

Nisbet strike piles pressure on struggling Hearts

Kevin Nisbet slotted after 67 minutes to end Hearts' Derby dominance and the 1-0 scoreline in favour of Hibs piles pressure on interim boss Steven Naismith and Hearts' new management team.

The Tynecastle team are in freefall having failed to record a point in six straight games in the cinch Premiership.

And the gap between the Men in Maroon and third-placed Aberdeen is now five huge points. The Dons have 50 points from 32 games and are sitting pretty.

The opposition is closing in on Hearts. Fifth-placed St Mirren, who lost 5-2 at Ibrox, have 44 points with Hibs, who are sixth, now on 43. Livingston are seventh on 42 points.

Hearts last game before the split is against bottom-markers Ross County at Tynecastle on Saturday (kick-off 12.30) and Nisbet's second-half strike ended a nine-game winless streak in the Capital clash.

The margin of victory could have been greater, but the win eases pressure on Hibs' boss Lee Johnson who had previously seen his men skid to four straight defeats.

The home side certainly started the better of the two, Joe Newell having an early chance, but Hearts lost experienced defender Michael Smith to injury early on which forced them to

re-shuffle and Zander Clark, restored between the sticks after injury, was forced into a superb stop with his right foot to deny Hibs' French star Elie Youan from close range.

The Gorgie side grew into the game and Alan Forrest missed a snip, but Hibs upped the pressure and Nisbet and Chris Cadden had opportunities which they failed to convert.

However, the pressure eventually told when Nisbet volleyed into the roof of the net for his first Derby goal after Jake Doyle-Hayes' corner was nodded on by Paul Hanlon.

Hearts pressed forward, leaving gaps, and Hibs had chances, Nisbet driving into the box and firing when Josh Campbell was in good position near the penalty spot, but the final whistle signalled celebrations for the Hibeers and their success-hungry fans.

However, it was a massive blow to Hearts who had 63 per cent of possession against 37 per cent from the home side. Both had 11 shots on target but Naismith's side had 410 passes against 235 from Hibs.

Nisbet said: "It was a massive game for us and a massive for the fans."

Jubilant Johnson told BBC Sport Scotland: "We battled and that is what our fans want to see. It was a good day for us and we want many, many more."

Honest Naismith said: "I don't think we did enough to win it. and we didn't carry as much threat as I would have hoped."

The former Scotland international added: "I expect us to have more attacking threat in the coming weeks."

The Hearts fans who made their way out of Easter Road will be delighted if they do.