

# Aberdeen 1 Heart of Midlothian 3

SPFL, Saturday 9 November 2013 – Pittodrie

Not too long ago, Aberdeen couldn't score against Hearts, far less win a game against them. Today, some bookmakers were offering odds of 6/1 for a Hearts win – a sure sign that the times they-are-a-changing. As events in the Granite City on Saturday afternoon proved, however, the bookies got this one completely wrong.

Hearts have struggled badly in the league of late and only the most dyed-in-the-wool Jambo heading to Pittodrie could have held much hope of seeing their team take anything from high-flying Aberdeen who are second in the SPFL and are League Cup semi-finalists. However, Gary Locke's youngsters showed a maturity which belied their status by coming from behind to record their first SPFL win away from Tynecastle this season – and their first league win since they last played Aberdeen in Gorgie in August.

Despite losing at home to St. Johnstone last Saturday, Hearts manager Gary Locke went with the same starting eleven, having said pre-match that he had 'had words with one or two of the youngsters during the week'. Whatever the former full back said to his charges seemed to have had an effect as Hearts created two early chances. After 17 minutes, good work from Kevin McHattie found Ryan Stevenson at the back post but the former Ayr United man fired his effort straight at Dons keeper Langfield and a golden chance was gone. Shortly after, Jamie Walker unleashed a ferocious shot from 20 yards and while his strike on goal had plenty power, it was, again, straight at the Aberdeen custodian. Nonetheless, this was a promising start for Hearts, albeit it was the home side who enjoyed most of the possession.

Aberdeen were dealt a blow when influential midfielder Wilo Flood went off injured after 23 minutes to be replaced by his former Dundee United colleague Barry Robson. The former Celtic player's impact was soon felt as, three minutes later, his corner kick found McGinn who fired the ball past Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald for the opening goal. The huge travelling support collectively shook their heads, having witnessed this scenario so many times already this season.

Towards the end of the first half, there were loud claims for a penalty from the Aberdeen players and fans alike when Zola's shot appeared to be blocked on the goal line by Dylan McGowan. Referee Iain Brines refuse to consider the home pleas for a spot kick but, ironically, he did award one minutes later when Hearts Callum Paterson was penalised for hand ball inside the penalty box – the irony being Paterson certainly didn't handle the ball deliberately and it seemed less of a penalty kick than the one the referee didn't give. McGinn stepped up and as the home support anticipated their team doubling their lead going into half time, they reckoned without Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald, who pushed McGinn's effort past the post. Although the Dons led 1-0 at half-time and felt, perhaps, they should have been further ahead, Hearts had given a decent account of themselves and were far from out of the game.

Aberdeen, who demolished Partick Thistle 4-0 on Monday evening, started the second half seeking another goal but the game changed soon after the re-start when the highly combative Robson, having already been booked in the first half, lunged in on Jason Holt and was sent off by referee Brines. Against ten men, Hearts sensed their chance to get back into the game and wasted little time in doing so.

In 66 minutes, Jamie Walker, having come close moments earlier, jinked into the Aberdeen defence and pushed the ball beyond the despairing Langfield to level the score at 1-1. Joy among the always magnificent Hearts support.

Aberdeen's Scott Vernon was causing the Hearts defence more

than a few anxious moments and his header from a Hayes cross with 20 minutes left almost put the home side back in front. Two minutes later and a goal did come – and it was for Edinburgh's finest. The ever dangerous Jamie Walker raced past the Aberdeen defence and delivered a fine cross for Callum Paterson to fire home and put the Jambos ahead at 2-1.

The home side were pressing for the equaliser with Hearts content to hit on the break, something they did with almost devastating effect four minutes from time when that man Walker delivered another teasing cross into the Aberdeen penalty box which fell perfectly for Paterson whose first time volley flew into the crowd.

Those Hearts supporters of a pessimistic nature hoped their team wouldn't rue that opportunity as Aberdeen stormed forward in search of the equaliser. They needn't have worried – in stoppage time, Hearts Ryan Stevenson surged forward fully 30 yards before firing an unstoppable effort past Langfield to seal a remarkable victory for the Jam Tarts. The game ended with a score line few would have predicted two hours earlier – Aberdeen 1 Hearts 3.

At the final whistle, the Hearts players celebrated with the huge travelling support who, yet again, had given their team magnificent backing. It was, without doubt, Hearts best result of the season thus far and with Kilmarnock losing, meant the gap at the bottom of the SPFL is now 13 points. Still a considerable one, but one which, following this hugely impressive victory, is one which Hearts fans will still feel can be addressed.

Hearts manager Gary Locke was full of praise for his players afterwards. "The players have responded to last week's criticism and every Hearts player out there was fantastic. The effort was superb and we're delighted to finally get a result our play deserved."

They say confidence is all important in football. A pity, then, that Hearts now have to wait a fortnight until their next SPFL game – the youngsters would take on Ross County tomorrow if they could.

Those writing Hearts' obituary – including, it must be said, this writer – may, on the basis of this showing, need to have a rethink.

Aberdeen: Langfield; Jack; Considine; Anderson; Hector; Reynolds; Hayes; Flood; Zola; Pawlett; McGinn.

Hearts: MacDonald, McGhee, McGowan, Wilson, McHattie; Hamill, Holt, Robinson, Paterson, Stevenson, Walker

Referee: Iain Brines

Att: 13,940

Top man: Unquestionably, Jamie Walker who ran the Aberdeen defence ragged at times.