

Return of the Edinburgh Derby

The Edinburgh derby returns to the city this month after another season of competing in different divisions and it will be a massive game, not just for the fans but particularly for both managers.

Jack Ross has rightly won plaudits for taking the Easter Road team to third place in the Premiership table as well as a Scottish Cup final, but his reputation is probably higher amongst the neutrals than the Hibs fans, some of whom still question his ability to win games that “matter”.







Despite winning his first derby thanks to a Martin Boyle double at Tynecastle, a 3-1 defeat coupled with a dreadful performance in the corresponding fixture at Easter Road infuriated the supporters.

Add that to the Scottish Cup semi-final defeat at Hampden last October and Ross is now in “negative equity” as far as derbies are concerned – and another ex St Mirren manager Alex Miller knows how popular that makes you.

Add that to the League Cup semi-final defeat and Scottish Cup final defeat, both to St Johnstone, then the jury is still out for a significant number of the Hibs’ faithful, although to be fair, Ross has the backing of the majority.

Counterpart Robbie Neilson will take charge for his seventh derby and his record of two wins, three draws and two defeats is not one that the Hearts fans take any pride in. Many Hearts

fans still blame him for conceding two late goals at Tynecastle in the Scottish Cup five years ago and his comments of a “big pay day” in the replay. He may have got what he hoped for, but Hibs went on to win that match and subsequently the Scottish Cup for the first time in 114 years.

Despite him leading Hearts to runners-up of the top-flight in his first term, some fans paid for a plane and banner calling for his dismissal. He led the club back to the Premiership at the first time of asking last year but that was expected and anything less would have been a disaster.

Both sides started this campaign with two victories, Hearts beating Celtic at home and St Mirren away, whilst Hibs returned with all three points from Fir Park and disposed of Ross County to top the table.

Ross added to his squad Matt Macey and Jamie Murphy, both of whom had been on loan last season from Arsenal and Rangers respectively, Dan McKay from Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Irishman Jake Doyle Hayes from St Mirren, whilst losing popular Ofir Marciano, veteran captain David Gray, Stevie Mallan, Fraser Murray, Jackson Irvine, and Tom James.

Neilson signed Ross Stewart and Josh Ginnelly – both on loan last term from Livingston and Preston North End respectively, Alex Cochrane from Brighton & Hove Albion on loan and highly rated midfielder Beni Baningime from Everton, whilst eleven players left the club including former captain Christophe Berra, Loic Damour, Olly Lee, Harry Cochrane, Andy Irvine, Craig Wighton and Aidy White.

Perhaps a draw would be acceptable to both coaches?