

Hearts Labour To Win As Racial Complaint Made



Heart of Midlothian 1 Kilmarnock 0

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 27 February 2016 – Tynecastle

After recent reversals to Hibernian and Dundee United, Hearts got back to winning ways with a narrow win over Kilmarnock at another packed Tynecastle on Saturday.

A Jamie Walker goal after just six minutes was enough to give the Jambos all three points but, if truth be told, it was another game where the Maroons delivered a second half performance that left a lot to be desired.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson – who signed an extension to his contract at Tynecastle on Friday – made five changes to the team which went down to Dundee United seven days ago. Callum Paterson returned from injury while Igor Rossi, John Souttar, Arnaud Djoum and Gavin Reilly were all given starting places.

Killie were looking to impress new manager Lee Clark and they almost took the lead in the opening few seconds. The home defence failed to clear a cross into the penalty box and Slater fired in a first time effort which went wide.

Hearts then forced a corner and Jamie Walker's delivery was met by the diminutive figure of Gavin Reilly whose header was just inches too high.

In the sixth minute Hearts did grab what proved to be the only

goal of the game. Alim Ozturk fired a long pass to Prince Buaben who was brought down by Findlay inside the penalty box. A penalty kick said referee Don Robertson who then reached for a card from his pocket. It's fair to say there was a degree of incredulity inside Tynecastle when the colour of the card was yellow rather than red – it seemed to many that the Killie defender had denied Buaben, even with his scoring record, a clear goalscoring opportunity.

Jamie Walker took the spot kick and saw his effort saved by former Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald – only for the Hearts man to scoop the rebound over his former team mate to give the home side the lead.

Hearts were playing more of a passing game than has recently been evident with young John Souttar looking a class act in the defence. The visitors were being pinned back in their own half but were dangerous on the counter-attack as was proved when Magennis had an effort saved by Hearts keeper Neil Alexander and Balatoni had a header cleared off the line by Callum Paterson.

Abioloa Dauda then had the home support on their feet when he set off on a run which had the Killie defenders trailing in his wake. His pass found Walker but the youngster's effort was saved well by MacDonald.

The impressive Souttar then had a chance five minutes before the interval before a fine free-kick from skipper Alim Ozturk was well saved by MacDonald who was again demonstrating why Hearts made an error of judgement by letting him go nearly two years ago. The Killie keeper then denied Sam Nicholson as half-time approached.

Half-time Hearts 1 Kilmarnock 0

A couple of minutes into the second half, Callum Paterson delivered a long cross which found the head of Nicholson but the winger's header hit the post before rolling along the goal

line and the danger was cleared.

And that, it has to be said, was pretty much it from a Hearts perspective – a late penalty kick aside. Kilmarnock dominated the second half as they chased an equaliser and Hearts defending became desperate at times. The home side struggled to contain Obadeyi and Magennis but the visitors couldn't convert their pressure into goals.

Callum Paterson had to leave the field with a shoulder injury with Blazej Augustyn taking his place. The home side were struggling to put two passes together but at least Gavin Reilly was, to use an oft-used cliché, working his socks off. It was strange, therefore, to see the former Queen of the South striker replaced by Juanma midway through the second half, a decision the home support were far from happy with and weren't slow in letting Robbie Neilson know their feelings.

Yet, for all they were poor in the second half, Hearts really should have eased the pressure on themselves when they were awarded another penalty kick with ten minutes left. Igor Rossi's header was handled by Magennis inside the penalty box and the Maroons had their second spot kick of the afternoon. This time Abiola Dauda took the kick but his effort was a woeful one, pushed out by MacDonald who then thwarted Nicholson's attempt to net the rebound. It was Hearts 15th penalty kick this season – and one of the poorest.

Injury time and Hearts timewasting tactics meant there was an additional five minutes to be played at the end of the ninety. Thankfully for the home side there was no further scoring and Hearts recorded the narrowest of wins to close the gap between them and second-placed Aberdeen to nine points – with the Maroons having played a game fewer than the Dons.

Robbie Neilson told the official Hearts website after the game "It was important to get the result. We want to play good football but sometimes it's not possible. We had good periods

today, but we weren't as good in the second half.

"On the plus side, I thought we defended our lead really well, and we didn't give many chances up outside of the first five minutes.

After the game it was confirmed that Kilmarnock striker Josh Magennis made a complaint to Police Scotland, alleging he was racially abused from a section of the Hearts support in the Wheatfield Stand.

A Police Scotland spokesperson said "We can confirm we have received a report of racial abuse and our enquiries are ongoing."

If the allegations are proved to be correct, Hearts will surely make every effort to identify the perpetrator(s) and criminal proceedings will commence. It is a sad reflection on society that such disgraceful behaviour still happens and every effort must be made to eradicate this poison.

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson (Augustyn, 75'), Ozturk, Souttar, Rossi, Walker, Buaben (Cowie, 62'), Djoum, Nicholson, Reilly (Juanma, 68'), Dauda.

Kilmarnock: MacDonald, Findlay, O'Hara (Faubert, 28'), Obadeyi, Slater (Boyd, 63'), McHattie, Kiltie, Balatoni, Hodson, Magennis, Dicker.

Referee: Don Robertson

Att: 16,354

Top Man: John Souttar – reminded me of a young Craig Levein thirty years ago