

Football – Heart of Midlothian 1 Manchester City 2



Photo – Mike Smith

Pre-season friendly, Friday 18 July 2014 – Tynecastle

As pre-season friendlies go, Friday evening's game between Hearts and FA Premiership holders Manchester City was a pretty decent effort. The glamour fixture, arranged to mark the centenary of the main stand at Tynecastle attracted a crowd of over 12,000 to Gorgie which was a pretty good turnout considering we're in the middle of the holiday season.

Hearts had Neil Alexander, Alim Ozturk, Morgaro Gomis, Prince Buaben and Osman Sow making their home debuts and all five players impressed, particularly Gomis who orchestrated things in midfield.

The English champions weren't quite at full strength – hardly surprising when you consider how many of the City squad were playing in the World Cup Finals in Brazil – but their starting eleven still included the likes of Samir Nasri, Alvaro Negredo, Micah Richards, Javi Garcia, Jesus Navas and Scott Sinclair, all of whom have considerable first-team experience.

Hearts began the game in sprightly fashion with young Sam Nicholson looking particularly impressive. Sadly, the young winger had to leave the field after just 15 minutes with what looked like an ankle knock. He was replaced by Billy King.

City had the first real opportunity when Nasri got to a cross

from Navas but the former Arsenal playmaker's effort was saved by Neil Alexander.

Dale Carrick then had a chance for the home team after he was set up by Jamie Walker and it took a fine save from Wright to deny the young Jambo.

City took the lead in the 24th minute. Fine play from the impressive Negredo set up Sinclair who buried the ball past Neil Alexander to give the visitors the lead – although there was more than a suspicion of offside in the build-up. The Manchester side, who were cheered on by around a thousand City fans in the Roseburn Stand, went in one goal ahead at the interval.

City made several substitutions at the break but if Hearts thought things would get any easier they were soon changing their minds when they saw the likes of Kolarov, Fernando and Rodwell appear for the second half. Nonetheless, it was Hearts who scored a fine equaliser in the 55th minute. Great possession play by Dale Carrick set up newcomer Osman Sow and the big centre forward showed fine composure before easing the ball beyond Caballero. The goal was all the more impressive when you consider Sow had taken a knock just before this and his last action before going off was to score Hearts equaliser.

The game looked like ending in a draw which would have been a fair result. However, with ten minutes left, Hearts right back Callum Paterson made a rash challenge on Huws inside the Hearts box to concede a penalty. Kolarov made no mistake with the spot kick and City held on to win 2-1.

Considering the quality of the opposition, Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson can be pleased with his team's showing. Even on this early evidence, it's clear Hearts will be contenders for

the Championship and promotion back to the Premiership.

Hearts: Alexander (Hamilton, 70'), Paterson, McHattie, Wilson (McGhee, 75'), Ozturk (McKay, 70'), Gomis (Oliver, 75'), Walker (Holt, 56'), Buaben (Robinson, 59'), Sow (D. Smith, 56'), Carrick (Keatings, 56'), Nicholson (King, 16').

Manchester City: *First half* – Wright, Richards, Leigh, Nastasic, Rekik, Garcia, Zuculini, Sinclair, Nasri, Navas, Negredo. *Second half* – Caballero, Bossaerts (Clichy, 71'), Boyata, Kolarov, Denayer, Fernando, Rodwell, Sinclair, Huws, Jovertic, Guidetti.

Referee: Steven McLean

Att: 12,188

Top man: The highly impressive Morgaro Gomis.