

Football – Spartans v Kilmarnock



FIVE STAR PERFORMANCE FROM SPARTANS

Spartans got back to winning ways in the Scottish Premier League with a convincing 5-0 victory over bottom of the table Kilmarnock at Ainslie Park.

The Home side dominated from start to finish scoring four goals inside the first 45 minutes through strikes by Diana Barry, Molly McKean and a brace by Lana Clelland. After such a strong first half Spartans made several changes to their line-up and continued to press for more goals. However, with Kilmarnock defending with large numbers and deep within their own half, the North Edinburgh side could only add one more strike to their goal tally with centre half Louise Moultray getting her first goal for the club in the 80th minute.

Straight from kick-off Spartans took the game to their visitors and the first opportunity fell to centre half Heli Hakkinen who sent a header wide of the goal. Louise Mason tricked her way down the right wing before winning a corner for her side off the feet of Nicole Murray. Lana Clelland sent the resulting cross to the far post to Hakkinen who, after losing her marker, sent a header wide of the target.

Moments later and again Spartans came close to opening their account as Louise Magilton sent a thunderous drive inches over the bar. Clelland collected the ball wide on the left and after driving in field found Magilton with a square pass. The midfielder, with acres of space in front of her, fired a looping drive that flashed over the bar from 30 yards out.

Kilmarnock were struggling to clear their lines and after 15

minutes Spartans broke the deadlock with Captain Diana Barry heading in from four yards out. Danni Pagliarulo played the ball out wide to Clelland who, after cutting inside the fullback, fired a right foot cross to the near post where Barry, who got in front of her the centre half, headed the ball into the back of the net.



The pressure on the Kilmarnock goal was constant and within minutes of the restart Spartans created another outstanding opportunity only to see Kilmarnock goalkeeper Lauren Grant expertly save from the feet of Clelland. Mason, who was a menace down the right wing, tricked her way into the box before cutting the ball back to Molly McKean. The midfielder looked up and saw the run of Clelland and clipped the ball over to the Spartans Number 7 who, eight yards out, fired in a

fierce right foot shot only to see the diving Grant expertly catch the ball at full stretch.

However, Spartans did double their lead on the half hour mark with McKean sending a 25 yard curling right foot shot into the top left hand corner of the net. McKean collected the ball midway through the Kilmarnock half and, after playing a quick one-two with Pagliarulo, sent a clever chipped drive into the top corner past the helpless keeper.

The home side were not letting the pressure ease on the Kilmarnock goal and five minutes later Magilton again tried her luck from outside the box however Grant was able to prevent the score from increasing momentarily. Chloe Fitzpatrick brought the ball out of defence and, after travelling some distance before being closed down, found Magilton on the edge of the box. The midfielder shifted her weight and sent a thunderous drive which the keeper was equal to on this occasion.

The Kilmarnock keeper was preventing the score from increasing at a rapid rate and once more she managed to save her side as she dived at the feet of Barry who was through on goal. Clelland collect the ball on the left hand side of the box and flicked it over the defenders heads into the path of Barry who, with a swivel of her hips, tried to round the Kilmarnock Number one only to see Grant smother the ball as the striker went to pass her.

However it was only a matter of time before the next goal went in and five minutes before half time the North Edinburgh side got their third with Clelland firing a long range effort that Grant could only parry into her own net. Clelland, who had temporarily moved infield found herself with plenty of space 30 yards from goal and the winger, after looking up, sent a swerving right foot shot that Grant could only fingertip into the back of the net.

And it was Clelland who again finished off a well worked Spartans move as she volleyed the ball home from six yards out. With the referee about to blow for half time, Mason charged down the right wing and as she reached the bye-line she managed to stop the ball before firing over a left foot cross to Clelland who, unmarked inside the box, crashed home a right foot volley past the helpless Kilmarnock keeper.

The second half continued in much the same fashion as the first with Spartans camped inside the Kilmarnock half. Within minutes of the restart substitute Sarah Archibald, who had come on at the break for McKean, sent a glancing header just past the right hand post. Clelland drove down the left wing and after twisting and turning past three players, sent a cross to the far post to Archibald who rose above her marker only to send her header wide of the mark.

Within the space of five minutes Archibald had two more opportunities to score however an off the line clearance by Rachel Webb and the frame of the goal prevented the midfielder from getting her first of the season. With 60 minutes gone, Clelland broke clear down the left wing and sent a low cross over to Barry who, with her back to goal, laid the ball back to Archibald who curled a left foot shot towards the bottom right hand corner. However, even though the ball was sailing past the outstretched hands of keeper Grant, defender Webb managed to get back to clear off her own goal line. Minutes later Archibald won herself a free kick on the edge of the Kilmarnock area after being barged off the ball and the Spartans Number 12 stepped up only to see her curling right foot shot smash off the bar and away from the danger zone.

Spartans did finally break the second half deadlock with ten minutes to go with centre half Louise Moultray heading home her first goal for the club. Spartans were awarded a corner which Clelland took from left to right and sent a cross to the far post where Ashley Nicolson, who had peeled away, headed back towards goal. Moultray, who was positioned just inside

the right hand post connected with the ball and sent a glancing header into the back of the net.

The home side continued to press for more goals and came close to increasing their five goal advantage minutes before full time with Nichola Sturrock sending a fierce left foot drive towards goal only to see the keeper tip onto the post and away for a corner.

Head Coach was pleased with her team's overall performance and felt her team dominated from start to finish. She said: "I think we set a very high tempo in the first half, scoring four goals – the second half we let it drop a wee bit but we were frustrated by how Kilmarnock defended. They defended very deep inside their own final third so it was difficult to break them down and find space to penetrate them but overall happy with three points, five goals and a clean sheet."

Teams:

Spartans: Rachel Harrison, Ashley Nicolson, Heli Hakkinen, Victoria Farquhar (Louise Moultray, 45mins), Chloe Fitzpatrick, Louise Magilton, Danni Pagliarulo (Nichola Sturrock, 70mins), Lana Clelland (Rebecca Galbraith, 80mins), Molly McKean (Sarah Archibald, 45mins), Louise Mason (Ann Taylor, 70mins), Diana Barry.

Unused Substitutes: Sarah Ewens

Kilmarnock: Lauren Grant, Becky Haddow, Alana Black, Nicole Murray, Rachel Webb, Katie Patterson, Samantha McManus, Kirsty Munro (Natalie Huggen, 65mins), Jo Casey, Morgan Hunter, Kayleigh Weeks

Report by Edmund Brown and Photos by Carson Ralton