

Hearts march to derby semi-final glory in emotional day at Hampden

Hearts took the spoils with a dramatic 2-1 extra time win over capital rival Hibs at Hampden to book a Scottish final spot on a stormy and emotional day in Glasgow.

At half-time, with the game poised at 0-0, news filtered through that former Hearts defender – and captain of the 2012 team that famously defeated Hibs 5-1 in the Scottish cup final – Marius Zaulikas, had passed away at the age of 36.

The game itself was a tetchy affair given what was at stake and was subject to awful weather conditions on Glasgow's south side. The rain and wind made it difficult for the players but both teams did seek to play some decent football albeit lacking the energy and bite that would have undoubtedly had come with 50,000 boisterous supporters from the capital.

Hearts started the brightest but it was always Hibs that carried the attacking menace going forward – perhaps due to their head start over their Gorgie neighbours with the premiership already in to double figure matches compared to the handful in the Championship. It took a characteristically world class save from Hearts stopper Craig Gordon to prevent Kevin Nisbett nodding home the opener after 29 minutes whilst his attacking counterpart Christian Doidge had a couple of

good chances come his way too.

The game really sparked in to life in the second half when Olly Lee's whipped cross was dispatched by Craig Wighton in to the Hibs net to give the Jambos the lead. The Hibeers were only behind for seven minutes however when Doidge flicked in a superb header from nine yards to bring things level.

The rain and wind continued to batter down and the game headed in to extra time. Again, the play was a cagey as before, matching the tension of the tens of thousands of supporters watching back at home, but referee Willie Collum added to the drama by awarding two penalties in added time.

Both penalties seemed to be soft with Popescu not appearing to make contact with Newell for the Easter Road side's spot kick. Whilst at the other end, Hearts' Aidy White and Hibs' McGinn seemed to come together more than anything. However, the outcome of each was the crucial factor and sadly for the men in green, up until now, goal machine Kevin Nisbet smashed his effort off the post whilst Liam Boyce slammed his strike in to the back of the net to secure a second Scottish cup final in two years for the Jam Tarts.

It was a symbolic win for new Hearts manager Robbie Neilson who has now won every competitive match since returning to Gorgie and he was quick to dedicate the win to the Hearts support afterwards. On a day that brought the sad news of a club great passing away, it seemed an apt way to celebrate the service of Marius Zalulikas who always enjoyed the devilment and intrigue of an Edinburgh derby.

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