

Looking Ahead: What Business will Hibs Do In January?

When Bournemouth owner Bill Foley bought a minority stake in Hibs back in February, it launched a new era at the club and opened the door to the recruitment of players who might normally be out of Hibs' price range. Foley has spoken openly about the prospect of bringing the clubs under the umbrella of the Black Knight Football and Entertainment Group closer together and that includes co-operation in the transfer market.

Now, with their latest appointment, Hibs go into the January transfer window with at least the prospect of improving their current situation.



Photo by [Lesly Juarez](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Recruitment Guru

The appointment of [Garvan Stewart](#) as head of recruitment is a

sign of how seriously Foley is taking the principle of co-operation between the clubs he's involved with.

The former head of recruitment at Bournemouth, who started work at Easter Road this week, has been given the job of overhauling the recruitment department at the club; something that is long overdue, given the upheaval caused by the appointment of six different permanent managers in the last four years. Current boss David Gray has provided some continuity thanks to his three stints as caretaker boss, although given the way that the season has panned out so far, his future in the position may not be that secure.

Dire Situation

Two wins from 15 games in the Premiership has left Hibs in a dire situation, kept off the bottom only by rivals [Hearts](#), while a second-round exit from the League Cup closed off another potential route to success in August.

There is a case for saying that Gray's men are in a false position. Based on Expected Goals, Goals For, Goals Against or Goal Difference, Hibs' performance so far this season has been that of a mid-table side, rather than a relegation candidate.

That isn't what the league table says, however. According to [online betting site Betway](#) and others, punters rate Hibernian as third favourites to finish the season in the bottom two, and given their weaknesses so far this season, you wouldn't want to bet on them to defy those odds. An inability to hold onto a lead and a perceived lack of determination and fight in the team have been glaring issues for weeks. The January window cannot come soon enough.

January Housekeeping

The big hope is that Hibs might be able to get hold of players of the calibre of Emi Marcondes, who came on loan from

Bournemouth last season and had a significant impact in his 17 games.

In the short term, however, this January window may be more about housekeeping than big spending or headline grabbing recruitment. The backdrop to this transfer period is the fact that 17 players at the club are out of contract this summer. While it may be hard to move many of those on, clearing out some of them now might free up space in the wage bill. And, given that the Easter Road rebuild is likely to be a long term project, the sooner they get started, the better.

Another option could be the recall of Dylan Vente, who is still out on loan at Dutch club PC Zwolle. Vente joined the Eredivisie outfit on a season-long loan in August and has scored three times in 13 games so far, but the hamstring injury sustained by summer signing Kieron Bowie has severely restricted Gray's options up front, so a Vente recall makes some sense.

Goalkeeper Problem

The biggest issue with the Hibs team, and the one that is mostly likely to be addressed in January is the goalkeeper situation. First choice keeper Josef Bursik has struggled so far this season, but his replacement Jordan Smith has hardly fared much better.

Hibs have been noticeably vulnerable at the back, frequently letting winning positions slip and part of that has to be down to the goalkeeping. It isn't just a question of goalkeeping errors. A more assured and commanding presence between the sticks could go a long way towards improving the organisation and discipline among the Hibs defenders, particularly when they're under pressure.

Future in the Balance

Foley may be expecting Hibs to be in the running for European

places rather than battling relegation, but currently, the team is at such a low ebb that ambitions will have to be tempered. With their Premiership future in the balance, this transfer window will be a key test of the club's determination to solve their problems and to start rebuilding after a period of chaos.