

Heart of Midlothian 1 Dundee United 2



SPFL, Friday 21 March 2014 – Tynecastle

BT Sport's television deal with the SPFL has seen several games this season switched to a Friday evening. This week it was Hearts turn and the novelty of starting the weekend by going to the football seemed to entice nearly 13,500 fans to Tynecastle on a night when you wouldn't have sent the dog out as rain lashed Scotland's capital city. Perhaps it was the prospect of the first competitive game on a Friday at Tynecastle for half a century.

Sadly for the Maroon Army, the outcome of the game was the same as it has been for much of the season. Another defeat pushed Hearts ever closer to Championship football next season.

The difficult conditions leant weight to that oft-used cliché 'not conducive to good football' although Dundee United still tried to play the passing style that has won them so many admirers this season. That said, their early attempts at goal were long-range efforts from Rankin and Robertson that failed to trouble a mud-splattered Jamie MacDonald in the Hearts goal. If anything, it was Hearts who looked more threatening with some laudable build-up play and Kevin McHattie fired an effort which was saved by United keeper Cierzniak before Dale Carrick had an effort that went close.

As half-time appeared on the horizon, I mentioned that Hearts had done well to keep the free-scoring United team at bay. Therefore, I blame myself for the visitors immediately taking the lead ten minutes before the break. Good build up play from Dow and Robertson set up Graham with the easiest of chances

which he duly took from three yards with the home side half-heartedly appealing for offside. Hearts tried to fight back and Callum Paterson headed David Smith's cross over the crossbar when he really should have hit the target before Ryan Stevenson fired in an effort that shook the rainwater from the side net. Half-time arrived with United a goal ahead.

United began the second half on the offensive with Robertson producing a fine save from Jamie MacDonald before Ciftci wasted a chance to double the visitor's lead. Soon after, Armstrong produced another great save from Hearts increasingly busy goalkeeper and it seemed just a matter of time before the second goal would come. It duly arrived 20 minutes from time with a quite brilliant goal from the impressive Ciftci who danced passed three Hearts players before firing a superb shot past the diving Jamie Mac.

To their credit, Hearts refused to throw in the towel and eight minutes later, skipper Danny Wilson powered home a header from Sam Nicholson's corner kick to pull a goal back which resulted in a spirited finish from the home side. However, it was to no avail and Hearts relegation will be confirmed next Sunday should they fail to beat Hibernian in the Edinburgh derby. It's a scenario manager Gary Locke isn't willing to contemplate and he spoke afterwards about his hope that his young team would record their third victory of the season over their great rivals.

"It's what our supporters deserve," said the Gorgie boss. "Everyone knows the situation we're in and the fans were right behind the cause again tonight. To get 13,500 on a Friday night is nothing short of incredible. We can't thank the fans enough."

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

Dundee Utd: Cierzniak, Wilson, Gunning, Dillon, Robertson,

Paton, Rankin, Graham, Armstrong, Dow, Ciftci.

Referee: Bobby Madden

Att: 13,448

Top man: Jamie MacDonald

