Heart of Midlothian 0 Motherwell 1 – Groundhog Day at Tynecastle

Hearts plea to the SPFL to lift the signing embargo imposed on them will be heard by the Hampden suits early next week. Desperate times call for desperate measures and if anyone was in any doubt about how desperate Hearts are, they need only have been at Tynecastle Stadium on Saturday.

With sources depleted, Gary Locke was again struggling to field a team with Callum Tapping the latest injury problem added to a list that already contained Danny Wilson, Jason Holt and Mark Ridgers. Tapping had been struggling with a bug all week but such is the casualty list at Tynecastle, the former Tottenham Hotspur player was named as a substitute. Defender Kevin McHattie started the game not fully fit and it was a gamble that didn't pay off as the youngster was forced to leave the field after an hour. Locke also opted for Jamie Walker to sit alongside Tapping on the bench meaning a rare start for Dale Carrick.

Watching Hearts this season, particularly at Tynecastle, has been akin to watching the film Groundhog Day – it's the same recurring nightmare, except on a fortnightly basis rather than a daily one. Certainly the beleaguered supporters must have been thinking 'here we go again' after just two minutes when Jordan McGhee sliced his attempted clearance and the ball seemed to spinning towards the Hearts net for the opening goal. However, as he has been so often this season, keeper Jamie MacDonald pushed the ball away and the majority of the near 13,000 crowd – another mightily impressive attendance given what's going on in Gorgie this season – heaved a sigh of

relief.

While there was plenty of effort on show, chances were few and far between for either team. Motherwell's Ainsworth had a couple of chances, one of which produced another fine save from Jamie Mac. However, the keeper was unable to prevent the visitors taking the lead five minutes before half time. Former Hearts striker John Sutton moved on to a through pass and fired home from a tight angle – albeit there was a deflection from Hearts Dylan McGowan – to give The Steelmen the lead. As the Hearts players trooped off the field at half time a goal down, it was difficult to see where the equalising goal would come from.

There may have been a few words of 'advice' from Gary Locke at the break because Hearts looked a much more determined side in the second half. Ryan Stevenson's cross-come-shot smacked off the crossbar before the industrious David Smith's 30 yard effort tested Motherwell keeper Neilsen. This seemed to inspire the home team who began to dominate the game.

Stevenson had another effort from 25 yards which Neilsen pushed over the bar before substitute Jamie Walker fired in a shot which was just over. Hearts continued to push forward and the home crowd were encouraged by their team at least looking threatening. However, the visitors were always dangerous on the counter-attack and Anier's effort on goal was well saved by MacDonald who then denied Sutton the chance of a second goal a few minutes later.

Hearts best chance came late in the game when Stevenson's cross landed at the feet of Jamie Hamill but the former Kilmarnock player couldn't control the ball and his effort on goal was blocked by the Motherwell defence.

When Hearts were denied a late penalty claim when the ball appeared to strike the arm of a Motherwell defender, the home support realised it was to be another day with no goals and no

points.

Hearts are now 20 points adrift at the foot of the league. Their appeal to the SPFL for clemency will be heard on Monday. It's unlikely to succeed. In any case, even if Hearts signed Lionel Messi, Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo, the deficit is too great now to save this great club from demotion.

Hearts: MacDonald; McGhee, McKay, McGowan, McHattie, Paterson, Hamill, Robinson, Smith, Carrick, Stevenson.

Motherwell: Nielsen, Hammell, Ramsden, Hutchinson, McManus, McFadden, Sutton, Vigurs, Lasley, Carswell, Ainsworth.

Referee: Willie Collum

Att: 12,888
Top man: Jamie MacDonald — again.