

# Football – Heart of Midlothian 1 Celtic 3

SPFL Saturday 14 September 2013 – Tynecastle Stadium

Hearts had won both their previous SPFL fixtures at Tynecastle this season but the acid test of this young Maroons team was always going to be when League Champions Celtic came to Gorgie. So it proved when Neil Lennon's side were too good for an enthusiastic and hard-working Hearts side who nevertheless gave as good as they got in an eventful afternoon at Tynecastle.

Celtic manager Neil Lennon recognised how tough this fixture has traditionally been for his side, and, despite the Hoops opening Champions League fixture in Milan next Tuesday, sent out a strong starting eleven. As expected, it was Celtic who had the bulk of the possession in the early stages of the game and Kris Commons had the first real chance but volleyed over from 12 yards when he really should have opened the scoring.

This is not to say Hearts were sitting back and Gary Locke's side looked dangerous on the counter-attack. The impressive Kevin McHattie, restored to the Hearts team following his suspension from the team that lost in Inverness before the international break, almost caught out Celtic keeper Forster with a close range effort. However, the opening goal came at the other end and in somewhat controversial circumstances.

Hearts Jamie Hamill must have felt an overpowering sense of déjà vu when, for the second game running, he was deemed guilty of handball in the penalty area thereby conceding a penalty kick. In Inverness a fortnight ago, Hamill seemed powerless to prevent the ball cannoning off his head – which not only resulted in a penalty kick for Caledonian Thistle but also a red card – ultimately rescinded – for the Hearts man.

This time round Stokes' effort cannoned off the unfortunate Hamill's arm. Penalty decreed referee Willie Collum although thankfully common sense prevailed and Hamill remained on the pitch. Commons despatched the penalty and the jeers and catcalls that whistled around Tynecastle from a disbelieving home support told its own story. Afterwards, Celtic manager Neil Lennon remarked he had been as surprised as anyone by the decision to award a penalty kick.

Hearts were seen more as an attacking force in the second half and equalised just before the hour mark when Jason Holt struck a low shot from the edge of the penalty area which evaded Forster to level the score. Tynecastle erupted and having defeated both Hibernian and Aberdeen with huge encouragement from a vociferous home support, one sensed Gary Locke's youngsters could perhaps do it again. However, parity lasted just six minutes when Stokes raced through the Hearts defence to restore the visitors' lead.

Hearts had appeals for a penalty turned down by referee Collum moments later in an incident that didn't look dissimilar to the one which gave Celtic their first half lead. The home side's frustration turned to despair when Celtic wrapped up the three points with four minutes left when new signing Pukki headed home their third goal.

Thus, Hearts unbeaten home record ended but there were many plus points for Gary Locke. The Maroons gave as good as they got for much of the game and although there can be no denying Celtic deserved to win the game, Hearts youngsters can take much encouragement despite having to chase the game after that controversial opening goal.

Hearts: Macdonald; McHattie; Wilson; McGowan; McKay; Hamill; Robinson; Walker; Holt; Paterson; B. King.

Celtic: Forster; Izaguirre; Ambrose; van Dijk; Lustwig; Matthews; Brown; Boerrigter; Ledley; Stokes; Commons.

Referee: Willie Collum

Att: 15,928

Top man: The impressive Kevin McHattie is a player who seems to be much improved this season.