

# **Hibs consolidate third place with comfortable 3-0 victory over St Johnstone**

**Hibs consolidated third place with a comfortable 3-0 victory over St Johnstone at Easter Road this afternoon.**

David Gray made one change from the team that drew with Kilmarnock with Myko Kuharevich replaces Kieron Bowie in the starting XI.

Four of the starting line up were back from international duty, Lewis Miller, Martin Boyle and Nectar Triantis with Australia and Rocky Bushiri with DR Congo.

Saints boss Simo Valakari made two changes from their goalless draw with Aberdeen, Victor Griffith and Jonathan Svedberg replacing Adama Sidibeh and Stephen Duke-McKenna.

Ahead of kick off a minute's applause was held in memory of former player and coach John Fraser.

Both sides were content to play possession football without creating any real chances before Hibs took a deserved lead in the 17<sup>th</sup> minute.

A Boyle strike was well saved but the Saints defence were unable to clear and Junior Hoilett took possession on the edge of the area before curling a superb strike into the top corner of the net.

At the other end Bushiri did well to clear a Jason Holt cross from the right as the Hibs players appealed for a free-kick.

Hibs should have doubled their lead when Kuharevich volleyed Jordan Obita's cross over the bar from six-yards.

The second goal came in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute when Hoilett did well to win possession in midfield and his tackle found Boyle who drove into the box and fired an angled strike into the bottom left hand corner of the net.

Hibs continued to press forward but were unable to add to their lead in the remainder of the first-half.

Simo Valakari has made three alterations at the break, with Stephen Duke-Mckenna, Taylor Steven and Benji Kimpioka replacing Makenzie Kirk, Sam Curtis and Drey Wright.

Hibs started the second-half on the front foot and Kuharevich had an effort blocked before Triantis picked up a knock in midfield.

In the 55<sup>th</sup> minute a clever corner from Obita found Hoilett who flicked the ball into the path of Kuharevich but his shot was well saved by Andrew Fisher.

Sven Sprangler was shown a yellow card for a trip on Kuharevich.

Hoilett and Boyle then teamed up to create a chance but the striker was crowded out before he could get his shot away.

In the 65<sup>th</sup> minute Kuharevich was replaced by Kieron Bowie.

Bowie did well to set up Boyle but his effort was blocked for a corner.

In the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute Hibs made a double substitution with Boyle and Dylan Levitt making way for Dwight Gayle and Alasana

Manneh who made his home debut.

Moments later Fisher produced a fine save to deny Bowie from the edge of the area.

With three minutes remaining Hoilett set up Bowie but his effort from 20-yards was touched round the post by Fisher.

Goal scorer Hoilett was then replaced by Josh Campbell and left the field to a standing ovation.

In added time Bushiri broke clear and found Bowie who was tripped inside the area.

And the striker sent the keeper the wrong way with the resultant penalty to send the fans home happy.

Hibs: Smith, Miller, Bushiri, Iredale, C. Cadden Levitt, Triantis, Obita, Hoilett, Boyle, Kuharevich.

Substitutes: Bursik, Ekpiteta, O'Hora, Manneh, Bowie, Moriah-Welsh, Campbell, Gayle, Allan-Molotnikov.

St Johnstone: Fisher, Wright, Baoldis, Mitchell, Douglas, Curtis, Holt, Svedberg, Sprangler, Griffith, Kirk.

Substitutes: Sinclair, Clark, Carey, Sidibeh, Steven, Duke-McKenna, Smith, Kimpioka, Watt.

Attendance 17,002