

Hearts End Season With a Draw



Heart of Midlothian 2 St Johnstone 2

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership, Sunday 15 May 2016 – Tynecastle

Hearts began their return to life in the Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership back in August with a thrilling 4-3 win over St Johnstone at Tynecastle. The somewhat confusing nature of the league fixtures saw Robbie Neilson's side end their campaign against the same opponents at the same venue. And, once again, the fans were treated to a thrilling game, despite there being nothing at stake.

Neilson made just one change from the team that defeated Aberdeen at Pittodrie on Thursday evening with youngster Lewis Moore being handed a starting place at the expense of another youngster, Canadian Dario Zanatta.

Hearts last home game, last weekend's 1-1 draw with Ross County, was something of a lacklustre affair but there appeared to be a different approach to this week's game. Right from the first blast of referee Greg Aitken's whistle, the Maroons – wearing the Foundation of Hearts strip – swarmed towards their visitors' goal. Arnaud Djoum had the game's first real chance with a shot from the edge of the penalty box but it was deflected clear.

Despite Hearts looking more menacing than they had last week, it was the visitors who struck with not one but two sucker punches.

In the ninth minute, John Souttar brought down Cummins inside the penalty box. Penalty said referee Aitken – it has to be said he didn't have the best of afternoons and this decision was hotly disputed by the home side – and Craig gave Hearts

keeper Jack Hamilton no chance with the spot kick.

Three minutes later, the Perth Saints doubled their lead. Former Jambo Danny Swanson's corner caused havoc in the six yard box and Cummins scrambled the ball into the net.

Tynecastle was stunned – but not for long. In the 17th minute, Callum Paterson set up Prince Buaben on the edge of the Saints penalty box. His cross was somewhat sclauffed by Gordon and Arnaud Djoum headed past Saints keeper Mannus to bring the home side back into the game.

Three minutes later it was all-square. Another cross from Buaben was aimed towards Juanma but Saints Shaughnessy couldn't get out of the way and he headed past an aghast Mannus. 2-2.

Hearts should have gone ahead ten minutes later. Youngster Lewis Moore delivered a fine cross from the left which was met by Abiola Dauda and the departing striker's header produced a brilliant save from Mannus.

The game was far from being a tedious end of season affair and the visitors came close to going back in front when the dangerous Cummins set up Swanson whose shot on goal was cleared off the line by Callum Paterson.

Half-time Hearts 2 St Johnstone 2

The second half was minutes old when Saints almost went in front again. Cummins got the better of Alim Ozturk and raced through on goal. However, young Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton raced out to meet him and the Saints striker's lob over the keeper also cleared the crossbar.

On the hour mark, Hearts were reduced to ten men when goalscorer Abiola Dauda went in late on Craig and referee Aitken flashed a red card to the Hearts man. One could argue that Craig's reaction to the challenge also merited

punishment. Something of a 'rammy' then followed with Djoum and Saints Fisher being booked. A clearly angry Juanma then had his name added to the referee's list of offenders soon after.

Captain Alim Ozturk delivered a trademark free kick in the 77th minute which was saved by Mannus but ten men Hearts organised themselves well to earn a point.

That they did so was down to the heroics of keeper Jack Hamilton who produced a brilliant save from Hurst in the final minute of the game.

The match ended all-square and the Hearts players came back on to the pitch moments after the end of the game to applaud the Maroon Army before beginning their brief summer break. Those players who are remaining at Tynecastle next season will be back for pre-season training a month today.

Hearts: Hamilton, Paterson, Ozturk, Souttar, Oshaniwa (L. Smith, 52'), Moore (Nicholson, 62'), Kitchen, Buaben, Djoum, Juanma (Reilly, 67'), Dauda.

St Johnstone: Mannus, Scobbie, Wotherspoon, Shaughnessy, Swanson, Cummins, Fisher, Easton, Kane (Hurst, 67'), Craig, Gordon (MacLean, 82').

Referee: Greg Aitken

Att: 16,046

Top man: Jack Hamilton – a star in the making