

Sow's Cracker Earns Point for Hearts

Motherwell 2 Heart of Midlothian 2

Ladbroke's SPFL Premiership, Saturday 28 November 2015 – Fir Park

On a day when one would hesitate to send their dog out, Hearts maintained their recent unbeaten league run with a 2-2 draw at Motherwell on Saturday. The Gorgie Boys got off to the worst possible start by losing a goal in the opening two minutes but fought back well (if you'll pardon the pun) for a thoroughly merited draw.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson made two changes to the team that drew with Dundee at Tynecastle last Saturday with striker Juanma back in the team following his suspension and Danny Swanson brought into midfield. Billy King and Prince Buaben were the players who stepped aside.

With heavy rain and a swirling wind, conditions were difficult for both teams. With barely two minutes played, Hearts – playing in their Foundation of Hearts tribute strip – found themselves behind. Goalkeeper Neil Alexander appeared to be fouled by Moulton as he came to collect a cross but the Motherwell striker was alert enough to poke the ball home much to the disgust of the Hearts custodian who was booked by referee Steven McLean for his protests. Robbie Neilson has spoken of his anger about players being booked for arguing with officials but it appeared the Hearts keeper had a point as it seemed he had been pushed by the goalscorer.

However, the visitors didn't take long to draw parity. In the tenth minute, great play by Osman Sow set up Juanma who chipped the ball over keeper Ripley to level the game at 1-1.

Sow should have put Hearts ahead just three minutes later after he capitalised on a mistake by Kennedy but the Swede was denied by Ripley.

The Steelmen then had a chance through Pearson but the former Scotland player's effort was blocked by Hearts Blazej Augustyn.

It was end-to-end stuff and the home side had another chance when Moulton set up McDonald but the former Celtic striker couldn't find the target with his effort.

Danny Swanson then delivered a brilliant free-kick which found the head of Igor Rossi but the defender's header went over the bar. Swanson repeated the feat minutes later, this time finding the head of Callum Paterson. The Scotland Under 21 star's header was on target but couldn't beat keeper Ripley who produced a fine save.

Just before half-time McDonald thought he had put the home side in front again but he was denied by Neil Alexander before Juwon Oshaniwa cleared the danger.

Half-time Motherwell 1 Hearts 1

Oshaniwa made way for Jordan McGhee in the 50th minute with the Nigerian clearly struggling with the conditions.

Twenty minutes into the second half, fine play from the industrious Swanson found Juanma but the Spaniard's chip past Ripley trundled wide. Hearts were to rue this missed chance seconds later when Motherwell went in front. Fine play from Johnson saw him skip past Rossi and substitute Jordan McGhee and he lashed the ball beyond Alexander to make it 2-1 to Mark McGhee's side. However, as they did in the first half, Hearts wasted little time in equalising. Osman Sow was the hero and he fired in a brilliant effort from thirty yards which gave keeper Ripley not an earthly. 2-2 and it was game on once more.

The visitors then went in search of an equaliser as the wind dropped and play became slightly easier. Juanma set up Sam Nicholson but the youngster's effort on goal was wide and a real chance for the winner had gone. Young Sam had an even better chance moments later when a shot from Sow was blocked by the home defence but fell for Nicholson ten yards out. However, to the despair of his team mates and another huge travelling Hearts support, Nicholson blazed the ball over and Hearts had to settle for a point when it could easily have been three.

Robbie Neilson couldn't fault his players for effort when he spoke to BBC Scotland after the game.

"It was an end-to-end game but weather conditions were horrific," said the Hearts gaffer. "You couldn't take free-kicks as the ball was blowing all over the place. I'm disappointed to drop two points as we would like to come here and win but we accept a point. The players worked hard and got into good positions but sometimes they made bad decisions."

Hearts draw meant Aberdeen climbed above the Jambos into second place in the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership. The Maroons face Inverness Caledonian Thistle next week before heading for Pittodrie in a fortnight for what is already looking like a mouth-watering clash.

Motherwell: Ripley, Hammell, Grimshaw, McManus, Pearson, Johnson (Ainsworth, 67'), Lasley, Kennedy, Law, Moulton, McDonald (Robinson, 84').

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Augustyn, Rossi, Oshaniwa (McGhee, 50'), Pallardo, Djoum, Nicholson, Swanson (Buaben, 68'), Juanma, Sow.

Referee: Steven McLean

Att: 5,141

Top man: Osman Sow – what a goal!