

Hearts Go Down To Champions Elect



Heart of Midlothian 1 Celtic 3

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Saturday 30 April 2016 – Tynecastle

As April draws to a close amidst a week of snow, hail, wind and occasional sunshine, Hearts welcomed Celtic to Tynecastle on Saturday hoping to record their first victory over the Hoops since their memorable triumph in the William Hill Scottish Cup semi-final at Hampden more than four years ago. The visitors knew that a win for them would all but secure a fifth successive SPFL Premiership title but the scarcely disguised ill-feeling between supporters of both clubs meant this was unlikely to be easy.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson was not a happy chap after his side's soulless performance in the 1-0 defeat at Motherwell. He made three changes from that team: Blazej Augustyn, Juwon Oshaniwa and Don Cowie replaced Callum Paterson, Liam Smith and Sam Nicholson.

It was another full house at Tynecastle despite the lunchtime kick-off with the atmosphere electric as it always is for Hearts-Celtic games. The visitors knew victory would just about tie up another league title and they made a determined start. Roberts was given too much space to stroll through the Hearts defence before seeing his shot on goal parried by home keeper Neil Alexander. The ball broke to McGregor who swept it into the net but the goal was ruled out – incorrectly as it transpired – for offside.

Roberts again set off on a run and made Alexander work for his

money. Again, the rebound broke to a Celtic player – Griffiths – but his effort was pushed over the bar by Alexander.

It was no surprise when Celtic went ahead in the 16th minute. Lustig's cross found Kazim-Richards who had time to control the ball before firing it beyond Alexander.

Hearts tried to respond when Arnaud Djoum set up Jamie Walker but the young forward's effort was saved by former Hearts keeper Craig Gordon.

With half-time approaching, Celtic almost doubled their lead. The unfortunate Arnaud Djoum saw a shot rebound from a Celtic player and fall to the feet of Griffiths. The former Hibernian striker raced in on goal but his effort was blocked.

Half-time Hearts 0 Celtic 1

Robbie Neilson was clearly an unhappy man as Callum Paterson and Abiola Dauda were brought on at the start of the second half at the expense of Augustyn and Cowie. The impact was almost immediate when Djoum sprinted forward and fired in an effort on goal which Gordon saved well.

Then John Souttar sent the ball wide to Juwon Oshaniwa who set up Dauda whose fine effort screamed just wide.

This was much better now from Hearts and they were rewarded in the 57th minute. The impressive Dauda gained possession and ran forward several yards to the edge of the Celtic penalty box before firing past Gordon for the equaliser.

Tynecastle erupted but home optimism lasted just ten minutes. A mistake from John Souttar allowed Roberts to collect the ball and fire past Alexander.

With just five minutes left, the unfortunate Souttar saw his attempted clearance charged down by Griffiths who fired the ball past Alexander to complete the scoring at 3-1 to the

champions elect.

Another disappointing afternoon for Hearts who will now officially have to settle for third place in the Ladbrokes Premiership.

Robbie Neilson cut a disappointed figure after the game as did the crestfallen Hearts support who witnessed their side capitulate yet again against Celtic.

“It was frustrating not to take anything out of the game, but we’re taking steps and getting better.” said the Gorgie boss. “We played well for large periods of the game and had opportunities, but two mistakes gifted them two goals and the three points at the end of the day.

“We’ve got to accept that we have a young team and they’ll make mistakes, but we just have to look to improve. We’ve got a good group here and we’ll get stronger.

Hearts: Alexander, Souttar, Ozturk, Augustyn (Paterson, 46’), Cowie (Dauda, 46’), Buaben (Nicholson, 76’), Kitchen, Djoum, Oshaniwa, Walker, Juanma.

Celtic: Gordon, Lustig, Ambrose, Sviatchenko, Tierney, Brown, Bitton, Roberts (Rogic, 68’), McGregor, Griffiths, Kazim-Richards.

Referee: Alan Muir

Att: 16,527

Top man: Perry Kitchen