

Hearts Go Clear at the Top of the League



Heart of Midlothian 2 Motherwell 0

Ladbroke's SPFL Premiership, Wednesday 12 August 2015 – Tynecastle

Hearts impressive return to the top flight of Scottish football continued at Tynecastle on Wednesday evening as they defeated Motherwell in front of a near sell-out crowd – a result which takes the Maroons clear at the top of the table.

Head Coach Robbie Neilson had hinted at changes from the team which won at Dundee at the weekend and, indeed, three changes were made as Gavin Reilly, Sam Nicholson and Billy King came in with Blazej Augustyn injured and Juanma and Jamie Walker dropping to the substitute's bench.

As is nearly always the case at Tynecastle, Hearts posted their intentions early on and Nicholson came close after just two minutes with a shot which had Well keeper Ripley beaten but whizzed past the post.

Nicholson and Billy King seemed to be taking it in turns to torment the Motherwell defence and it was from a King free-kick that Igor Rossi almost gave the home side the lead but the defender's header was deflected away from goal.

Just after the half hour mark, Hearts pressure told when the ever-dangerous Nicholson danced his way past the visiting defence into the penalty box only to be fouled by McDonald. Penalty said referee Brian Colvin and Gavin Reilly confidently stroked home the spot kick to give the home side the lead.

Hearts should have doubled their lead five minutes later when

Nicholson delivered a teasing cross which Prince Buaben met with his head but his effort on goal was inches wide.

Good work by King then presented Reilly with another chance but his shot on goal was straight at Ripley.

Half-time Hearts 1 Motherwell 0

After posing little threat in the opening forty-five minutes, Motherwell looked more determined at the start of the second half. That said, the hard-working Gavin Reilly came closest to scoring again with a shot which was saved by Ripley.

Billy King then tested the overworked Well keeper with a 25 yard low shot which the goalie pushed away. However, the impressive King was not to be denied and he doubled Hearts lead in the 65th minute. Great build-up play by Buaben saw King collect the ball on the right and he cut in before firing a shot which Ripley could only parry into the net to put Hearts two goals ahead.

Hearts substitute Juanma came close when he almost connected with Callum Paterson's dangerous cross but the scoring ended at 2-0 to the home side.

Hearts looked much more assured in defence and Robbie Neilson will be delighted not only with another three points but his side's first clean sheet of the season.

Hearts are playing a lot more 'direct' football this season than last, when Neilson was quoted as saying his side would never play the long-ball game. However, when they play the passing game that has become their trademark, they can still do it to devastating effect. New signing Oshaniwa looks very comfortable on the ball and the Nigerian World Cup star's pace and trickery will cause problems to many teams.

Another fine victory for Hearts who are now clear at the top of the Ladbroke's Premiership following champions Celtic

dropping a couple of points at Kilmarnock. Hoops assistant John Collins was quoted this week as saying that other teams in Scotland aren't clever enough to test the Glasgow club.

Well, if Mr Collins would care to look at the league table tonight he will see Hearts are in a very clever position indeed...

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Ozturk, Rossi (McGhee, 84'), Oshaniwa, King (Oliver, 88'), Buaben, Gomis, Nicholson, Reilly, Sow (Juanma, 59').

Motherwell: Ripley, Hammell, Laing, McManus, Ainsworth, Johnson, Lasley (Leitch, 67'), Law, Moulton (Thomas, 76'), Taylor, McDonald (Clarkson, 87').

Referee: Brian Colvin

Att: 16,645

Top man: Sam 'The Man' Nicholson