

# Late show on the cards at Tynecastle

Cast your mind back a couple of months to 21st September. Hearts travelled to Dingwall to take on Ross County and led 1-0 until three minutes from the end. Backed by a superb travelling support of nearly 1,000 fans who sang non-stop all afternoon, Hearts looked on their way to three vital points until the metaphorical roof fell in and Ross County scored twice in the dying moments to clinch a 2-1 win. Hearts had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory and the message I received after the game from my former manager, Ross County aficionado and now Chief Executive of the Scottish Social Services Council which said 'I can't hear the Hearts fans singing now' was taken in the spirit in which it was intended (if you're reading this, Anna, I hope you have a thoroughly miserable afternoon on Saturday!)

Many observers thought the Hearts youngsters had been taught a harsh lesson that day in the Highlands – namely, keep your level of performance up for the whole 90 minutes – and more. However, there was perhaps a certain degree of 'karma' in the result. Little more than four months earlier at the end of season 2012/13, Ross County performed admirably at Tynecastle and deservedly led Hearts 2-1 going into the final ten minutes of their SPL game. Then, three goals in a devastating five minute spell from Jason Holt, Michael Ngoo and an own goal from Ikonomou turned the game around and Hearts won 4-2.

There's something particularly satisfying about coming from behind to rescue a point or three. Intriguingly, there have been a few examples of Hearts and Ross County doing this throughout the years. Hearts previous visit to Dingwall in February this year saw another late show from the home side when a goal from Iain Vigurs a minute into injury time snatched a 2-2 draw after Hearts led for the final 25 minutes.

At the end of October last year, the Highlanders looked to be on their way to their first league victory at Tynecastle when second half goals from Brittain and Kettlewell turned a 1-0 half-time deficit to a 2-1 lead – only for Jambos striker John Sutton to grab an equaliser in the 93rd minute. It's remarkable to think that of the Hearts starting eleven that afternoon only three players – Jamie MacDonald, Ryan Stevenson and Callum Paterson – are likely to feature this afternoon.

Ross County's rise to SPFL status has been one of football's more recent success stories but even when they've played Hearts on cup business there has been late drama. Back in 1998, County – then in the Third Division – headed to Tynecastle for a League Cup tie against a team who had lifted the Scottish Cup just four months earlier. Yet, the Highlanders took the game to the Scottish Cup winners and led by a Roy McBain goal with 20 minutes to go when substitute Derek Holmes scored an equaliser for Hearts – who then had Paul Ritchie ordered off. Extra time ensued but Hearts needed a penalty shoot-out to clinch their place with some relief in the next round.

Hearts weren't so lucky in another cup tie with the Highlanders that went to a penalty shoot-out back in 2001. This time, Hearts were in Dingwall for a midweek League Cup tie and after a goalless 120 minutes, the tie had to be decided by penalty kicks. County keeper Tony Bullock was the hero of the night for the home team as he saved efforts from Steven Boyack and Thomas Flogel to send Hearts crashing out.

It's not just in competitive games between County and Hearts that comebacks feature. In a testimonial match for Ross County's Gordon Connolly in Dingwall in 1997, Hearts let slip a 4-1 lead for a final score of 4-4 while in a pre-season friendly in Dingwall in 1984, as part of Hearts tour of the Highlands, Alex MacDonald's side – despite two goals from Gary Mackay – conceded an equaliser ten minutes from the end and had to settle for a 2-2 draw with the then Highland League

side.

Hearts supporters have been nothing short of magnificent this season and their support in Dingwall a few weeks ago was quite brilliant – something Gary Locke and the players readily acknowledge. Even at Tynecastle and even when facing defeat, few of the Jambo Army leave early, preferring to stay until the end to show their support for this young Hearts team. Given some of the previous encounters between Hearts and Ross County, staying right until the end of this Saturday's game is advised.

You're likely to miss a comeback or two if you don't!