

Hearts End A Week To Forget With Defeat

Dundee United 2 Heart of Midlothian 1

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 20 February 2016 – Tannadice

Hearts failed to shake off the hangover from their William Hill Scottish Cup exit at Easter Road on Tuesday as the Maroons went down at bottom of the table side Dundee United at Tannadice on Saturday afternoon.

The visitors had Jordan McGhee ordered off in the first half and soon went behind to a goal just before half-time. Although Jamie Walker equalised for the ten men, United scored a late winner to secure their first league victory in a month.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson – a former United player – made five changes to the team that lost to Hibernian. Captain Alim Ozturk returned to the side as did Juwon Oshaniwa, Prince Buaben and Sam Nicholson while young Canadian forward Dario Zanatta was given a starting place for the first time replacing the injured Juanma. Callum Paterson was also injured while Miguel Pallardo, Igor Rossi and Arnaud Djoum had to be content with a place on the substitute's bench.

The home side are cast adrift at the foot of the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership table and were desperate for points, particularly after chairman Stephen Thompson's diatribe at the players following their midweek defeat from Motherwell.

That said, there wasn't much to report on in the opening stages. The nearest to a goal came in the 18th minute when United's Ofere forced Hearts keeper Neil Alexander into a brilliant save.

With half an hour gone the Hearts number one was again to his team's rescue with another good save from Demel.

Hearts, meantime, were making little progress with United's keeper Kawashima having one of his quieter afternoons. However, seven minutes before half-time, slack play from United's Gunning set Sam Nicholson free on goal but his long range effort was wide.

Moments later, Hearts Jordan McGhee went for a fifty-fifty ball with Ofere. Referee Kevin Clancy didn't like the Hearts defender's challenge and, having already shown McGhee a yellow card for an earlier challenge, produced a second yellow card followed by a red – and Hearts were reduced to ten men.

An already bad afternoon for the Jambos then worsened when Demel headed home a corner three minutes before half-time to put the home side in front.

Half-time Dundee United 1 Hearts 0

Robbie Neilson may well have had words with his out of touch team at the break. If he did, it only took three minutes for this to have the desired effect. Substitute John Souttar – barracked by the supporters of the team he played for until last month – found Jamie Walker and the forward blasted the ball past Kawashima to draw parity.

Dow had a chance midway through the second half when he beat Augustyn but the on-rushing Neil Alexander managed to put off the United man and the chance was gone.

Hearts opportunities were few and far between although Abiola Dauda had an effort which was stopped by Kawashima.

The game appeared to be petering out for a share of the points until three minutes from the end when Paton blasted home a spectacular volley from 25 yards past Alexander to wrap up all three points for the home side.

There was just time for United's Anier to match Jordan McGhee by receiving a second yellow card but there was little time for Hearts to rescue a point.

So ended a week that Hearts fans will be glad to see the back of. No doubt the Robbie Neilson critics will be out in force on social media tonight – but the Maroons remain well clear in third place in the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership.

Dundee United: Kawashima, Paton, Rankin, Ofere (Anier, 72'), Durnan, Gunning, Spittal, Fraser, Donaldson, Sinama-Pongolle (Dow, 59'), Demel (Dixon, 53').

Hearts: Alexander, McGhee, Ozturk, Augustyn, Oshaniwa (Rossi, 46'), Buaben (Djoum, 75'), Cowie, Nicholson, Walker, Zanatta (Souttar, 43'), Dauda.

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Att: 8,031

Top Man: Jamie Walker