

Football – Spartans WFC




SPARTANS HAVE REACHED THE SEMI-FINALS OF THE SWPL CUP

Spartans WFC reached the last four of the Scottish Premier League Cup after beating Inverness 2-1 at Ainslie Park.

After last weekend's game against the same opposition ended all square, this cup-tie was going to go down to the wire. With Inverness taking the lead through a Karen Mason goal, Spartans had to come from behind to book their place in the semi-finals with a brace by Sarah Ewens.

Inverness started the brighter and within four minutes went close to taking the lead through a Zoe Johnston strike however her shot hit the side netting. Natalie Bodiam skipped down the right wing and as she reached the bye-line she fired over a cross to the far post which Johnstone to hit first time but she could only hit the side netting.

Moments later Spartans had their own opportunity to take the lead as Sarah Ewens collected the ball out wide right and proceeded to turn two defenders before charging into the box. However her cut back to strike partner Diana Barry was intercepted just as the Number 9 was about to shoot.

Inverness were constantly dangerous on the break and with  11 minutes gone Megan McCarthy sent a powerful header inches over the bar. Natalie Bodiam won a free-kick on the right hand side of the box which was taken by Johnstone who floated it onto the head of McCarthy, however the centre half's header went sailing over the bar without troubling keeper Harrison.

Two minutes later Inverness took the lead with Captain Karen Mason firing into the corner of the net. Finella Annand

started the move down the right hand side and sent over a cross to the edge of the box which Johnstone flicked into the path of Mason who, unmarked just inside the box, fired a right foot shot past keeper Harrison.

However the Inverness lead was to only last seven minutes as Ewens fired the equaliser into the bottom right hand corner. Lana Clelland flew down the left wing, sending the ball over to the far post into the path of Nichola Sturrock. Sturrock met the ball on the volley laying the ball straight into the path of Ewens who, after controlling and getting past the defender, fired into the corner of the net past keeper Kim Jappy.

Moments later this move was replicated as again Clelland got past her market and sent over a cross to Sturrock who also played the ball into the path of Ewens but her shot this time went straight into the arms of Jappy.

With half time looming Inverness were awarded a penalty as Bodiam charged into the box from a break-away and, as she cut inside, Victoria Farquhar stuck out a leg and brought the forward crashing down giving the referee no option but to point to the spot. Like the week before, Mason stepped up to take the kick but this time she saw her powerful drive expertly saved by Harrison who guessed correctly and tipped the ball around the post.

Spartans were fired up for the second half and within two minutes of the restart midfielder Claire Crosbie sent a sizzling right foot half volley over the bar. Clelland, who had been fouled on the right wing took the awarded freekick and swung the ball into the box which Chloe Fitzpatrick flicked into the path of Crosbie who, with a quick look up, sent a half volley towards goal only to see it sail over the bar.

☒ Moments later Spartans again came close with Barry creating

space for the shot by flicking the ball over one defender before firing in a powerful left foot shot towards goal. However central defender McCarthy managed to get back in time to put a leg out and deflect it for a corner. Clelland's out-swinging kick was connected with by Louise Moultray but her powerful downward header was deflected past the post.

Both teams were determined to get that place in the final four of the competition and Inverness came close to getting that all important second goal with Lorraine Cadden sending over a far post cross for striker Bodiam. However Farquhar nipped in ahead of the striker to take the ball off the feet of the Inverness Number 11 just as she was about to pull the trigger.

With only 15 minutes left in the game Inverness again proved dangerous on the attack and could have taken a free shot on goal but for a last-gasp challenge by Spartans fullback Louise Magilton. Johnstone flew down the left wing and fired over a cross towards the run of Bodiam however Magilton seemed to appear from nowhere to flick the ball away from the feet of the striker.

Within five minutes Spartans finally got that decisive goal with Ewens getting her second of the game, rounding the keeper to send her side into the semi-finals of the competition. Barry picked the ball up midway through the Inverness half and played a defence splitting pass into the path of Ewens who, with a turn of the hips, rounded keeper Jappy and fired into an empty net.

Spartans Head Coach Debbi McCulloch was delighted to get through to the semi-finals and felt her team deserved the victory. She said: "I think over the 90 minutes we played out of our skins and I felt we should have scored a few more if I am honest. After going a goal down we could have let our heads drop but we fought back and Rachel Harrison's fantastic penalty save just before half time was just like a goal. It was also pleasing to see Sarah Ewens get another couple of

goals and her improvement in the last season has been amazing. So overall I am really pleased to be through to the semi-finals of the cup.”

The draw for the semi-finals sees Spartans face Celtic and Forfar play Glasgow City.

Teams:

Spartans: Rachel Harrison, Bobbie Beveridge, Louise Magilton, Victoria Farquhar, Louise Moultray, Claire Crosbie, Chloe Fitzpatrick, Nichola Sturrock (Louise Young, 82 mins), Lana Clelland, Sarah Ewens (Louise Mason, 88), Diana Barry (Ann Taylor, 88).

Unused subs: Jo Hutcheson, Danni Pagliarulo

Inverness: Kim Jappy, Marnie McArthur, Sarah Main, Karen Mason, Megan McCarthy, Finella Annand, Zoe Johnstone, Kirsty Deans (Lisa McKenzie, 32mins), Lorraine Cadden, Natalie Bodiam, Becky Dingwall (Hannah Gordon, 52 mins).

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