

# Livingston 2 Heart of Midlothian 3

**SPFL Championship, Saturday 7 February 2015 – Energy Assets Arena**

Two days after Christmas, Hearts edged a tight encounter against the SPFL Championship's bottom club thanks to a solitary goal from James Keatings. Six weeks later, Robbie Neilson's table-toppers were back in West Lothian and, again, their promotion credentials were put to the test. And, again, Hearts proved they have what it takes by winning another close affair.

Neilson made three changes to the team that hammered Alloa Athletic seven days ago with Jordan McGhee, Sam Nicholson and Genero Zeefuik replacing the injured Adam Eckersley and Osman Sow and the suspended Prince Buaben.

Hearts have scored early in their last two games and they did so again today. Jamie Walker took the ball from Jacobs before it landed at the feet of Genero Zeefuik. The big Dutchman powered away from Sives before firing a low effort beyond Jamieson to give Hearts the lead after just four minutes.

Buoyed by this early goal, Hearts took command of the game and Miguel Pallardo, having scored his first Hearts goal last week, almost scored his second when his effort from the edge of the box went narrowly over the bar.

Livingston are fighting for their lives at the bottom of the league but they took this metaphor a bit too far with some brutal challenges which saw referee Brian Colvin reach for his yellow cards six times in the first half. The most shocking of these challenges was the one from Talbot which saw his studs catch the face of Sam Nicholson. This became the home side's fifth yellow card when it really should have been red.

Nicholson had to be replaced at half-time by Hearts new Dutch signing Kenny Anderson.

### **Half-time Livingston 0 Hearts 1**

The home side equalised in the 52<sup>nd</sup> minute. Former Jambo Craig Sives was all alone to fire home even if it did appear he was in an offside position. This wasn't what the Maroon Army expected but the visitors pressed to regain their advantage. The impressive Zeefuik tried his luck from distance, Callum Paterson came close with a header and Jamie Walker also had a chance but saw his effort go wide.

It was beginning to look like the Maroons would drop two points which might have had the doubters out in force again. However, with eight minutes to go, substitute Billy King delivered a fine cross into the penalty area where debutant Kenny Anderson dived to head home. Jubilation among the Hearts support and the Dutchman couldn't contain his delight – nor should he!

Just a couple of minutes later, the impressive Billy King sent Jamie Walker through with a sublime pass and the youngster fired beyond Jamieson to seal the points.

Well, I say seal the points – there was a late scare when Hearts Brad McKay – who this week agreed to join St. Johnstone in the summer – pulled down Hippolyte in the penalty box and was show a red card. Jacobs fired home the resultant penalty kick but Hearts held on for a 3-2 win – and stretch their lead at the top of the SPFL Championship table to 19 points.

Second placed Rangers may have three games in hand but even if they win all three – and this is not certain by any means – they will still be ten points behind Robbie Neilson's impressive side. And this Friday evening Rangers face Hibernian – who have beaten them twice already this season...

**Livingston:** Jamieson, Sives, Talbot, Fordyce, Kyle Jacobs,

Keaghan Jacobs, O'Brien, Gallagher, White, Mullen, Sekajja.

**Hearts:** Alexander, Paterson, Wilson, Ozturk, Gomis, Walker, Nicholson, Pallardo, Keatings, Zeefuik, McGhee.

**Referee:** Brian Colvin

**Att:** 5,352

**Top man:** Genero Zeefuik – what a powerful fellow he is!