

Leeann's legacy

Hibs' fans have taken to social media to thank Leeann Dempster for her contribution to the club during the past six-years and to speculate as to her replacement.

In her Hibs' tenure she brought the 'holy grail' back to Easter Road in the shape of the first Scottish Cup win in 114-years and took the club back to the top-flight after a prolonged absence in the Championship.



Leeann Dempster

The former Motherwell chief took up the position at Easter Road back in 2014 when Terry Butcher was in charge at at that time Chairman Rod Petrie said: "Leeann is an outstanding football leader with a proven track record. In addition to a desire for sporting success, I know from our numerous discussions that there is a shared belief in the direction of travel towards increased involvement of supporters and greater community engagement."

She added: "I believe that to succeed in a sustainable way in the long term we need to grow club resources, re-engage lapsed supporters and strengthen the club collectively. As a big city club, Hibernian has a fantastic opportunity to build on the great physical assets and grow attendances through increased engagement and success on the pitch. I am looking forward to the challenge."

A dreadful end to the season however resulted in Hibs finishing in the play-offs against Hamilton Academical and despite a 2-0 away victory, they ended up losing the second-

leg at Easter Road by the same margin.

The Accies won the penalty shoot-out and hundreds of frustrated fans protested outside the main stand after the full time whistle with chairman Rod Petrie the main target.

Her first act of note was to dismiss Butcher and his assistant Maurice Malpas and controversially appoint former Celtic and Everton defender as Head Coach.

Despite playing some attractive football Hibs finished their first season in the Championship well behind runaway winners Hearts and fell at the first play-off hurdle against third placed Rangers who subsequently missed out on promotion to Motherwell.

The following season Hibs reached the Scottish League Cup final which they lost to a last minute goal against Ross County then a two dreadful refereeing decisions cost them victory over Falkirk in the play-off semi-final leaving 'only' the Scottish Cup final to play for.

Goals from Anthony Stokes and David Gray ended the 114-year-wait and the famous old trophy returned to Leith but that summer Stubbs left the club to join Rotherham.

Dempster wasted no time in securing the services of former Celtic manager Neil Lennon who led the team back to the top-flight as champions then achieved a fourth place finish in their first season back up, qualifying for Europe.

After a poor run of form the following season and a rumoured training ground bust up Lennon made a shock exit from Hibs in January 2019.

Dempster identified Paul Heckingbottom as his replacement and despite a good start in going ten matches unbeaten, the former Leeds United boss was sacked the following November with Jack Ross his successor.

Peruvian media mogul Ron Gordon bought a controlling stake in the club from long-time owner Sir Tom Farmer in July 2019 and due to a lack of crowds allowed into the games this season he forecast a drop in revenue of up to 50 per cent, as players were first asked to take a wage deferral then wage cut, while some academy coaching staff were made redundant.

The appointment of Ross has proved to be a success to date with him achieving more points than any other manager outwith Rangers and Celtic.

The shock announcement of her departure came yesterday and she said: "I think it is genuinely the right time, both for the club and for me, to move on to a new chapter. It has been an intense and fulfilling time of my life.

"I have grown to love the club and the Hibernian family, but the club is in good hands and has an exciting future ahead of it. I wanted to make sure Ron settled in following the transaction, and I think we have achieved that. I

"'ve enjoyed working with him and I have learned a lot in the process. Supporters should be optimistic and excited about Ron's plans for the club's future, and I know they will continue to support the club in the magnificent fashion that they have done during my time, especially during recent months when they absolutely stepped up when we most needed them.

"I thank every one of them for making this job such an enjoyable one. Now I look forward to the excitement of taking on a new challenge."

Gordon paid tribute to her achievements at the club. He said: "I would have liked Leeann to stay. She has done a terrific job throughout her time at the club and I know how highly regarded she is by every supporter and within football. She has explained that she believes it is the right time for her and for the club – that she is ready to pursue a new and different challenge, and that she wants to spend more time

with her family.

“She has obviously thought long and hard about this and we now have to accept and respect her view. I am happy to say she will work with us to ensure a smooth transition as we decide how to best move forward and thank her for her continued commitment to the club. She has definitely left her mark at Hibernian, and everyone at Hibs should be very grateful to her, I know I am, and all of us wish her every success.”