

Another Win for Table-Topping Hearts



Heart of Midlothian 3 Partick Thistle 0

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 22 August 2015 – Tynecastle

For a brief period on Saturday afternoon, Hearts were knocked off their perch at the top of the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership table. League champions Celtic had defeated Dundee United in the early afternoon kick-off meaning Robbie Neilson's side – tipped to be champions earlier this week by former captain Steven Pressley – were in second place going into the 3.00pm kick-off against Partick Thistle at Tynecastle. Their fall from top place didn't last long. By 4.50pm, the marauding maroons were back on top of the league following a fine 3-0 win over the Jags.

Hearts had suffered a pre-match blow when the influential Jamie Walker was ruled out of the game due to a foot injury. Gavin Reilly took his place.

Hearts normally start games in Gorgie in a frenetic fashion. However, on Saturday it was Partick Thistle who applied the early pressure although they didn't seriously trouble home keeper Neil Alexander. Inevitably, it was Hearts who came closest to scoring when fine play from the skilful Sam Nicholson was almost finished off by Juanma.

It was Sam the Man who almost broke the deadlock after 12 minutes with a ferocious effort from 20 yards which forced Thistle keeper Cerny to push the ball over the bar. Next, skilful play by Hearts captain Alim Ozturk found Prince Buaben who set up a shot for Callum Paterson but the Scotland Under

21 player's effort on goal was deflected. Then Juanma found Igor Rossi but the defender showed why he is a defender when he volleyed an effort wide of goal.

It was all Hearts now and after 29 minutes, the Maroons duly went ahead. Nicholson's corner was headed on by Paterson and as the Thistle defence tried desperately to clear, Osman Sow showed a predator's instinct by prodding home from six yards.

Half-time Hearts 1 Partick Thistle 0

After an initial flurry from the visitors trying to get back into the game, Hearts almost doubled their lead ten minutes into the second half. Great play from Buaben set Sam Nicholson free. The young winger hared in on goal and looked certain to score. However, he pulled his shot agonisingly wide and Tynecastle collectively groaned.

Nonetheless, the youngster didn't let his head go down. Minutes later, Hearts were awarded a penalty kick when Paterson was brought down in the penalty box. Juamna's spot-kick was saved by Cerny but Sam Nicholson was the quickest to react to the rebound and blasted home for Hearts second goal.

Just two minutes later, Nicholson was involved again when he played Juanma through on goal and the Spaniard showed real composure to chip the ball over the Thistle keeper to make it 3-0 and seal the points for the Maroons.

The Firhill side have only scored two league goals all season so their chances of getting anything from the game were slim to say the least. They nearly pulled a goal back with ten minutes left when substitute Osman headed goalwards but Hearts young substitute Sean McKirdy cleared off the line.

Gavin Reilly almost made it 4-0 but the former Queen of the South striker's fine effort was pushed away by Cerny.

There was just enough time for Hearts to introduce yet another product of their flourishing youth academy when 16-year-old Calumn Morrison was given a late run out.

At the end of another fine afternoon, Hearts were back on top of the Ladbrokes Premiership after a fifth league win on the bounce. Yet, afterwards, Robbie Neilson was still not entirely happy.

“We were a bit wasteful in the first half,” he told the official Hearts website. “We got into good areas but didn’t create a lot of great chances.

We were OK today, not great. The second half was better in terms of attacking, and I’m pleased with the clean sheet, but there’s a lot we could have done better.”

It’s this kind of attitude that will ensure Hearts continue to make such astonishing progress under Neilson and Craig Levein. A title challenge this season? Perhaps not. But a top six finish is certainly achievable.

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Ozturk, Rossi, Oshaniwa, Sow (King, 64’), Buaben (McKirdy, 74’), Gomis, Nicholson, Reilly, Juanma (Morrison, 86’).

Partick Thistle: Cerny, Miller, Seaborne, Welsh (Osman, 61’), Booth, Amoo (McDaid, 74’), Bannigan, Doolan, Stevenson (Lawless, 56’), Frans, Fraser.

Referee: John Beaton

Att: 16,657

Top man: Sam Nicholson