

Hibs move to within a point of Rangers with victory over St Johnstone

Hibs moved to within a point of league leaders Rangers with a controversial 1-0 won over St Johnstone at Easter Road this afternoon.

Head coach Jack Ross made two changes to the starting XI that beat Dundee United on Thursday to reach the League Cup semi-finals. Josh Doig returned in place of Lewis Stevenson and Chris Cadden replaced Jake Doyle Hayes.



The first chance of the game fell to Doig in the fourth minute following a Joe Newell free-kick which landed at the youngster's feet but his shot was blocked.

Moments later Scott Allan collected the ball in midfield, beat two defenders and went down under a challenge inside the box but referee John Beaton wasn't interested.

That was to prove the story of the first-half with Beaton incurring the wrath of the Hibs' fans with a series of strange decisions, none of which went in favour of the home side.

Hibs had another penalty claim dismissed when Kevin Nisbet clashed with Zander Clarke then a Kyle Magennis long range effort deflected taking the pace off the ball which allowed the Saints' keeper time to scramble across the goal.

St Johnstone started to get a foothold in the game and Matt Macey had to be alert to tip a Chris Kane effort over the bar.

A cross from Rooney then took a wicked deflection off Doig and Macey did well to save at his near post.

Martin Boyle collected the ball on the right wing, cut inside and was clearly brought down but incredibly Beaton waved play on sparking a torrent of abuse from three sides of the stadium.

That seemed to make matters worse and he gave two throw ins to the visitors which clearly should have gone to Hibs.

The referee's performance appeared to give Kane a licence to foul Porteous at every opportunity and the biggest cheer of the first half was when Beaton noticed and gave a free-kick to Hibs.

Moments later however Kane clearly pulled Porteous's jersey before the Hibs' defender put his arm round the striker and was booked for his trouble.

Hibs almost opened the scoring just before the break when Allan's corner was met by Hanlon at the back post but his effort flew inches wide of the post.

The chorus of boos that met the half-time whistle told their own story.

Doyle-Hayes replaced Magennis for the start of the second-half but the first decision after 30-seconds went the way of the visitors.

Ironically on the hour mark Beaton had another decision to make and this time it favoured Hibs.

Newell cut the ball back into the path of Boyle whose powerful shot appeared to strike Chris McCart's arm at point-blank range and Beaton after taking a couple of seconds to gather his thoughts awarded a penalty amid furious protests.

Boyle piled on the agony to score his sixth penalty this term

although Clark managed to get a hand on the ball before it found the bottom-left corner of the net.

Moments later a sarcastic clap towards an assistant referee saw McCart shown a second yellow.

Hibs used their man advantage to good effect and comfortably held on to secure the victory.

After the final whistle Ross told BBC Sportsound: "The game needed either a moment of fortune or a moment of magic to win it. Martin Boyle hasn't been training and Kyle Magennis went off injured at half-time. I think that's impacted our performance levels slightly but we have dug out points and that's a sign of how this team are continuing to grow."

Macey; McGinn, Porteous, Hanlon, Doig; Newell, Allan, Magennis; Cadden, Boyle, Nisbet. Subs: Dabrowski, Stevenson, Gullan, Doyle-Hayes, Scott, Wood, Gogic

St Johnstone: Clark; Ambrose, Muller, McCart; Rooney, Craig, Crawford, Booth; O'Halloran, Kane, Wotherspoon. Subs Parish, Dendoncker, Devine, Gilmour, Middleton, May, Vertainen

Referee: John Beaton

Attendance: 13,263