

Heart of Midlothian 0 Partick Thistle 2 – More woe for Hearts



2013 was a miserable year for Hearts and their supporters. A host of experienced players left the club, there was great disappointment in losing the League Cup final to St. Mirren in March and the club plunged into administration in June. The latter incident had huge ramifications with Hearts beginning season 2013/14 with a 15 point deduction in the SPFL – a handicap they've been unable to overcome thus far.

2014 hasn't started any better – defeat in the Edinburgh derby from Hibernian at Easter Road on just the second day of the year. With the gap at the foot of the SPFL Premiership table widening instead of reducing and relegation for the first time in over 30 years now a near certainty for Hearts, it was a somewhat disillusioned Hearts support who trudged along to Tynecastle for the first home game of the year.

True to form of late, Hearts produced another dismal performance as Partick Thistle easily recorded their first win at Tynecastle since 1995 thanks to first half goals from Taylor and Taylor-Sinclair.

Hearts were without the suspended Jamie Hamill with David Smith finding a starting place following his decent showing at Easter Road on Thursday. Skipper Danny Wilson was still out, a huge blow coupled with Hamill's enforced absence.

After an early chance for the home side – Ryan Stevenson's effort couldn't get past Thistle keeper Fox – it was an unlucky 13th minute for Hearts as the visitors took the lead. A long ball should have been dealt with by home defender Dylan McGowan but he was easily muscled out by Taylor who poked the

ball past Jamie MacDonald from six yards. The groans from the frustrated home support told its own story.

Ryan Stevenson had a half-hearted effort on goal after 35 minutes but, if truth be told, it was a poor game with neither side looking as if they could string more than two passes together. Six minutes before half time, Thistle doubled their lead. From a corner kick, Taylor-Sinclair had the freedom of Gorgie Road to head home and put the Jags 2-0 ahead at half time.

There was at least some improvement from Hearts in the second half although given their woeful first half display this was hardly difficult. David Smith produced a fine cross after the restart which Stevenson headed just over before Callum Tapping hit the crossbar from 30 yards out. Despite a better showing, Hearts just could not find a way past the Thistle defence even when the visitors were reduced to ten men nine minutes from the end when Bannigan was shown a second yellow card by referee Iain Brines.

The game ended with a cacophony of boos from those Hearts fans who stayed until the end of the game. Their loyalty to their club shows no sign of abating – the attendance of 13,763 at Tynecastle was 5,000 more than any other SPFL game this weekend – but even the diehard fans now realise the writing is on the wall for Hearts hopes of defying the odds and remaining in the top flight of Scottish football. Hearts manager Gary Locke seemed to acknowledge this after the final whistle.

“It was a sore one to take” said the Hearts boss. “I’ve said to the players we need to play for 90 minutes not just for 45. There’s no doubt we’re up against it but I won’t accept relegation until it’s mathematically impossible to avoid. But we can’t afford to feel sorry for ourselves. We have another game next week and we’ll need to defend better. That first half performance today was just unacceptable.”

Hearts: MacDonald; McGhee, McKay, McGowan, McHattie; Smith, Tapping, Robinson, Walker, Stevenson, Paterson

Partick Thistle: Fox, O'Donnell, Taylor-Sinclair, Muirhead, Balatoni, Craigen, Bannigan, Lawless, Piccolo, Taylor, Higginbotham

Referee: Iain Brines

Att: 13,763

Top man: David Smith