

Stevenson and Hanlon win their Easter Road swan song

During a night of emotional farewells, Hibs beat Motherwell 3-0 at Easter Road for their first home win since March and first clean sheet in six games.

In what has been a turbulent week for Hibs, it was nice for football to take centre stage again as they faced Motherwell, however, the main talking point of this game was always going to be the departure of two Hibernian legends.

It was an emotional night, David Gray, in interim charge for the fourth time following the sacking of Nick Montgomery yesterday made three changes, notably bringing in Lewis Stevenson to start alongside Paul Hanlon for the final time at Easter Road.

Stevenson, making his record 600th Hibs appearance, received an early booking from referee Ian Sneddon, which was – predictably – met with a chorus of boos from the home support.

The game started as you would expect for a relatively meaningless post-split bottom-six match, Hibs did play some nice stuff early on, with Nectar Triantis producing some lovely passes in his return to the Hibs midfield.

There were few chances in the opening stages as the mist descended on Easter Road, until the half-hour mark when Hibs peppered the Motherwell goal.

Joe Newell forced Liam Kelly into a save from a powerful volley, and then Martin Boyle's deflected effort hit off the post from the resulting corner.

Hibs continued to push and in the 38th minute, they were awarded a penalty when Myziane Maolida attempted to control a deflected cross and the ball hit off Stephen O'Donnell's hand.

The home supporters were urging Lewis Stevenson to take the spot kick, Newell even handed him the ball, however, Stevenson didn't appear as interested as Maolida.

And after a lengthy wait, while VAR had a look, Maolida slid the ball into the bottom right corner to net his 12th Hibs goal since joining in January.

Just before half-time, Hibs had doubled their lead, Maolida was played in behind beautifully by Newell who whipped a cross into Martin Boyle, and his less-than-natural finish bobbed over the line just inside the post to send the home side 2-0 up at half-time.

10 minutes into the second half, Boyle grabbed his second, Motherwell failed to clear a Stevenson cross and the Australian international, with all the time in the world at the back post, made no mistake as he cut inside and fired past Kelly.

Motherwell, who had barely contributed to the game in an attacking sense did begin to threaten, Jojo Wollacott was forced into a fine save and Theo Bair had a deflected cross hit the side netting.

Eventually, they did get the ball into the back of the net, a mix-up in the Hibs defence allowed Bair to brilliantly bend an effort past Wollacott, but he was ruled offside.

Maolida was then subbed off in what was likely his own final Easter Road appearance and received a standing ovation in the

process, the Hibs fans showed their appreciation to the man who has been a rare shining light in recent dark times.

The game then petered along until the 87th minute when Paul Hanlon almost scored a dream goal, but his header from a corner was excruciatingly cleared off the line.

Then, with 90 minutes on the clock, it was time for the goodbyes, Paul Hanlon and Lewis Stevenson – who played a huge part in keeping a clean sheet – walked off the Easter Road pitch for the final time as Hibs players, to a huge standing ovation.

The match finished 3-0 to Hibs, but it was a night where the result didn't feel like the most important thing, and after the final whistle the two departing heroes did a lap of honour, poetically accompanied by the tune of Sunshine on Leith.



Lewis Stevenson playing in 2014 PHOTO John Preece



Paul Hanlon at training in 2014 PHOTO John Preece



Despite having the bulk of possession Hibs left it late to equalise in the first minute of extra time to finish the game 2-2 in their first game against Motherwell in January 2024.
Credit: Ian Jacobs