

Newell inspirational as Hibs secure two-goal advantage

Hibs turned on the style in a pulsating second-half performance to beat Swiss side FC Luzern 3-1 and take a step towards earning a tie with English cracks Aston Villa in the next round of the UEFA Europa Conference League.

However, they will face a severe test in the return next week against a side who are fast on the break and who press aggressively.

Joe Newell (pictured) was key for Hibs, scoring a goal and providing inspiration in attack, as well as making several telling clearances in defence, and he told BBC Sport Scotland that they knew it was going to be a tough clash.

He praised newcomer Dylan Vente for his assist on the opening goal and added: "We had a good game plan and we knew they would have spells on the ball when it would be hard work."

Lee Johnson, Hibs' manager, believed it was a fantastic game of football and he told BBC Scotland Sport: "There's a lot to do, they're good enough to score a couple quickly and we're going to have to repeat the work-rate over there."

Earlier, Luzern had a chance down the left when the ball was sent over the top and caught out Lewis Miller and Marshall had to get down low to save.

Minutes later Paul Hanlon had to clear after another break down the right finished with a cross into the middle of the box.

Lively start continued with the Swiss side, who were robust in the tackle, preventing Hibs from making progress near the box but, at the other end, a diagonal ball from midfield to the right caused problems for Hibs but they were able to get the ball clear.

Hibs broke and new signing Dylan Vente latched onto the ball, forcing a corner, but Luzern dealt comfortably with Newall's cross, and the home side had so far failed to test the young goalkeeper.

A long-range effort from Martin Boyle from just outside the box forced the young goalkeeper to palm the ball over the bar at full stretch after a turnover in the final third, but Luzern were dangerous. They were also quick on the break and put Hibs rearguard under pressure once again.

Their slick-passing carved open another chance just on half-time but Newell was in the right place at the right time in the middle of the box to deflect the ball over the ball.

But it was Hibs who started the second-half with a bang, opening the scoring inside the first minute with a fine move down the right. Adam Le Fondre fed new signing Vente and his weight of pass across the box was perfect for Newell who took it in his stride and side-footed the ball home with his left foot.

Goalkeeper David Marshall raised his arms to celebrate as the home fans burst into life. Then Will Fish jumped to head the ball goalwards following a long throw on the right, but his effort went wide.

Lively Le Fondre then threatened with a snap shot as Hibs looked for a second and Luzern made a double change in a bid

to claw their way back and lanky striker Ismajl Beka exposed weaknesses in the home rearguard from a set-piece to nod home from six yards to level at 1-1. Time: 56 minutes.

Hibs looked shaken and the Swiss took full advantage, forcing the play, and Teddy Okou sped down the left to lay on another chance, but the Swiss failed to take advantage of the break.

Tempers flared as tackles flew in with both sides looking for an advantage and it was Hibs to seize it with a wonderful goal after 73 minutes after neat interplay. Newell weaved his way towards the by line.

He fed Lewis Stevenson who sent the ball into the box to Adam Le Fondre and he chipped into the danger area where debutant Vente picked his spot to nod into the net and put the home side ahead.

Easter Road was bouncing and substitute Doidge had a chance which was blocked but at the other end Luzern threatened and a shot from just outside the box had Marshall worried.

Seconds later, Boyle's neat footwork on the right opened up the visiting defence and he crossed to the near post where Doidge fired the ball onto the outside of the post. The Swiss then hit a post with Marshall struggling.

The play continued to swing from end-to-end and Fish was next to threaten after lurking at the back post but the on-loan Manchester United defender failed with a header. Luzern were not lying down and Hibs had another scare moments later, the ball flying inches wide.

In the dying seconds, however, Jordan Obita broke from half way to race towards goal and, from the edge of the box, sent the ball home with his left foot for 3-1 in the 90th minute and Hibs saw the game out to take a two-goal advantage to Switzerland.