

Heart of Midlothian 2 St. Mirren 1

SPFL, Wednesday 29 January 2014 – Tynecastle

After finally reaching the positive points tally after last Saturday's fine victory at Ross County, there was a degree of optimism at Tynecastle on Wednesday evening as Hearts played out a re-arranged SPFL Premiership fixture with St. Mirren. This game should have been played this coming weekend but as Hearts are on League Cup semi-final business on Sunday, the game was brought forward – thus enabling Ryan Stevenson to complete his two match suspension and make him available for the semi-final at Easter Road (assuming he hasn't moved on by then...)

The optimism was justified as Hearts recorded a second SPFL win in a row for the first time this season, despite losing a goal in the opening minute. Goals from Callum Paterson and Jamie Hamill gave the Maroons their first win at Tynecastle since August and put the Gorgie faithful in a positive frame of mind before Sunday's big semi-final.

On a bitterly cold evening, those same Hearts supporters were given a bitter pill to swallow after just 30 seconds. St. Mirren attacked straight from kick-off and Newton's cross found Thompson who easily outjumped two home defenders to head powerfully home into the corner.

Hearts looked momentarily stunned but it took them just three minutes to equalise. Sam Nicholson, impressive at Dingwall on Saturday, fed David Smith whose cross was headed home by Callum Paterson – the big striker's second goal in as many games. It has to be said former Hearts keeper Marian Kello looked less than clever when Smith's cross came in but the home support were delighted.

The impressive Nicholson produced a piece of magic after 12 minutes and his cross found Paterson whose headed looked a winner until Kello redeemed himself by palming the ball over the crossbar.

However, the Paisley Saints almost regained the lead ten minutes before the break when McGinn's header crashed off the crossbar. Half-time arrived with the teams on level terms.

Hearts began the second half in determined fashion and almost took the lead just three minutes in when Danny Wilson's header clipped the crossbar. Two minutes later, Hearts were awarded a penalty kick when Dale Carrick's run towards goal was halted abruptly by St. Mirren's McAusland in the penalty box. Red card for the Saints defender, penalty kick for Hearts and Jamie Hamill did his usual expert job to put the Maroons ahead.

Despite being a man and a goal ahead, Hearts seemed to retreat into their shells a little and the visitors had more of the play which they weren't entitled to expect given their numerical disadvantage.

Hearts did hit the post in the 73rd minute when Carrick got on to a flick from McKay but it was the visitors who looked more threatening. Indeed, Danny Lennon's team had a golden opportunity to draw parity with six minutes to go when Thompson elected to hit a first time effort from the edge of the penalty box when he perhaps had more time than he thought.

The final chance of the evening came to Hearts Scott Robinson whose effort from fully 30 yards was well saved by Kello.

The final whistle blew soon after and Hearts had secured another league win. By doing so they avoided an unwanted record – failure to record a victory would have meant Hearts would have gone 10 successive league games at Tynecastle without recording a win – something that has befallen no Hearts team in their near 140 year history. They now move on

to five points at the foot of the SPFL – and in confident mood ahead of Sunday's League Cup semi-final.

Hearts: MacDonald; McGowan, McKay, Wilson, McHattie; Smith, Robinson, Hamill, Nicholson, Carrick, Paterson.

St Mirren: Kello; Naismith, McAusland, McGregor, Kelly; Newton, McGinn, Goodwin, McGowan, Campbell, Thomson.

Att: 12,422

Referee: Steven McLean

Top man: The hard-working Callum Paterson