

# Champions' Celtic too clinical for Hibs at Parkhead

Champions Celtic proved to be too clinical for Hibs at Parkhead this afternoon and deservedly took all three points with a 3-0 victory.

Head Coach Jack Ross kept faith with the same starting XI that ended Rangers' 114-year clean sheet record last weekend at Easter Road. Jamie Murphy, who missed the game against his parent club, returned to the squad but Scott Allan was absent for the third successive game as the club continue to investigate his illness.



Celtic boss Neil Lennon made three changes to the side that beat Riga 1-0 on Thursday night. Odsonne Edouard and Olivier Ntcham both dropped to the bench whilst James Forrest missed out altogether with injury. Captain Scott Brown passed a fitness test after being on the end of a heavy tackle against Riga, whilst former Hibs' striker Leigh Griffiths returned to the squad and was listed amongst the substitutes.

Celtic went into the game knowing that rivals Rangers had demolished Motherwell 5-1 at Firhill earlier on the day and started in a determined mood but it was Hibs who created the first chance when Kevin Nisbet did well to find Joe Newell on the half-way line. Newell drove forward into the Celtic box but his cross was cleared.

Hibs then won a corner but the ball was cleared. Jeremie Fringpong broke at speed and it took a superb tackle from Paul Hanlon to clear the danger.

In the fifth minute Celtic keeper Vasilius Barkas fumbled a Martin Boyle cross from the left but managed to grab the ball at the second attempt.

Celtic took the lead against the run of play in the 7<sup>th</sup> minute when Ryan Christie found Callum McGregor in acres of space and the midfielder fired a tremendous 25-yard strike into the bottom corner of the net.

Hibs fought back and Boyle sent in a cross to the back post which Christian Doidge won but there was no-one in a purple shirt to take advantage.

Hibs had a great chance to equalise in the 15<sup>th</sup> minute after Nisbet cut in from the right and found his striking partner Doidge. The Welshman shot on the turn but the ball flew inches over the bar.

Newell then displayed some sublime skill in midfield, beating two Celtic players before sending a great ball into the Celtic box. Nisbet out muscled Shane Duffy but his shot from an acute angle went well wide.

Paul McGinn did well to find Boyle on the corner of the box and the winger turned Kristoffer Ajer but the ball got stuck under his feet and by the time he got it under control Brown blocked his shot which deflected for a corner.

With Hibs pressing, the Hoops doubled their advantage in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute. Frimpong cut in from the right and found Mohamed Elyounoussi inside the area. He stabbed the ball goalwards but Ofir Marciano could only parry his shot into the path of Albion Afeti who fired the ball into the net from close range.

In the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute Alex Gogic found Boyle who fired just over from the edge of the area.

Just before the break, Frinpong went close after latching onto

a Greg Taylor cross at the back post.

Lewis Stevenson replaced Josh Doig for the second-half then Drey Wright made way for Murphy moments later.

Celtic then dominated possession and Marciano produced three excellent saves to deny Nir Bitton, Brown and substitute David Turnbull as the Hoops looked to end the game as a contest.

Hanlon then did well to rob Edouard on the edge of the area as Celtic continued to press forward.

Hibs refused to lie down however and Nisbet headed over a Boyle cross from the right.

Midway through the second-half Murphy found Stevenson who cut the ball back into the box. It was cleared into the path of Newell but his shot flew well over the bar.

Marciano then produced another fine save to deny McGregor's long-range effort before Stevenson sent a terrific through ball into the path of Murphy. The on-loan striker drove into the box and went down under a challenge but the ball fell to Newell who once again fired well wide.

Murphy then sent a superb cross to the back post which Doidge headed into the path of Nisbet but his volley was blocked.

With 12-minutes remaining Celtic wrapped things up when McGinn's tackle fell to Turnbull who slid the ball into the path of Elyounoussi and the striker fired past Marciano to make it 3-0.

Stevie Mallan replaced Doidge as Hibs continued to press forward but Celtic held on to secure the three points.

Celtic: Barkas, Taylor, Duffy, Bitton, Ajer, Frimpong, Brown, Christie, McGregor, Elyounoussi, Ajeti. Subs: Bain, Elhamed, Soro, Turnbull, Rogic, Ntcham, Griffiths, Klimala, Edouard.

Hibs: Marciano, McGinn, Porteous, Hanlon, Doig, Boyle, Gogic, Newell, Wright, Doidge, Nisbet. Subs: Barnes, Gray, McGregor, Stevenson, Hallberg, Mallan, Murphy, Shanley, Gullan.

Referee Steven McLean