

Five red cards and no silky football in bruising Derby

There was bags of passion from both sets of fans at sun-kissed Tynecastle. There was also full commitment from both Hearts and Hibs in a bruising battle and the ball got off lightly as Lee Johnson, Hibs' manager, felt it was only in play for 25 minutes, so scrappy was this key cinch Premiership affair.

Players will be on the treatment table in the aftermath and, sadly, there are possible longer-term consequences for two Hibs men and one Jambo.

Chris Cadden was carried off with what appeared to be a leg injury – Achilles or calf, according to senior officials – and Jake Doyle-Hayes suffered what appeared to be a shoulder injury and was seen with the limb in a sling at the end of the encounter.

Hearts' Austrian-born midfielder Peter Haring, who spent months recovering from concussion and only recently returned to the team, was substituted after only 17 minutes after a mid-air duel for the ball with Doyle-Hayes.

Yes, there was a result for Hearts despite the game ending 1-1

as the jubilant Jambos look set for another European adventure. There was, however, disappointment for the men from Easter Road, but they could still be in Europe next season depending on what happens elsewhere.

What this game cried out for was somebody to put their foot on the ball and orchestrate proceedings. Instead, the paying fans received a stop-start affair, with bodies flying around, game management, some would call it time wasting, and cards dished out, including a straight red for Hearts' defender, Alex Cochrane.

Blood and thunder was how one hack described this clash. He was spot on. Football purists would have been advised to shut their eyes as robust challenges went in throughout the 90-plus minutes with an extra seven added minutes in the first half and nine in the second.

It was certainly tense and ten-man Hearts survived despite Cochrane's dismissal by referee Don Robertson, after viewing the VAR footage, for denying a goal-scoring opportunity.

That came in the 28th minute, 21 minutes after quicksilver Japanese player, Yutaro Oda, who has quickly become a favourite at Tynecastle, fired the home side ahead right in front of the Hibs fans.

On-loan defender James Hill launched one of his trademark long throws into the Hibs box from the right wing. The ball broke to Oda at the edge of the box and he sent a left foot shot low into the net, Hibs' goalkeeper David Marshall had no chance.

The penalty incident, which had a major impact on the game, came as a light aircraft flew over the ground with a message in memory of Jambos fan David Stewart who passed away recently.

Cochrane tangled with a Hibs player as a hopeful cross ball came from the left hand side of the pitch towards the Hearts'

box. Cochrane, who returned to the team against Hibs after a previous red card, shook his head as the initial yellow was upgraded to red.

The incident proved a double whammy for the Men in Maroon as Hibs striker Kevin Nisbet calmly held the ball and stayed out of the way of the on-pitch arguments while the referee made his decision. He then placed the ball close to the edge of the penalty box, in a central position, and, with his right foot, sent it low into the Jambos net. Zander Clark guessed correctly but Nisbet tucked the ball away perfectly. Hibs fans burst into song: "Can you hear the Jambos sing, no, no."

The dismissal sparked a flurry of activity on the Hearts' bench, Toby Sibbick replacing Barrie McKay to provide more defensive cover with Hill, Kye Rowles, Sibbick and Atkinson forming a back four.

Cammy Devlin, Orestis Kiomourtzoglou, who had come on for Haring, and Josh Ginnelly in midfield with Lawrence Shankland and Oda up front.

It was backs to the wall for Hearts for the remainder of the game and the home side found it difficult to break out. When they did, long balls to Shankland either found the skipper isolated, or with his back to goal. He was also hounded by Will Fish who shackled Shankland throughout a difficult game for the Scotland striker.

Midfielder Joe Newell, he with a much taled about "stylish" left foot, was allowed space to run at Hearts and he was one player who Hibs fans looked to create chances. They came but were spurned and not enough were fashioned according to manager Johnson.

Those that did were bravely blocked by the Men in Maroon but, overall, Hearts goalkeeper Clark, who produced three quality stops during the game, was not placed under consistent pressure, a major disappointment for Hibs boss and the

travelling fans.

Interim boss Steven Naismith urged the home support to up their volume as the clock ticked down, and substitute Harry McKirdy, who was one of two half-time changes by the men from Easter Road, sent a header wide and a shot over in the dying seconds. A real scare, and big defender Fish saw an effort rebound from Clark's right-hand post.

The final whistle drew a massive cheer from home fans. One sensed if was partly in relief that Hearts had secured fourth position in the table. Skirmishes (pictured by **Nigel Duncan**) immediately broke out among players and staff from both teams on the pitch at the final whistle. Later, it was confirmed that four red cards had been issued. They were shown to Johnson and Hibs' unused substitute, Rocky Bushiri plus Hearts' unused substitute goalkeeper, Ross Stewart, and the club's goalkeeping coach, Paul Gallacher,

Security staff were also seen scurrying across the turf to intercept a number of young boys who ran onto the pitch.

Once all that had calmed down, Hearts' players and WAGS, plus children, made a guard of honour for three players who are leaving the club, Michael Smith, Ross Stewart and Gary Mackay-Steven. Thousands stayed to applaud the players. A nice touch and a total contrast to what we had witnessed during the game.