

Hearts Win Tynecastle Cup Thriller



Heart of Midlothian 1 Aberdeen 0

William Hill Scottish Cup Fourth Round, Saturday 9 January 2016 – Tynecastle

Exactly four weeks after losing to Aberdeen in the Ladbrokes Scottish Premiership at Pittodrie, Hearts turned the tables by knocking the Dons out of the William Hill Scottish Cup following a pulsating fourth round tie at Tynecastle.

The Maroons got off to the best possible start with Callum Paterson heading home in just the second minute. They spurned chances to increase their lead but, nonetheless, the Gorgie Boys fully deserved their victory and their place in Monday evening's fifth round draw.

Head Coach Robbie Neilson made three changes to the team that threw away a winning position at Kilmarnock last weekend. Captain Alim Ozturk returned to the team along with Miguel Pallardo and Osman Sow – Juwon Oshaniwa, Billy King and Juanma moving to the substitute's bench.

Hearts forced a corner after just two minutes. My grandson Jack opined that Sam Nicholson would take it and Callum Paterson would head home. I admired his optimism. I threw my arms around him seconds later when Nicholson's corner was headed on by Ozturk to Callum Paterson who duly headed home to open the scoring. It was just a pity it was too late for me to ask Jack for the winning lottery numbers and to nip down to the shops...

Buoyed by this early counter Hearts proceeded to dominate the

first half. Just moments later, Osman Sow set up Gavin Reilly but the former Queen of the South striker was thwarted by Dons keeper Ward. But said keeper nearly put his team in deeper trouble when his attempt to collect Miguel Pallardo's wayward effort slipped through his hands. However, Hearts Blazej Augustyn couldn't capitalise on the error.

It was Augustyn who then set up Nicholson who cut in from the left wing before firing in a rasping shot which was well saved by the Dons keeper.

It had been an excellent first half by Hearts who were well on top, playing some neat passing football with the visitors struggling to contain their hosts.

Half-time Hearts 1 Aberdeen 0

Hearts began the second half in similar determined fashion and threatened with a free-kick right on the edge of the penalty area. However, captain Ozturk's effort was easily dealt with by Ward.

Aberdeen boss Derek McInnes had clearly said something to his team at the break and they came at Hearts in much more determined fashion. That said, Hearts were still creating the best chances and Prince Buaben set up Sam Nicholson whose effort on goal was deflected behind for a corner kick.

The Dons threatened through Rooney who forced a fine save from Neil Alexander. The tie should have been level moments later when Hayes burst through a static Hearts defence to set up Considine but the Dons defender contrived to blaze the ball over the bar from six yards when it was patently easier to score. It was an undoubted let-off for Hearts and the Maroon Army began to believe this was going to be their night.

Great play from Prince Buaben set up Reilly who then fed Osman Sow but the big Swede's effort on goal was saved by Ward. It was Sow who came close again to securing a Hearts win with a

long-range effort which was again saved by the Dons keeper.

There was still time for some last-minute drama. Another long ball from the visitors fell to McGinn who thought he had equalised – only for Neil Alexander to deny him with a brilliant save.

Aberdeen's desperation was evident when Hearts booted the ball out of play in stoppage time when a home player was injured – only for the Dons to ignore the accepted practice of immediately giving the ball back, much to the disgust of the home fans.

The final whistle sounded soon after. Hearts were triumphant and had finally recorded their first victory in the Scottish Cup – and, indeed their first goal – since they humiliated Hibernian in the 2012 final.

Four weeks ago some Aberdeen players were less than complimentary about Hearts following that league encounter in the Granite City with comments that the Maroons were a long-ball team with a brutal approach to the game. Some of the Dons players seemed intent on seeking retribution in the cup-tie at Tynecastle – Adam Rooney, in particular went unpunished for a challenge on Neil Alexander – and their persistent use of the long-ball and unsporting end to the game meant they got what they deserved.

For Hearts, the last time they defeated Aberdeen in the Scottish Cup – in 2006 – they went on to win the trophy. The Maroons have never lost to Aberdeen at Tynecastle in the Scottish Cup and never looked likely to on Saturday evening. And, given this is 2016, Hearts fans will be hoping their team's penchant for reaching cup finals in years ending with six will continue this year.

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Ozturk, Augustyn, Rossi, Buaben, Djoum, Pallardo, Nicholson (King, 68'), Reilly (Juanma, 78'), Sow (McGhee, 87').

Aberdeen: Ward, Logan, Shinnie, Considine (Goodwillie, 69'), Taylor, Reynolds, McLean, Flood (Pawlett, 37'), Rooney, McGinn, Hayes.

Referee: John Beaton

Att: 13,595

Top man: Alim Ozturk – an immense performance from the captain