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**ABERDEEN v**  
**CELTIC**  
SUNDAY, 14 APRIL 2019



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## Aberdeen vs Celtic

William Hill Scottish Cup  
Semi-Final  
Sunday, 14 April 2019  
Hampden Park  
Kick-off 2pm



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## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME



William HILL  
SCOTTISH CUP

Good afternoon and welcome to Hampden Park for today's William Hill Scottish Cup semi-final between Aberdeen and Celtic.

What an afternoon we have in store, as two of the strongest sides in the country go head-to-head for a place in this year's final.

Both Aberdeen and Celtic boast a number of international players, which is credit to both clubs and the hard work of their managers and coaching staff.

This is not the first meeting between these two clubs in cup competition this season, after the two met in the League Cup Final back in December.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Celtic on their triumph, as they continued their impeccable trophy haul in the last three seasons.

Furthermore, Celtic took another step towards wrapping up the league title last weekend, with the Scottish Cup another target as they seek an unprecedented treble.

Of course, both teams will have their attention firmly focussed on today's semi-final, having navigated difficult routes to be here this afternoon.

Aberdeen faced Stenhousemuir in the fourth round - a side the Dons had previously never managed to defeat. And that record remained true when they drew 1-1 at Pittodrie to set up a replay at Ochilview. Derek McInnes' side turned in a stronger performance in that game though, winning 4-1.

They then faced Queen of the South in the fifth round and when Stephen Dobbie struck one of the goals of the tournament to level proceedings, Aberdeen had to dig deep to overcome their Championship opposition

4-1 and reach the last eight, where they faced Rangers.

That clash at Pittodrie ended 1-1, but the Dons' 2-0 victory in the replay at Ibrox secured their passage to the semi-finals for an impressive third consecutive season.

Holders Celtic have made it to the last four of the competition without conceding a single goal, triumphing over two Premiership sides in their three games on the road to Hampden.

Up first was Airdrieonians, who faced the holders at Celtic Park. A 3-0 victory set the Hoops up against St Johnstone in the fifth round, a devastating performance ending in a 5-0 win for the Glasgow side.

New Celtic interim manager Neil Lennon faced a trip to his former club Hibernian in the sixth round, which was certainly one of the fascinating sub-plots of this year's competition. Celtic emerged 2-0 victors in Edinburgh, leading them to today's showpiece fixture at Hampden.

High-profile fixtures such as this one bring a lot of attention to our game here in Scotland, so I urge supporters to enjoy today's contest and to do so in a respectful manner.

Lastly, I'd like to wish both teams the very best of luck. I hope we're in store for a memorable encounter here at Hampden Park.

Enjoy the match.

Alan McRae  
President,  
Scottish FA



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# THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

There is nothing inevitable about today's semi-final...

By John Greechan, Scottish Daily Mail





Some will tell you that the script has already been written. That there's no room for even the slightest ad-lib moment. Certainly no space for slipping a bit of Doric into the dialogue. If football followed a pre-ordained set of directions, though, no-one would turn up to watch.

On a day when so much is at stake, in exactly the kind of high-octane environment that causes some men to break and others to break records, nothing can be entirely predictable. And make no mistake. Both teams are under the kind of pressure that can do funny things to the strongest of characters.

That's a fact of life that should be embraced by every single player on the pitch. Why do they play football? To win. To excel. To experience the sheer thrill of being part of the most exciting team sport ever gifted to a grateful world. But also to be tested to the very limits of their talent. To exceed their reach, go beyond the possible, surprise even themselves.

Today at Hampden, the players of Celtic and Aberdeen have an opportunity to do all of the above. Under the sort of intense scrutiny that Scottish football does so very well.



Celtic know what is at stake. Their supporters feel as if they can almost reach out and touch the Holy Grail of an unprecedented Treble Treble. And the Dons? Ignore any talk about there being zero in the way of expectation surrounding a side without a trophy since lifting the 2013-14 League Cup.

In an era when Aberdeen have been the only consistently credible challengers to Celtic's undisputed domestic dominance, the Dons have received plaudits aplenty. Whatever the champions have achieved in the past three seasons, they've done so at least in part because of those red jerseys lurking

**TOP:** Aberdeen last lifted silverware in 2014 when they overcame Inverness to scoop the Scottish League Cup

**ABOVE:** Celtic have already got the better of Aberdeen once this season at Hampden Park, edging the Scottish League Cup Final 1-0 last December



**ABOVE:** Andrew Considine celebrates scoring the winner as the Dons took the spoils in the final game of last season at Celtic Park

**BELOW:** Neil Lennon is back in the Celtic Park hotseat following Brendan Rodgers's departure



over their shoulders, providing a reminder not to let up or slip up. But nobody should believe that Derek McInnes is satisfied with merely reaching semi-finals and finals. He craves silverware. And is entitled to feel that, arguably, his team deserve a trophy as reward for their efforts in recent seasons.

Celtic obviously start as favourites, as you'd expect of team who have won the previous seven - okay, let's just call it eight, when you look at the league table - domestic trophies.

The fact that Brendan Rodgers jumped ship before he could steer the Hoops to another triple trophy season doesn't appear to have caused major disruption in a squad of serial winners. And, of course, Neil Lennon's return to Celtic Park is working out exactly as many wise judges expected. He hasn't changed much. These guys still win when it matters. They have

about nine or 10 different ways of beating opponents. And they never, ever, make the mistake of believing that anything in this game is inevitable. That will be a key point today, despite everything they know about this formidable Aberdeen side.

Because the human brain seeks out patterns in everything. And the established routine when this pair meet isn't exactly akin to the unstoppable force colliding with an immovable object. When the big games against Celtic have come around, Aberdeen have been, well, all too movable. Edged out. Nudged aside. Even, just once or twice, swept away.

If the Reds can overcome both the absence of suspended captain Graeme Shinnie, a major loss, and everything Celtic throw at them today, it will be the first genuinely significant win over the Glasgow club since February 2016.