

# Heart of Midlothian 2 Queen of the South 0



## SPFL Championship, Saturday 28 March 2015 – Tynecastle

After celebrating clinching the SPFL Championship title – and promotion back to the Premiership – last weekend, Hearts held a title winning party at a packed Tynecastle on Saturday afternoon. It is often the case that, on such a celebratory occasion, the champagne tastes flat as players may feel that, with the job done, they can take their feet off the gas as it were. Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson had preached to his players all week the importance of continuing their astonishing league form that has seen them lose only once this season and the boys in maroon heeded their gaffer's warning with a solid display to defeat the Doonhamers.

Neilson went with the same side that won impressively at Falkirk last Saturday and the Maroons were sportingly applauded on to the Tynecastle pitch by a Queen of the South side with aspirations of their own for promotion. The home support had come for a party and the atmosphere was Tynecastle at its best as the fans greeted the champions.

The visitors began brightly with the intent of taking the game to their hosts. However, when Hearts moved forward purposefully for the first time they took the lead. Six minutes in, fine play from Osman Sow saw the Swede elude the attention of the visiting defence inside the Queens penalty box and his low shot flew past keeper Clark to open the scoring. Cue the party anthems ringing down from the packed Tynecastle stands as the party atmosphere was racked up another notch.

Minutes later, Sow was at it again as he got on the end of a

fine flowing move – only this time his shot on goal blasted into the side netting when perhaps the better option would have been to pass to his colleagues in the six yard box.

Miguel Pallardo was controlling the Hearts midfield and a brilliant pass from the Spaniard found Callum Paterson whose cross almost found Billy King but the youngster was thwarted by the Queens defence.

With half-time approaching, Hearts nearly doubled their lead. Fine play from Jamie Walker was met by a back-heel from Sow but Clark pulled off a brilliant save. **Half-time Hearts 1 Queen of the South 0**

Scots 1980 Olympic gold medal winner Allan Wells was the half-time guest but it was Queens who were quick off the blocks in the second half when Millar's free kick from 25 yards was only pushed out by home keeper Neil Alexander to Lyle but the striker blazed the rebound high over the bar from just six yards – just as well, then, the assistant referee had flagged for offside...

Pallardo and Morgaro Gomis were different class for Hearts and their passing, pace and movement was simply too much for the visitors. Gomis sped past three Queens players before passing to Billy King but the youngster's shot on goal was high and wide. Then Jamie Walker drove at the visiting defence and his effort looked goalbound until it was deflected wide.

Although Hearts perhaps lacked the intensity of recent weeks, they still looked the likelier side to score and this was confirmed in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute. After Jamie Walker was fouled, Alim Ozturk stepped up to the plate for the free-kick. The defender, who has made long-range goals something of a trademark this season, duly did it again albeit his effort was deflected beyond the despairing Clark to put Hearts two goals ahead and seal the points.

It was game over now. Hearts knew it, Queen of the South knew it and the final 20 minutes were something of a training exercise for the home team. There was even time for a moment of humour from referee Craig Thomson who had tried unsuccessfully to burst one of the many party balloons which floated around the Tynecastle pitch all afternoon in blustery conditions. Step forward goal hero Ozturk who stood on said balloon and burst it first time of asking – prompting a handshake from the referee. It was that sort of afternoon.

The game ended and the players quickly took their leave before returning for their lap of honour.

Hearts owner Ann Budge and the board of directors took to the field after the game and Mrs Budge thanked the Hearts fans for their magnificent support this season – and those who had signed up to the Foundation of Hearts, without whom the club would not have survived. An emotional Mrs Budge then made way for Robbie Neilson and the players to re-enter the field and do their lap of honour to an ecstatic home support.

The championship has been won. Promotion has been secured. It's job done. But Robbie Neilson, having been thrown into the air by his players on the field during the post-match celebrations, will already be preparing for next season. 'There's only one Robbie Neilson' sang the delirious Hearts supporters. And they are grateful he is plotting Hearts next success.

**Hearts:** Alexander, Paterson, Wilson, Ozturk, Gomis, Walker, King, Pallardo, Sow, Zeefuik, Eckersley.

**Queen of the South:** Clark, Holt, Dowie, Durnan, Higgins, Millar, Reilly, McKenna, Paton, Carmichael, Lyle

**Referee:** Craig Thomson

**Att:** 16,855

**Top man:** Miguel Pallardo