

Under-strength Hibs suffer narrow defeat to league leaders Rangers at Ibrox

Under strength Hibs suffered a narrow defeat to league leaders Rangers at a wet and windy Ibrox Park this afternoon thanks to a first-half goal from Ianis Hagi. The Romanian however was lucky not to concede a penalty after his high-boot challenge connected with Joe Newell's face as Hibs fought for an equaliser.

Hibs' Head Coach Jack Ross made four changes to the starting XI that beat St Mirren in midweek. Ofir Marciano and Kyle Magennis made way for Dillon Barnes and Alex Gogic after picking up injuries, whilst Josh Doig and Drey Wright were selected ahead of Lewis Stevenson and the suspended Christian Doidge.



Rangers made one change to their starting line up with Leon Balogun replacing Fifip Helander presumably to counter the attacking threat of Martin Boyle.

Hibs almost opened the scoring within the first minute when Doig sent a superb ball across the face of evaded the Rangers defenders but Boyle on the stretch could only turn it round the post from close range.

Rangers started to dominate possession and Barnes did well to hold a cross from Bornaa Barisic with Kemar Roofe waiting to

pounce.

Paul McGinn then tripped Glen Kamara just outside the area but the normally reliable James Tavernier fired the resultant free-kick high over the bar.

McGinn then saved his team from going behind with a superb clearance off the line from Balogan's low shot.

Joe Newell demonstrated superb skill in midfield beating three Rangers players before finding Kevin Nisbet but his cross was cleared.

Rangers almost took the lead in the 25th minute when Tavernier's superb corner kick was won by Connor Goldson but Barnes produced a superb point blank save. The ball was cleared to Tavernier who dribbled into the box and stumbled following a brush with Gogic's leg then handled the ball before the danger was cleared.

Kamera then found Hagi just outside the area but his shot on the turn flew just wide of the post and Rangers piled on the pressure.

The breakthrough came in the 32nd minute when Kamara found Roofe inside the area and his low cross was turned into the net by Hagi.

Hibs had a chance to equalise two minutes later when Newell sent a long ball into the path of Boyle but his angled drive went wide of the post.

Another fine cross from Doig struck the far post then at the other end Ryan Porteous produced a superb tackle to dispossess Roofe inside the area.

Just before the break Gogic was booked for persistent fouling.

Hibs started the second-half brightly and Doig sent in a

dangerous cross from the left which Balogun cleared acrobatically. From Hallberg's corner the ball was cleared to the edge of the box and Newell was kicked in the face by the high boot of Hagi as he headed the ball but inexplicably referee Willie Collum waved play on.

At the other end McGinn did well to block a powerful strike by Ryan Kent.

Rangers almost doubled their advantage then a corner fell to the feet of Balogun but once again Barnes produced a point blank save although Porteous was fouled as the ball was in the air.

Hallberg then sent a superb through ball to Boyle but his shot was blocked and deflected for a corner.

Newell then found Nisbet with a lobbed cross but the striker's effort was off-target.

A Hallberg free-kick was half cleared and Kamara clashed with Boyle at the back post but Hibs' penalty claims were denied.

Hibs then had another penalty claim rejected when Tavernier clipped Porteous's heels as he attempted to get on the end of a Newell corner.

With eight minutes remaining Jamie Gullan replaced Wright then moments later Hallberg fired in a low curling shot from the corner of the box but Allan McGregor produced a superb diving save.

Hibs continued to press forward and won a number of late corners but the Rangers' defence held firm.

In time added on Hibs won a free-kick in a dangerous position but McGregor was able to catch Hallberg's cross.

Substitute Alfredo Morelos had a chance in the dying minute but once again Barnes managed to block his effort and Rangers

held on to secure the victory.

Rangers: McGregor, Tavernier, Goldson, Balogun, Barisic, Davis, Kamara, Aribio, Hagi, Kent, Roofe. Subs: McLaughlin, Bassey, Helander, Zungu, Barker, Arfield, Defoe, Morelos, Itten.

Hibs: Barnes, P. McGinn, Hanlon, Porteous, Doig, Hallberg, Gogic, Newell, Boyle, Wright, Nisbet. Subs: Samson, Gray, McGregor, Stevenson, S.McGinn, Bradley, Gullan

Referee Willie Collum