

St. Mirren 1 Heart of Midlothian 1



A season which began with much doom and gloom thanks to a 15 point deduction and signing embargo, ended on a high for Heart of Midlothian. Hot on the heels of the news that the club has finally exited administration, Hearts grabbed a well-deserved draw against St. Mirren on Saturday.

More than 2,400 Hearts supporters headed for Paisley which was yet another incredible turnout given the game meant nothing in terms of league status. But it was another demonstration of the passion of the Hearts support.

Manager Gary Locke – whose position at Tynecastle is due for discussion with the club's new owner, Ann Budge, this week – made three changes from the side that lost to Partick Thistle in midweek. Goalkeeper Jamie MacDonald was restored between the sticks while Jamie Walker and David Smith also made Hearts starting line-up.

As they did against Thistle, Hearts began the game on the offensive with Jamie Walker having a couple of early efforts. However, despite being on top, Hearts found themselves a goal behind just before the half-hour mark. McLean's shot on goal was blocked by Jamie MacDonald but the ball fell to Newton who slotted the rebound home to give the Buddies a scarcely deserved lead.

A former Aberdeen player, Wylde then combined with a current Aberdeen player – Magennis who is on loan to St. Mirren – with the latter heading wide. McLean then hit a free-kick from 25 yards which produced a superb save from Jamie MacDonald and prevented the visitors from going two goals behind. Despite a bright opening, Hearts were somewhat relieved to be only 1-0

down at half-time. The travelling support, though, seemed to have their minds elsewhere with an eruption of noise emanating from the away end with news of Hibernian's demise at Easter Road.

Gary Locke may well have had a word or two to say at the break because the Maroons came out for the second half in determined fashion. From a St. Mirren corner, Hearts broke forward with a pace that had the home defenders struggling. Sam Nicholson fed Jamie Walker whose shot on goal looked a winner until Saints keeper Dilo produced a superb save. However, the ball broke to the in-rushing Dale Carrick who kept up his impressive scoring rate of late and parity was restored.

Magennis and McGowan had chances to win the game for the home side but both opportunities were spurned. Hearts also had chances. Fine play from Kevin McHattie set up substitute Gary Oliver but the young striker's effort went wide. Then Callum Paterson's header was superbly saved by Dilo. The game ended 1-1 and Hearts time in the SPFL Premiership officially came to an end.

The magnificent Hearts support gave their team a standing ovation at the end of the game. Hope has returned to Hearts and the Maroon Army. With a young team that has markedly improved since the start of the season – they would have consigned Hibernian to automatic relegation but for the 15 point penalty imposed last summer – the start of the new season in the Championship can't come soon enough.

St Mirren: Dilo, McLean, McAusland, Newton, Kelly, Naismith, McGregor, Teale, Magennis, Goodwin, Wylde.

Hearts: MacDonald; Paterson, McGowan, Wilson, McHattie; D. Smith, Robinson, Holt, Nicholson; Walker, Carrick.

Referee: Stephen Finnie

Att: 6,311

Top man: Dale Carrick