

The Route to the Scottish Cup Final



by Allan Martin

SCOTTISH CUP FINAL 19 May 2012

Most of us know that it is Hearts and Hibs who are playing in the final at Hampden on Saturday. But how did they get there? Allan Martin explains.

Come Saturday there is one thing that we can all be sure of, an Edinburgh team will become Scottish Cup Champions. What is undecided yet is whether it will be 110 years of anguish over, or the start of the 111th year of bragging. Hearts versus Hibernian, the first Edinburgh final since 1896, and it all started way back in January. Here's how both clubs reached the biggest cup final in over 100 years.

Fourth Round

Both clubs were entered at the fourth round stage, with Hibs being drawn away to Second Division side Cowdenbeath, and Hearts at home to Junior side Auchinleck Talbot. Going by Hibs league form at this time (which was 10 games without a win) the trip to Central Park was not going to be as easy as people may have expected, and within 19 seconds the boys from Leith would have wished they stayed at home when Greg Stewart put the home side in front. But goals from Leigh Griffiths, David Wotherspoon and debut boy Eoin Doyle ensured Hibs were through to the next round, but of course not without giving their loyal fans a nervy finish when Jon Robertson volleyed

Cowdenbeath's second with 20 minutes to go.

Final Score Cowdenbeath 2 – Hibernian 3

Hearts hosted Auchinleck Talbot, who were sitting mid-table in the West Super League, and with the Jambos fielding a team consisting of Rudi Skacel, Andrew Driver, Ian Black and Andy Webster, this was seen as an easy win for the home team. But it was not to be, and it looked like being one of those days when debutant, Fraser Mullen, stepped up to take a 20th minute penalty which was saved by Auchinleck keeper Andy Leishman. Unfortunately Mullen was then added to the list of missed Hearts penalties, 4 consecutive misses 4 different players, but from then on the Ayrshire side were well and truly camped in their own half. Hearts huffed and puffed but with no joy as Leishman kept them at bay, until a fumble between the goalkeeper and substitute Bryan Slavin in the 84th minute allowed Gordon Smith to net the winner for the SPL side. Not put down by this, the junior boys fought back, and had a goal controversially disallowed to deny them a dream replay back at Beechwood Park. After a hard fought match it was Hearts who made it through to the next round (just).

Final Score Hearts 1 – Auchinleck Talbot 0

Fifth Round

After scraping through to the next round, both Edinburgh clubs found themselves facing SPL opposition. Hibs had been drawn at home to Kilmarnock and Hearts had another home tie, this time with Perth side St Johnstone

Hearts decided not to leave it to the last 6 minutes to give the Tynecastle faithful a cheer, unlike their previous round, but instead a goal from David Templeton in the 10th minute assured the home fans could begin to relax, at least for now. Both clubs had many chances to score, with the Saints probably having the better of them, and when St Johnstone captain, Dave MacKay, was sent off in the 74th minute, it looked like Hearts

were safely through to the quarter finals. But, just 3 minutes later, former Celtic man Cillian Sheridan scored to make it 1-1 and that's how it finished with the replay being held on Valentine's Day.

Final Score Hearts 1 – St Johnstone 1

The replay served up a brilliant finish to an otherwise lacklustre game with both keepers remaining virtual spectators. It was not until the 83rd minute that all the fun began, as Murray Davidson put the Saints ahead and just like Hearts in the first game, it looked like the home side were going through to the next round. But a controversial penalty in the 4th minute of injury time gave Hearts a lifeline. Jamie Hamill stepped up and calmly sent St Johnstone's Northern Irish keeper Alan Mannus the wrong way to force extra time. It was St Johnstone who was the better team in extra time, but it was Hearts who got the important goal when the Saints struggled to clear Hamill's corner and Marius Zaliukas got the winner to send the travelling support back to the Tynecastle Arms for a celebratory pint.

Final Score St Johnstone 1 – Hearts 2 (AET)

A good defensive performance from the Hibs back four ensured they booked their place in the quarter finals after a victory over SPL rivals Kilmarnock. Kiliie were in buoyant mood going into this game after securing a place in the League Cup Final (and we all know how that ended) but Hibernian ended their chance of maybe reaching two domestic finals after Eoin Doyle who scored in the previous round against Cowdenbeath put the home side ahead on 15 minutes after good work from another Hibs new boy Tom Soares. Kilmarnock pressed for an equaliser but to no avail, which meant Hibernian marched on to the quarter finals knowing that two more wins meant they booked their place at Hampden on May 19th.

Final Score Hibernian 1 – Kilmarnock 0

Quarter Finals

In the quarter finals Hibernian were made to travel to Ayr who knocked the Hibeers out of this competition last year while Hearts continued to do things the hard way against St Mirren.

Hibs were hoping not to have a repeat of last year's cup exit to the hands of the then 1st division side, but with Ayr not putting up much of a fight, a Roy O'Donovan goal along with a Leigh Griffiths penalty in the first 20 minutes of the game helped them reach the semi-finals of the Scottish Cup and a trip to Hampden.

Final Score: Ayr United 0 – Hibernian 2

Hearts once again made life difficult for themselves in their quarter final tie with St. Mirren at Tynecastle. They fell behind after a free kick from Graham Carey but luckily Craig Beattie levelled things up just before the half time whistle with his first Hearts goal and Beattie would play a pivotal role in Hearts run to the final but more of that later. Hearts could have gone into half time with the lead but Beattie's effort was ruled offside even though replays later showed he was actually onside. This didn't seem to bother the Gorgie side as within the first three minutes of the 2nd half fans favourite Rudi Skacel put the home team in front but just as in the last game against St. Johnstone, Hearts let it all slip away when with 6 minutes remaining the man who got them to the quarter finals, Marius Zaliukas, put the ball in his own net to force a replay between the two clubs.

Final Score: Hearts 2 – St Mirren 2

Things went a lot better for Hearts in their replay at St. Mirren Park but it didn't start off as well as they would have liked. Marius Zaliukas, whose own goal forced the replay, gave away a penalty in the 13th minute but luckily for the Lithuanian Jamie McDonald produced a save to deny Graham Carey who scored in the first game. St. Mirren was left to rue that

missed chance when Jamie Hamill put the visitors in front to give them a lead at half time. After dominating the 2nd half Hearts booked their semi-final place against SPL Champions Celtic when Rudi Skacel made it 2-0 for the Jambos with 4 minutes remaining.

Final Score: St Mirren 0 – Hearts 2

Semi Finals

Both Edinburgh clubs make it to Hampden Park with the chance of there being an all Edinburgh final for the first time in 116 years. Here is how each semi-final ended, Goosebumps at the ready.

First up was Hibs against Aberdeen where we had an early goal a late goal and in my opinion the goal of the season. Gary O'Connor gave the Hibeers a start they could have only dreamt of when he gave his team a 3rd minute lead and that's how it ended for the first half and exactly what the men from Leith deserved. It stayed 1-0 until Rory Fallon scored an absolute peach of a goal taking the ball on his chest and volleying it over the top of Graham Stack but it was Hibernian that had the last laugh when O'Connor's pass found Hibs fan and local boy Leigh Griffiths who slotted the ball past Dons keeper Jason Brown. This gave Hibernian their first Scottish Cup final in over a decade and a chance to end their Scottish Cup woes.

Final Score: Aberdeen 1 – Hibernian 2

24 Hours later the maroon half of Edinburgh were up against the SPL Champions Celtic who had been beaten at Hampden this season already. The first half was a pretty quiet affair with the only chance coming from Celtic's Ki Sung-Yeung who missed a sitter when his header rebounded off the post. Once the 2nd half started it didn't take long for the deadlock to be broken when Rudi Skacel took it past Forster and slammed the ball into the roof of the net to give Hearts the lead. Both clubs had chances to score in the 2nd half most notably Ki Sung-

Yeung who hit the post again with a header almost identical to his miss in the 1st half. It was not until the 87th minute that Celtic got their goal when Charlie Mulgrew crossed the ball in for Gary Hooper to equalise with a header although he was clearly offside. But then the unthinkable happened when deep into injury time Hearts were awarded a penalty after what at first seemed to be because of a Joe Ledley handball then turned out to be because of a Victor Wanyama handball, either way it was former Celtic man Craig Beattie's opportunity to seal an all Edinburgh Final and he didn't disappoint, capping it off with a celebration that will be with Hearts fans for years to come (Taps Aff comes to mind).

Final Score Celtic 1 – Hearts 2

So there we go, that's how both the Jambos and the Hibeers have set up a mouth-watering final this Saturday. It's going to be a fantastic match, one which I'm sure will go down in history and may the best team win. Well I would say that being neutral.

(We are not showing any bias by displaying a photo of Easter Road – just that we have not yet been up to Tynecastle to snap a photo there!)