

High drama at Parkhead as Hibs grab share of points with late equaliser

One of the most extraordinary days in the history of Scottish football ended in high drama at Celtic Park as Hibs grabbed a share of the points with a last minute equaliser by the league's joint top scorer Kevin Nisbet.

A late David Turnbull free-kick seemed to have secured a victory for Celtic but Hibs' never say die attitude denied them the three points.



PHOTO Alan Rennie

Hibs Head Coach Jack Ross made five changes to the starting XI that lost to Livingston last weekend.

New signing Matt Macey replaced Dillon Barnes whilst Josh Doig, Melker Hallberg Jamie Murphy and Drey Wright took over from Lewis Stevenson, Stevie Mallan, Martin Boyle and Christian Doidge.

Celtic were without manager Neil Lennon and 13 players who had been forced to isolate following a Covid scare on their return from a winter training camp in Dubai but were still able to field a relatively strong side which included internationals Shane Duffy, Tom Rogic, Callum McGregor and Diego Laxalt. In fact eight of the starting XI had been in the squad that lost to Rangers on 2nd January including five that started.

There was a major surprise when Duffy was included as Celtic had previously stated that he would be unavailable having left the 'bubble' to return to his home in England from Dubai.

Ahead of the game Hibs requested that additional on day tests be carried out on the Celtic players but the club and the SPFL refused and Hibs were warned that not fulfilling the fixture would result in sanctions.

Hibs started brightly and Joe Newell split the Celtic defence with a superb ball to Murphy but his shot was deflected wide of the post. From Hallberg's corner Nisbet's header flew inches over the bar.

Newell was next to try his luck with a half volley which Conor Hazard parried away.

Hibs continued to press forward and won four corners in the opening six minutes but the Celtic defence held firm.

Murphy then set up Nisbet with a great through ball but Hazard did well to hold his angled drive.

At the other end Macey did well to save a long range effort from Turnbull.

Celtic had a great chance when Newell was dispossessed outside his own penalty area and Mikey Johnston slid the ball to Cameron Harper but the youngster's shot hit the side netting.

Macey did well to hold a long range effort from Tom Rogic then Alex Gogic fired high over the bar from 25-yards.

In the 30th minute Ismaila Soro was booked for a late challenge on Gogic then Macey had to be alert to hold a low cross from Harper.

Celtic finished the first-half on the front foot and Macey did well to save strikes from Soro and Laxalt.

In the final action Turnbull lobbed the ball into the path of McGregor but he mishit his effort which flew harmlessly wide.

Lewis Stevenson replaced Doig at half-time to make his 500th appearance for the club then six-minutes later Doidge replaced Wright.

Hallberg was booked for a trip on Soro then Newell slid a superbly weighted through ball into Hallberg's path but Hazard was able to smother his effort.

Newell then tried his luck from the edge of the area but his shot was deflected for a corner.

Soro broke clear for Celtic but some great defending by Murphy on the edge of the box cleared the danger.

Johnston went down under a challenge by Porteous but referee Steven McLean was in the perfect position to deny the penalty claim.

Newell who picked up a strain was replaced by Mallan in the 67th minute then Porteous was booked for stopping Celtic taking a quick throw in.

Moments later Paul McGinn fired in a cross from the right but Nisbet's shot deflected off Doidge and Hazard was able to save.

Mallan then set up Hallberg with a clever back heel but his shot was blocked for another corner.

Mallan then tried his luck from 30 yards but his effort flew high and wide.

With 12-minutes remaining Stephen McGinn replaced Hallberg and his first act was to trip Turnbull on the edge of the 'D' and the former Motherwell midfielder fired the resultant free-kick into the top corner of the net.

Hibs continued to press forward and Hazard did well to save a powerful strike from Murphy.

A Paul McGinn cross was met by Doidge but his close range effort was blocked and the ball was cleared to Mallan but his effort flew just over the bar.

In the last minute, Laxalt tripped Paul McGinn and Mallan sent the resultant free-kick to the back post. Paul Hanlon headed the ball back across the face of the goal and Duffy's clearance fell to Nisbet who fired the ball into the net for a much deserved equaliser.

Hibs almost grabbed a winner in time added on but Mallan's effort from the edge of the area deflected inches over the bar and the game finished with honours even.

After the final whistle goalscorer Nisbet told Sky Sports: "I thought we played well and had a lot of chances. It was a great free-kick but we showed a bit of character and got back in the game. We kept our shape well and I was delighted from a personal view (with the goal) and it was good to get back on the score sheet and it's another point toward the end of the season."

Celtic: Hazard, Duffy, Soro, Turnbull, Rogic, Johnstone, Frimpong, McGregor, Harper, Welsh, Laxalt. Subs: Doohan, Taylor, Connell, Coffey, Oko-Flex, Henderson, Ralston, Hjelde, Katamoko

Hibs: Macey, P. McGinn, Hanlon, Porteous, Doig, Gogic, Newell, Hallberg, Wright, Murphy, Nisbet. Subs: Dabrowski, Gray, McGregor, S.McGinn, Gullan, Mallan, Bradley, Doidge

Referee Steven McLean