

Hearts Regret Missed Chances



Heart of Midlothian 1 Kilmarnock 1

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 3 October 2015 – Tynecastle

Hearts made it four successive games without a win in the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership after they allowed Gary Locke's Kilmarnock side to steal a share of the points at Tynecastle on Saturday.

A combination of yet more poor defending alluded to missing a hatful of chances – and coming up against an inspired former Hearts keeper in Jamie MacDonald – meant the Maroon Army went home disappointed.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson made one change from the team that battled to a goalless draw at Celtic Park last Saturday with Prince Buaben replacing Miguel Pallardo. Morgaro Gomis captained the side in the absence of injured skipper Alim Ozturk and he led out the Hearts team with this reporter's grandson Jack Peacock by his side as mascot.

Another packed Tynecastle created the usual raucous atmosphere but the game had a lethargic start. However, Jamie Walker set off on a trademark run before setting up Juanma whose effort on goal forced a fine save from MacDonald.

Midway through the first half Hearts should have opened the scoring when the lively Sam Nicholson raced on to Osman Sow's pass. The youngster was through on MacDonald but opted to pass the ball back to Sow and the danger was cleared.

Nicholson was tormenting the Killie rear-guard and, moments after his chance, he came close again when his effort on goal took a deflection before going over the bar.

For all the home side's pressure it was the visitors who almost took the lead ten minutes before half-time. Hearts keeper Neil Alexander took a rush of blood to his head and came racing out of his penalty box to clear the ball – only to pass it to Kiltie who immediately returned the ball towards the gaping goal. Thankfully for Hearts, Blazej Augustyn raced back to clear the ball off the line.

Killie rued that missed opportunity, as three minutes later Hearts took the lead. Osman Sow was fouled by Balatoni in the penalty box. Penalty said referee John Beaton – one of the few decisions the official got right all afternoon – and Jamie Walker duly dispatched the spot kick high into the net.

The closing moments of the first half saw further chances for the home side through Juanma and Nicholson but none were taken and, at half-time, the feeling persisted that Hearts would have cause to regret missed chances.

Half-time Hearts 1 Kilmarnock 0

The second half started in much the same way as the first with not a lot of goalmouth action. Killie's Findlay had a free header on goal but couldn't keep his effort low enough. Then, Slater fired in a free-kick for the Ayrshire team which went over the bar with referee Beaton bizarrely awarding a corner kick even though home keeper Alexander hadn't touched the ball.

Hearts had chances themselves and Sam Nicholson was again the danger and fired in a ferocious effort on goal only to be thwarted by a brilliant save from his former team-mate MacDonald.

Osman Sow and Juanma then had chances which weren't taken as the home support grew increasingly anxious about the number of wasted opportunities. Their fears were realised eleven minutes from the end when Balatoni fired home a low shot from eight yards to equalise and stun the home support.

Hearts substitute Gavin Reilly was then shown a straight red card from referee Beaton after kicking out at Smith following a late challenge. The game ended a few moments later.

Robbie Neilson, perhaps conscious of the two match ban suspension issued to him during the week, was in philosophical mood after the game. "We should have been probably four or five goals up at half-time," said the Gorgie gaffer.

"We had some fantastic chances but didn't take them. Second half, we had three or four real clear-cut chances. But if you don't take them then you are really going to struggle in games."

In the end, an afternoon of disappointment for Hearts. Robbie Neilson may have kept tight-lipped about the referee but the Edinburgh Reporter doesn't have such shackles. Quite frankly, Mr Beaton had a shocking performance with some decisions that baffled both teams. Now, there's no doubt Hearts had only themselves to blame for not winning the game. However, yet again, an inept refereeing display was one of the main talking points of the game.

Surely that must be a concern for Scottish football's governing body?

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Augustyn, Rossi, Oshaniwa, Buaben, Gomis, Nicholson, Walker (Reilly, 86'), Sow (Swanson, 73'), Juanma.

Kilmarnock: MacDonald, Hamill (Boyd, 70'), Findlay, Higginbotham (Smith, 83'), O'Hara, Obadeyi (McKenzie, 59'), Slater, McHattie, Kiltie, Balatoni, Magennis.

Referee: John Beaton

Att: 16,461

Top Man: Without a shadow of a doubt – young Sam Nicholson.