

Football Partick Thistle 2 Heart of Midlothian 4



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SPFL, Saturday 5 April 2014 – Firhill

Hearts SPFL life support machine, which had been threatened to be turned off by Hibernian and Aberdeen in the last six days, finally had its plug pulled in Glasgow despite Hearts producing, ironically, one of their best performances of the season to defeat Partick Thistle at Firhill.

The Maroons were faced with a scenario where they had to win each and every one of their remaining six SPFL Premiership games while hoping St. Mirren would lose all of theirs. There was as much chance of that happening as Leigh Griffiths signing for Hearts in the summer and so Hearts were mercifully relieved of their duties and will play their football next season outside the top flight of Scottish football for the first time since 1983. Whether that will be in the Championship or League Two may well be decided next week after yet another meeting of creditors in Lithuania. The earnest hope is a deal will be struck for the shares of the club meaning Ann Budge can take control and the Foundation of Hearts can lead the way forward – and crucially see Hearts only dropping down one division next season.

Yet again there was a sizeable support from Edinburgh whose devotion to their team this season has been nothing short of remarkable. Those who travelled to Glasgow were ‘rewarded’ by seeing their team go a goal down after just five minutes. A long ball forward reached Doolan who fired past Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald to put the hosts a goal up and invoke the predictable ‘Hearts are going down’ chant from the home

support.

Hearts, with Brad McKay, Dale Carrick, Scott Robinson and Billy King replacing Danny Wilson – who was suspended following his red card against Aberdeen on Wednesday – Paul McCallum, David Smith and Sam Nicholson, fought back but nearly went two goals down when Taylor fired over the bar from 18 yards. Doolan then had a chance for his second goal after fine build up play but his effort was saved well by Jamie Mac.

Hearts then almost grabbed the equaliser when Scott Robinson got on the end of a Kevin McHattie corner only for Thistle keeper Gallacher to produce a superb save. Billy King then had an opportunity to level the scores when he latched on to Dale Carrick's through pass but the youngster fired his shot wide and it began to look as if it would be one of those days. However, the Maroons would not be denied and three minutes before half-time, King turned provider when he crossed for Carrick to head home the equaliser. 1-1 at the interval.

While it took Thistle just five minutes to score in the first half, it took the Jambos just four minutes of the second period to go in front. Billy King collected the ball 25 yards from goal and unleashed a superb shot which flew past Gallacher and into the net to put the visitors in front. 12 minutes later, Scott Robinson's corner found the head of Ryan Stevenson whose header found the corner of the net to put Hearts 3-1 ahead with less than half an hour to go.

Hearts were rampant now – something that hasn't been said too often this season – and six minutes later they scored a fourth goal. The hard-working Robinson raced down the right wing before crossing to Stevenson. 'Stevo' turned and fired in a brilliant shot which was beyond Gallacher and, astonishingly, it was now 4-1 to Hearts.

With the news that St. Mirren were losing at home to Motherwell, it seemed Gary Locke's side were about to survive

for another day, even when McMillan pulled a goal back for Thistle with two minutes to go. However, any thoughts of the 'Great Escape' faded with the news that St. Mirren had equalised against Motherwell – then disappeared entirely when news filtered through that the Paisley Saints had scored twice in two minutes to win the game. Hearts relegation, therefore, was confirmed despite a superb second half performance in Glasgow – and a result which puts Partick Thistle in the dreaded play-off place.

Defiant Hearts supporters chanted 'we'll support you ever more' as the emotional Hearts players left the field at the end of the game. With performances like this, surely it will be only a matter of time before Hearts are back in the big time.

Partick Thistle: Gallacher, McMillan, Taylor-Sinclair, Bannigan, Gabriel, Mair, Higginbotham, Fraser, Taylor, Doolan, Erskine.

Hearts: MacDonald; Paterson, McGowan, McKay, McHattie; Robinson, Hamill, Holt; Stevenson, Carrick, King.

Referee: Stephen Finnie

Att: 4,262

Top man: Billy King