

The Joy of Six For Rampant Hearts



Heart of Midlothian 6 Motherwell 0

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 16 January 2016 – Ice Station Zebra (Tynecastle)

Hearts produced their best performance of the season – and one of the best in this reporter’s memory – when they demolished Motherwell 6-0 at a freezing and snowy Tynecastle on Saturday afternoon.

Following on from last Saturday’s impressive victory over Aberdeen in the William Hill Scottish Cup, Hearts produced an awesome first half performance against the Steelmen which saw the Gorgie Boys three goals up within 22 minutes. Understandably, the second half performance was never going to match the first but the Maroons managed to add a further three goals. Six goals in total and six different goalscorers – no wonder the Maroon Army gave their team a standing ovation at the end of the game despite the snow becoming heavier as the afternoon went on.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson was forced to make one change to the team which defeated Aberdeen – Sam Nicholson, who picked up a leg knock following some tough treatment from the Dons overly-physical defenders, was unable play, his place being taken by Billy King.

As is so often the case at Tynecastle – close to yet another full-house despite it being a day when you wouldn’t put the dog out – Hearts pressurised the opposition from the start. Callum Paterson, the goal hero from seven days ago, was the first to try his luck on goal with rasping effort from 20

yards which just went wide.

In the 11th minute Hearts made their early pressure count. Billy King's corner from the left was met by the head of Igor Rossi and his goal bound effort was cleared by a 'Well defender – but the assistant referee signalled the ball had crossed the line and Hearts were ahead.

Motherwell looked dangerous when they broke forward and McDonald tested home keeper Neil Alexander who saved the Australian's effort without too much difficulty.

In the 16th minute Hearts were two goals ahead. Fine play from Arnaud Djoum set up Osman Sow and the Swede showed fine control before firing past keeper Ripley from 20 yards and into the corner of the net.

Buoyed by these early goals, Hearts swarmed forward at will and Paterson drilled in a tempting cross which just eluded maroon shirts. If the vociferous Motherwell fans thought it was going to be a long afternoon, their fears were confirmed in the 22nd minute when the hard-working Gavin Reilly attempted to take ball past keeper Ripley who brought him down. Penalty kick said referee Kevin Clancy (although only a yellow card for the keeper which surprised many) and Reilly duly despatched the penalty kick to put the Maroons 3-0 ahead.

There was a rare opportunity for the visitors when Johnson – who made some ill-judged comments during the week about Tynecastle being a 'horrible place' – had a chance from 20 yards out but he appeared to slip as he shot for goal and ball sailed over the bar, much to the delight of the baying home support.

In the 31st minute Hearts thought they had added a fourth goal when a pass from Reilly found Sow who poked the ball home but the former Crystal Palace striker was adjudged to be offside.

Then Prince Buaben, who looks revitalised, tried his luck from 30 yards which brought out a fine save from Ripley.

Half-time Hearts 3 Motherwell 0

After such an engrossing first half, there was a bit of a lull to proceedings at the beginning of the second period. Motherwell tried hard to grab the goal which would bring them back into the game but, as they had done last week, Hearts defended resolutely.

The visitors should have scored with 20 minutes left. Johnson's cross fell to the unmarked McDonald but the Australian contrived to head wide with the goal gaping. It was a miss on a par with Aberdeen's Considine at Tynecastle last week but the home support weren't complaining.

Osman Sow was replaced by Juanma and the Swede's generous applause to the home support seemed to signal this may have been his last game at Tynecastle. If it is, he will be a huge miss.

Juanma showed his strength by racing past the visiting defence before passing to Callum Paterson. The defender's cross into the box was almost met by Billy King but, again, Ripley came to the rescue.

Despite their fine showing, casualness crept into Hearts play when Blazej Augustyn dithered on the edge of his own penalty box and gave the ball away to Fletcher. Thankfully, Hearts keeper Neil Alexander saved and the danger was averted but the Hearts number one wasn't slow in making his feelings known to the unfortunate Augustyn.

All was forgiven in the 77th minute. Fine play from captain Alim Ozturk set up substitute Dario Zanatta and the young Canadian fed Callum Paterson who fired home Hearts fourth goal.

Three minutes from the end Hearts went nap. The impressive Arnaud Djoum found Juanma who fired home inside the penalty box to put Hearts five goals ahead.

In stoppage time, Djoum danced his way into the Motherwell penalty box before being brought down. The Belgian blasted home the resultant penalty to end the scoring at 6-0 to Hearts.

The final whistle sounded moments later as the snow fell ever more heavily but the Maroon Army went home happy after a thoroughly impressive display. There was pace, skill, movement and deadly finishing from Hearts who will fancy their chances against anyone at Tynecastle on this kind of form.

Robbie Neilson, though, was not getting carried away following what has been a fine week for Hearts.

“Last week was the benchmark and we’ve carried it on into this week,” he said. “We’re not going to get carried away. We had a good result last week, we’ve had a fantastic result this week, but we’ve still got a long way to go.

“The players have still got to improve vastly if they want to get to where we want to be, which is challenging Celtic, and we’ve still got Aberdeen in our sights.”

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Ozturk, Augustyn, Rossi (McGhee, 83’), King, Pallardo, Djoum, Buaben, Reilly (Zanatta, 69’), Sow (Juanma, 64’).

Motherwell: Ripley, Hammell, McManus, Ainsworth (Thomas, 68’), Pearson, Johnson, Chalmers, Law (Clarkson, 82’), Moulton (Fletcher, 68’) Hall, McDonald

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Att: 16,574

Top man: Arnaud Djoum – what a find he has been for Hearts

