

# Hibs come from behind to secure victory over Paul Hartley's Cove Rangers

Hibs had to come from behind to secure the victory over Cove Rangers at a windswept Balmoral Stadium this afternoon.

Head Coach Jack Ross picked an attack-minded team for the trip to the Cove Bay area of Aberdeen, despite missing five players due to international call-ups and another three due to injuries.



He made three changes to the starting XI that beat Brora Rangers on Wednesday night with Martin Boyle, Kevin Nisbet and Christian Doidge returning to the team. Paul Hanlon, Jamie Murphy and Jamie Gullan made way.

Former Hibs' Scottish Cup winning midfielder Fraser Fyvie missed out having picked up an injury against Dundee two weeks ago but there was a couple of familiar faces in the hosts' dugout, namely former player Paul Hartley and former goalkeeping coach Alan Combe.

The hosts started brightly playing a high-press game but it was Hibs that should have opened the scoring in the 9<sup>th</sup> minute when Nisbet found Boyle on the right wing. The Australian international sent in a perfect cross which found Doidge unmarked but with the goal gaping but his header bounced up struck the crossbar and was cleared.

Seven minutes later, David Gray fouled Jamie Masson on the

edge of the 'D' and Danny Higgins sent a superb free-kick over the wall into the corner of the net to give Cove the lead.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> minute, the Hibs' defenders fell asleep at a Cove free-kick allowing Mitch Megginson to lose his marker but Barnes did well to save his shot at the second attempt with Connor Scully waiting to pounce.

Hibs had a great chance to equalise in the 29<sup>th</sup> minute when Doidge timed his run to perfection but Stuart McKenzie produced a superb save to deny the Welshman.

Moments later Boyle was brought down 35-yards from goal but Stevie Mallan's free-kick flew narrowly wide and the visitors went in at the break a goal-down.

Whatever Ross said to his players during the break worked as Hibs started the second-half on the front foot.

Jamie Gullan replaced Drey Wright and within a minute the visitors almost grabbed an equaliser when Doidge found his striking partner with a great through ball. Nisbet managed to round the keeper but was off balance as he fired the ball into the side netting from an acute angle.

Moments later the equaliser arrived after good work from Doidge who once again found Nisbet on the edge of the area. The striker slid the ball into the path of Boyle who instead of shooting as expected cut the ball back into the path of Gullan who calmly knocked the ball into the empty net from close range.

Cove continued to press forward and Megginson did well to control the ball at the edge of the box but his shot flew just over the bar.

Leighton McIntosh was shown a yellow card for sarcastically applauding the referee who awarded Hibs a free-kick then Kyle Magennis replaced Stephen McGinn.

Within seconds of the substitution, Hibs took the lead after Stevie Mallan took a quick free-kick which found Melker Hallberg in space. The Swede sent a cross into the penalty box and Nisbet volleyed the ball into the net from 15-yards.

Blair Yuill was next to be shown a yellow card for cynically chopping down Gullan as he broke clear on the left wing.

The conditions worsened and neither team was able to retain possession.

Magennis almost made it 3-1 after winning possession in midfield but his powerful strike was well saved by McKenzie.

Doidge was booked for persistent fouling with 10-minutes remaining then Harry Milne suffered the same fate for holding back Boyle as he broke clear.

Cove almost grabbed a last minute equaliser when a long throw was cleared into the path of Higgins and his superb volley was tipped over the bar by Barnes.

Hibs now travel to Forfar on Tuesday night with maximum points from their opening two group stage matches.

Cove Rangers: McKenzie, Milne, Scully, Ross, Yule, Megginson, Masson, McIntosh, Higgins, Livingstone, Graham. Subs: Leighton, Watson, McAllister, Semple, Brown, Demus.

Hibs: Barnes, Gray, McGregor, Stevenson, Wright, Hallberg, Mallan, S. McGinn, Boyle, Nisbet, Doidge. Subs: Samson, Mackie, Magennis, Bradley, Gullan, Shanley

Euan Anderson