

Queen of the South 0 Heart of Midlothian 3

SPFL Championship, Saturday 4 October 2014 – Palmerston Park

The Maroon Army headed to delightful Dumfries on Saturday for a fixture which had the air of a Sir Walter Scott novel about it – Queen of the South versus Heart of Midlothian. Robbie Neilson's table-toppers were looking to maintain their unbeaten start to the SPFL Championship campaign. And, after a less than comfortable opening period, they maintained their six point advantage at the top of the table.

Neilson has shown already this season that he is not afraid to make changes to his side even on the back of a 5-0 hammering of Livingston six days ago. Kevin McHattie, Callum Paterson and Sam Nicholson were left out of Hearts starting eleven today, replaced by Adam Eckersley, Jordan McGhee and Billy King respectively.

As is the norm, the Maroon Army marched in considerable numbers to Dumfries with an estimated 3,000 maroon-clad foot soldiers making the journey in support of their team.

Hearts began the game well with chances for Prince Buaben and Jamie Walker in the opening minutes. However, the home side began to assume control with Reilly's effort on goal going just inches past the post. Then, following a corner, Dowie's header came back off the post and those in maroon breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Queens were looking the likelier side to score – so, right on cue, Hearts took the lead seven minutes from half time. Skipper Danny Wilson played a long pass which was chested down by Osman Sow. The big Swede turned and fired in a high shot from about 20 yards which smacked off the crossbar and over the line. At least over the line according to referee Brian

Colvin although his assistant didn't seem convinced and the home players and support were adamant the ball hadn't gone over. But the referee deemed that it had and Hearts were somewhat fortuitously in front.

Just three minutes later, the visitors doubled their lead. Prince Buaben embarked on a run for which he is becoming renowned, beating three home defenders before poking the ball past Queens' keeper Clark. The joy among the away support was uncontained as the half-time whistle blew moments later. **Half-time Queen of the South 0 Hearts 2**

Buoyed by their two goal lead, Hearts looked more comfortable in the second half and may well have had a penalty when Jamie Walker appeared to have been fouled by Holt but referee Colvin was having none of it.

A third goal for the visitors did arrive just before an hour's play. The hard-working Billy King raced down the left wing and sent over a peach of a cross which was tapped home by defender Jordan McGhee. 3-0 to Hearts and the Maroons were now in easy street.

The Doonhamers almost pulled a goal back 20 minutes from the end when Kiltie's effort produced a brilliant save from Neil Alexander. With the game drawing to a close, Hearts should have added a fourth goal when Sow, having run a considerable distance with the ball, seemed to run out of steam in the six yard box and drove his shot into the side netting.

The game ended at 3-0 to Hearts and another impressive victory was notched up as the Gorgie side look to earn automatic promotion. With Rangers labouring to a single goal win at Livingston – a side Hearts crushed 5-0 six days ago – and Hibs dropping more points to a Christian Nade inspired Raith Rovers, few would bet against Robbie Neilson's side – on current form at least – being top of the pile come next May.

Queen of the South: Clark, Fowler, Dowie, Higgins, K. Holt,

McShane, Kidd, Russell, Lyle, Kiltie, Reilly.

Hearts: Alexander, Wilson, Ozturk, Gomis, Walker, El Hassnaoui, King, Buaben, Sow, McGhee, Eckersley.

Referee: Brian Colvin

Att: 5,534

Top man: Billy King caused the home defence problems aplenty