

Hearts Go Top After Win at Dundee

Dundee 1 Heart of Midlothian 2

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 8 August 2015, Dens Park

Dens Park, Dundee holds some very unhappy memories for those Hearts fans who endured the mental trauma of seeing their team lose the league title there in the last eight minutes of season 1985/86.

Much has happened in the intervening decades but there is still an unease felt by many Hearts supporters of my generation when a visit to the blue half of Dundee beckons. This didn't prevent 2,800 of the Maroon Army heading to Tayside on Saturday for a game that, following last weekend's results, looked promising on paper.

Hearts made one change from the team that recorded a thrilling 4-3 win over St. Johnstone in the league opener last Sunday – new signing Juwon Oshaniwa coming in for Sam Nicholson.

Dundee had scored four goals themselves last weekend and the game began as many expected it to. The first chance fell to the visitors when Jamie Walker claimed he was fouled in the penalty box but appeals to referee Craig Thomson were ignored.

The home side began to take the ascendancy and duly opened the scoring in the fifth minute. Hemmings headed the ball home from a corner as the Hearts defence stood admiringly and Robbie Neilson's side were off to the worst possible start.

The Dees dominated the rest of the first half although Hearts should have been on level terms in the 14th minute when Juanma fed Jamie Walker but the youngster's weak effort was blocked by keeper Bain – and Walker's header from the save was

misjudged to put it kindly.

Hearts keeper Neil Alexander may have had a disappointing afternoon in Gorgie six days ago but he was back to his best today. He saved brilliantly from McGowan before Harkins missed an opportunity to double the home side's lead when he struck the side netting.

Despite Dundee dominating possession and creating more chances, it was Hearts who should have equalised when good work from captain Alim Ozturk found Juanma. From six yards out the Spaniard seemed certain to score – but he headed wide. Groans emanated from the huge travelling support. Hearts may well have had cause to rue that miss when Holt's header looked goal-bound right on half-time only for Alexander to push the ball behind.

Half-time Dundee 1 Hearts 0

Robbie Neilson appeared to have earned his corn during the interval as his charges set about the home side right from the start of the second half. Jamie Walker delivered a fine low cross which was just out of the reach of new boy Oshaniwa as Hearts pushed for the equaliser. The goal duly arrived in the 56th minute.

Referee Thomson awarded Hearts a penalty kick after handball by McPake and Juanma duly converted the penalty to make it 1-1.

If Dundee felt this was a blow they were devastated three minutes later when Juanma showed a good turn of pace before firing low past Bain to the delight of the Maroon Army.

The home side looked stunned, having dominated the first half, but they seemed to lack ideas as to how to breach the Hearts rearguard. In fact, it was Hearts who should have scored again when substitute Gavin Reilly dispossessed former Hibs player McPake and passed to Jamie Walker – but, again, the

youngster's effort was weak and lacked direction.

No one in white and maroon was complaining at the end, however, as Hearts hung on for an impressive victory – and with two wins from two games in the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership leapt to the top of the league.

Hearts boss Robbie Neilson was delighted with his side's second half display.

"It's another three points and we move on to the next game on Wednesday night against Motherwell" he told BBC Scotland.

"In the first half Dundee were hungrier and they worked harder. Dens Park is a difficult place to come and it's been a long time since we've won up here. To pick up three points is great as they're a very good team."

"Last week Juanma was really physical and I think this week the two centre halves up against him tried to be really tough. He wasn't getting much change out of them but in the second half, after we spoke to him about his positioning, he was fabulous.

"His two finishes were great and it's good to get someone who's confident taking penalties.

Dundee: Bain, Holt, McPake, Stewart, Thomson, Hemmings, Extabeguren, Ross, McGowan, McGinn, Harkins.

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Augustyn, Rossi, Oshaniwa (King, 75'), Ozturk, Buaben, Gomis, Walker, Sow (Nicholson, 53'), Juanma (Reilly, 80').

Referee: Craig Thomson

Att: 8,222

Top man: Juanma