

Heart of Midlothian 5 Cowdenbeath 1



photo – Mike Smith

SPFL Championship, Saturday 20 September 2014 – Tynecastle

After a week where Scotland's people decided to remain as part of the UK, thoughts turned to somewhat more mundane matters at Tynecastle on Saturday afternoon as Hearts entertained Cowdenbeath in the SPFL Championship. After last week's goalless draw at Dumbarton, Robbie Neilson's side were looking to get back on track against a side who gave Hibs an almighty fright at Easter Road last weekend. After a decidedly shaky first half, the Maroons did eventually get on track to record what turned out to be another comprehensive win in the league this season.

There was a pre-match blow the home side when Kevin McHattie and Sam Nicholson failed fitness tests and were replaced by debutant Adam Eckersley and Jamie Walker. On the plus side there was a welcome return to the team for Calum Paterson, having recovered from an injury sustained in Hearts opening weekend victory at Ibrox.

Jimmy Nicholl's Cowdenbeath caused Hibernian all sorts of problems across the city seven days ago and it was clear the Blue Brazil were in the mood to do the same to Edinburgh's top team. Several challenges of the physical variety were made by the visitors early on but referee Craig Charleston didn't see

fit to brandish a yellow card in the early stages. Hearts, as you might expect, were dominant and they deservedly took the lead after 15 minutes. A sublime pass from skipper Danny Wilson found Billy King inside the Cowden penalty box. The youngster took a touch before driving the ball past keeper Thomson to put the home side in front. However, the lead didn't last long.

Five minutes later Oyengua drove an effort which was saved by Hearts keeper Neil Alexander; however Gallagher fired in the rebound to stun the home support in the 15,000 plus crowd – another phenomenal attendance at Tynecastle this season. Osman Sow almost put Hearts in front again but his effort produced a fine save from Thomson. The first half petered out with Hearts, particularly defender Alim Ozturk, looking too casual at times and the team's frustration spread itself to the stands. **Half-time Hearts 1 Cowdenbeath 1**

If Head Coach Robbie Neilson felt the same as the Hearts supporters did at half time he would have had a word or two in the ears of some of the Hearts players at the interval. Whatever he said had an immediate effect as Hearts went straight on the attack. Osman Sow linked up brilliantly with Billy King and the Big O's shot was well saved by keeper Thomson. Buoyed by this, Hearts went ahead in the 48th minute. Adam Eckersley's cross from the left was headed home by Jamie Walker and the sense of relief around Tynecastle was palpable.

Seven minutes later, Walker was fouled inside the penalty box and Hearts were awarded a penalty kick. Sow did his usual expert job from the spot and Hearts were 3-1 ahead.

The Maroons were now displaying the passing game which had destroyed Falkirk a few weeks back and which had been sadly lacking from their first half display. Substitute Soufian El Hassnaoui made an immediate impression with a brilliant pass to Sow but the big Swede fired his effort into the Gorgie Stand, to the chagrin of the Hearts support.

With ten minutes to go, Hearts made it 4-1. Fine work from Sow set up another substitute, Dale Carrick, who fired in a low shot past the Cowden keeper to ensure the three points would remain in Gorgie. Carrick almost added another moments later with a tremendous effort from 25 yards which struck the Cowden crossbar and bounced to safety. The impressive Carrick was not to be denied a second goal, however. With four minutes left his effort from a similar distance flew past Thomson to complete the scoring at 5-1 to Hearts.

Such a scoreline, of course, is synonymous with Hearts famous Scottish Cup final triumph over Hibernian more than two years ago and the home support bellowed their appreciation.

It was, as the cliché goes, a game of two halves. In the first period Hearts huffed and puffed and struggled to deal with the sometimes overly-physical attentions of the visitors. It seemed Hearts had resorted to long ball tactics which suited Cowdenbeath. However, in the second half, Hearts went back to the quick passing style which has been their trademark this season and this brought their just reward.

With Rangers dropping two points and Hibernian losing again, Hearts are now three points clear at the top of the league, the damage from last week's draw at Dumbarton remedied by Rangers inability to defeat Alloa Athletic. Hearts are now 10 points ahead of the ailing Hibeas which, even at this stage in the season, is a significant gap.

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Wilson, Ozturk, Gomis, Walker, Robinson, King, Keatings, Sow, Eckersley.

Cowdenbeath: Thomson, Campbell, Armstrong, Wedderburn, Robertson, Higgins, Gallagher, Brett, Oyenuka, Fraser, Hughes.

Referee: Craig Charleston

Att: 15,594.

— photo – Mike Smith

Top man: Danny Wilson – the captain was immense today.