

Hibs show Arsenal 'solidarity' but no mercy

Finally after 16-long months, fans were allowed back into Easter Road and those lucky enough to have a ticket witnessed Hibs beating English giants Arsenal 2-1 in a highly entertaining 90-minutes.

Before kick-off Hibs showed solidarity with Arsenal star Bukayo Saka who was the victim of vile racist abuse in the wake of England's defeat to Italy on penalties in the final at Wembley on Sunday after his spot kick was saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.



Arsenal Twitter

When Arsenal arrived at the stadium they found a Hibs' jersey with his name and number on it hanging up in the away dressing

room.

Arsenal showed their appreciation for what Hibs have done by sharing an image of the jersey on social media and captioning it: "Solidarity".

Hibs then responded by simply saying: "We stand with you, Saka."

Arsenal fans loved the gesture and commended the Easter Road club for it on social media.

The clubs have had an affinity going back almost 100-years, starting with the world record transfer of goalkeeper Bill Harper then with Hibs copying the famous white sleeves. In the sixties the Gunners fielded Joe Baker and Johnny McLeod and bought the 'new George Best' teenager Peter Marinello for an incredible £100,000. Four years later they bought cultured midfielder Alex Cropley, but tonight it was the other way round as former Gunner Matt Macey started in goals for Hibs.

Jack Ross was without a number of players due to injury and illness including Josh Doig, Christian Doidge, Jake Doyle-Hayes, Darren McGregor, Stevie Mallan and Jamie Murphy demonstrating the strength of the squad.

The visitors started on the front foot and should have taken the lead within five minutes when Eddie Nketiah dispossessed Paul Hanlon but his shot flew just wide of the post.

£56m striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang then saw his powerful effort blocked by Ryan Porteous and Macey dived full length to push away an angled drive from Reiss Nelson.

But Arsenal's early dominance didn't last and it was Hibs who opened the scoring in bizarre circumstances.

Young Arsenal keeper Arthur Okonkwo was caught in two minds following a pass-back. He couldn't decide whether to head the ball or kick in and did neither, allowing Martin Boyle to

score one of the easiest goals of his career.

Scott Allan displayed the form that made him such a beloved figure amongst the Hibs' fans and a trademark through ball set up teenage winger Steven Bradley who rattled the post shortly before half-time after cutting in from the right hand side.

Defeat to Hibs clearly wasn't on Arsenal's agenda and they made a number of changes at the break, bringing on last season's top scorer Alexandre Lacazette and £75m signing Nicolas Pepe from the bench.

Jack Ross made one, bringing on Kevin Dabrowski in place of Macey.

Shortly after the restart Pepe was awarded a free-kick after a slight tug by Lewis Stevenson and curling a wonderful strike towards the top right corner of goal that Dabrowski acrobatically kept out.

On the hour mark, Ross replaced Boyle and Bradley with Kyle Magennis and new-signing Dan McKay and the inspired move paid immediate dividends.

Moments later Magennis's corner was headed back across goal by Hanlon and McKay had the simplest of tasks to nod the ball into the net from close range.

The Gunners upped the pressure and were awarded a controversial penalty when Paul McGinn nudged Lacazette in the box. Pepe took the resultant spot-kick but was denied by a superb save from Dabrowski, the young Pole diving low to get a strong left hand to the effort to frustrate the £72m striker.

The visitors did reduce arrears on 81 minutes when Smith Rowe volleyed in from close range following an excellent lobbed delivery from Hector Bellerin, however it was too little, too late as Hibs held on for the memorable victory.

Hibs: Macey (Dabrowski 46'), Hanlon, Porteous (Hallberg 70'),

McGinn, Boyle (Mackay 67'), Newell (Magennis 67'), Gogic, Nisbet (Gullan 79'), Stevenson, Allan (Wright 62'), Bradley (Campbell 62'). Substitute not used: Brydon.

Arsenal: Okonkwo (Hein 46'), Willian (Partey 46'), Aubameyang (Lacazette 46'), Maitland-Niles (Rekik 46'), Soares (Bellerin 62'), Mari, Nelson (Pepe 46'), Elneny (Henry-Francis 74'), Nketiah (Balogun 46'), Kolasinac (Girald-Hutchison 79'), Clarke (Smith Rowe 46'). Substitutes all used.

Referee: Don Robertson.

Attendance: 1,822.