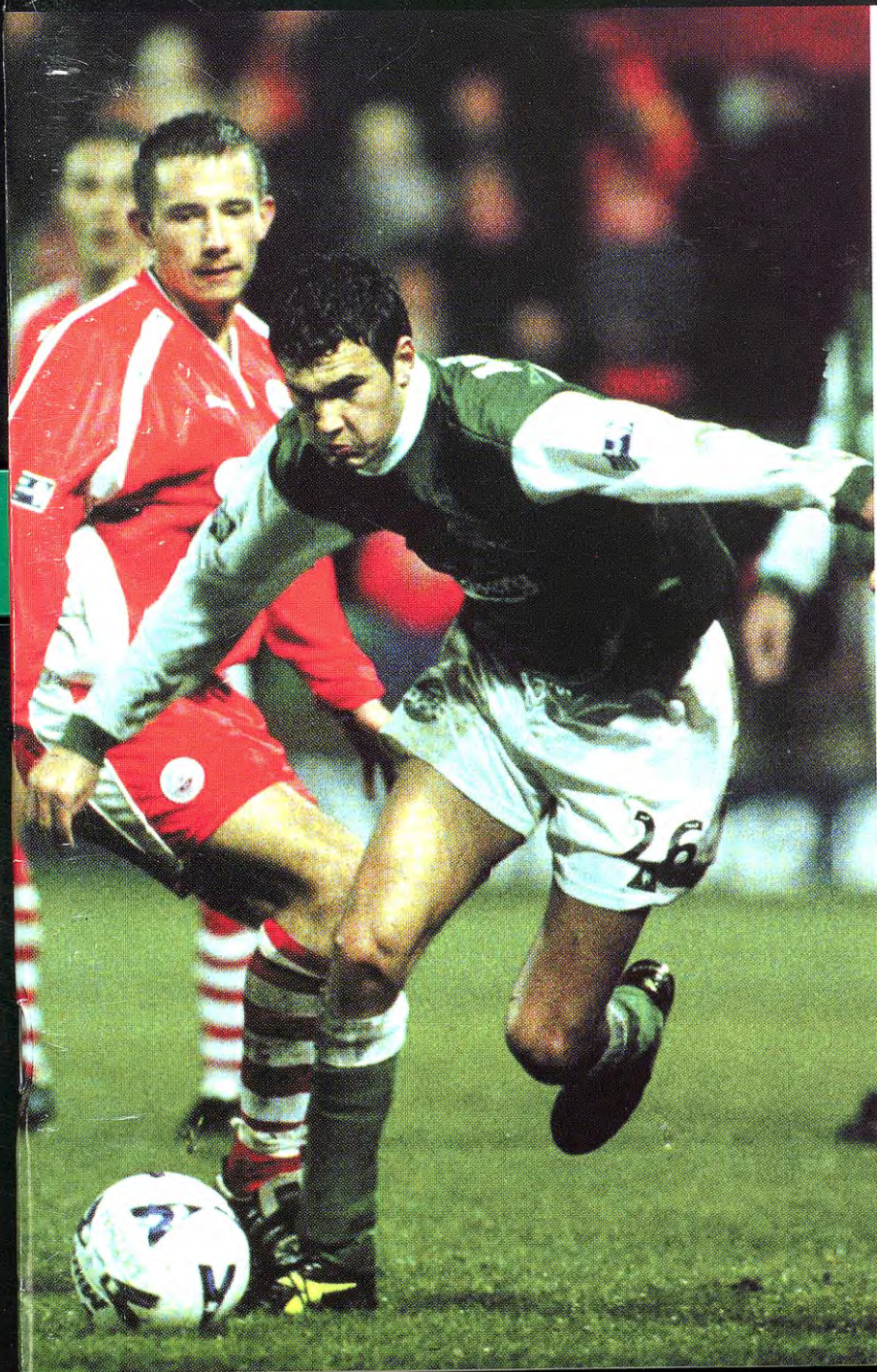


HIBERNIAN

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CELTIC

**WEDNESDAY
29 NOVEMBER 2000**

Kick-off 7.45pm



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HONOURS

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE CHAMPIONS
*Winners 1902/03, 1947/48,
1950/51, 1951/52*

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION
CHAMPIONS
Winners 1980/81, 1998/99

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE CUP
Winners 1972/73, 1991/92

SCOTTISH FA CUP
Winners 1886/87, 1901/02

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MANAGER'S REPORT

ALEX McLEISH



Tonight we face league leaders Celtic in what promises to be an exciting match. We have suffered a little blip in our form of late and it is important that we bounce back quickly. However, I am confident that if the players show the mental toughness I know they possess then we can end this run of games where we have not picked up as many points as we would have liked.

Our last home fixture saw us go down 0-2 to Aberdeen. This was a disappointing result particularly in view of the points we had amassed before that game and the fact that it cost us our unbeaten home record. It was a game that most people probably expected us to win and perhaps at times we thought we had to merely turn up to win. I don't think we worked hard enough when we did not have the ball. Indeed in many ways it was to be a similar lack of work rate that would cost us dearly seven days later in Paisley.

I believe we can work much harder, and indeed we must, because the two things that go hand in hand for a successful football team are playing good football and working hard. We did not do enough to get on the ball when we didn't have it and failed to find our usual passing



rhythm enough when we had it. And whilst the Aberdeen match saw us enjoy statistically the bulk of the possession, we did not create anywhere near enough chances.

Whilst I recognise that we had players missing for the Aberdeen game it was nevertheless an opportunity for the other players to come in and prove themselves. The changes disrupted our momentum but we have to learn to cope with those types of problems over the course of a season. It is now vitally important that we get back on track as soon as possible if we are to maintain our serious challenge at the top of the table.

Finally on the subject of the Aberdeen game I feel that we lost goals due to sloppy defending and so far this season that has not been something we have had to worry unduly about. It is a key aspect of our game that when we are not firing on all cylinders that we show more mental resolve in defence. In short we have to show the kind of attitude that says "We are not playing well today but the very worst we will achieve is a 0-0 draw".

At Paisley against St. Mirren we got off to a smashing start and we should have capitalised

on it. We passed the ball well in the early stage, pressed St. Mirren at every turn and forced them to defend very deeply, indeed we penned them back for long periods. However, we did not quite get the breakthrough we needed for a second goal, although watching the game on video the 'goal' that Mixu scored actually looked outside and that would probably have killed off St. Mirren. As it was we eventually tried to protect a lead which I found baffling, but it seems to be human nature rather than design. We also conceded far too many corners and free

the second half and let the opposition defence come out with the ball far too easily and this meant we had to defend a little deeper.

In essence I am saying that we have got to work hard. Our defending from the front was excellent earlier in the season in the run of games in which we were very good in. Perhaps there are signs of tiredness creeping into our play but we set standards that in turn raises expectations.

Whilst we never boasted about what we would achieve this season we did have internal

"WE MUST GET BACK TO DOING THE THINGS WE DO BEST"

kicks that were only going to lift the opposing fans and the home team.

Personally I would like to see us showing more arrogance and belief in the way we pass the ball and the way we press people. We did this in the early stages of the game but then lost our way somewhat. Ultimately we did not work hard enough in

targets and these are going well. At the weekend we actually gained a point on Kilmarnock and Celtic. This all contributes to making tonight's encounter even more significant. Rounding up, if we combine work rate with a will to pass and get on the ball, we look a good team and can pose problems for any team in the league.

Alex McLeish

THE MANAGER