

# Ex Jambos Knock Hearts Out of Betfred League Cup

St Johnstone 3 Heart of Midlothian 2

Betfred League Cup 2<sup>nd</sup> Round, Wednesday 10 August 2016 – McDiarmid Park

It's an oft-used cliché that when a club releases players there is always a danger they will return to 'haunt' them with something of a payback. That cliché struck not once but twice at McDiarmid Park on Wednesday evening when former Hearts players Danny Swanson and Brad McKay – released by the Gorgie club last year – scored for St Johnstone who came from 2-1 down to knock Hearts out of the Betfred League Cup.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson made three changes to the team that lost to Celtic on Sunday. Skipper Alim Ozturk replaced the injured Faycal Rherras and Prince Buaben and Robbie Muirhead came in for Sam Nicholson and Tony Watt. The omission of Watt from the starting line-up was a surprise for the travelling Maroon Army, given how well the former Celtic player did against his former team on Sunday.

Hearts began the game well enough and Conor Sammon saw his 20-yard shot come off the post as the visitors looked to make an early breakthrough. However, it was the home side who made that breakthrough in the tenth minute. Former Hearts player Danny Swanson thrashed home a magnificent shot from 30 yards which gave Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton not an earthly and the Saints were ahead.

The Perth Saints were understandably buoyed by this and created other chances but it was Hearts who turned the game around as half-time approached. With three minutes left of the first half, Robbie Muirhead produced a fine save from Saints

keeper Mannus. Jamie Walker seized on the loose ball and passed to Igor Rossi whose cross into the penalty box was met by Callum Paterson who headed the equaliser.

Joy for the travelling support which increased right on the stroke of half-time when Paterson was fouled in the penalty box by Easton. Jamie Walker slotted home the resultant penalty kick and Hearts, unexpectedly, were in front at the interval.

### **Half-time St Johnstone 1 Hearts 2**

The Saints began the second half determined to get on level terms and Easton and Craig forced Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton to make impressive saves.

Conor Sammon was proving to be Hearts main threat but the Maroons could not increase their lead – and literally paid the penalty in the 75<sup>th</sup> minute when Alim Ozturk brought down Swanson inside the penalty box. The former Jambo made no mistake with the penalty kick and the tie was level – but not for long.

Four minutes later, that man Swanson delivered a corner kick that was met by another former Jambo, Brad McKay, who headed past a startled Hamilton to score what was to prove to be the winner.

Robbie Neilson made a late substitution and it was one which puzzled the less than happy Hearts support. With the Maroons 3-2 down, Neilson took off Prince Buaben and replaced him not with Dario Zanatta – a forward – but with Liam Smith – a defender.

Hearts could not rescue the tie and yet again have exited a cup competition at an early stage.

**St Johnstone:** Mannus, Scobbie (McKay, 46'), Alston, Anderson, Wotherspoon, Swanson, Shaughnessy, Paton, Easton, Kane, Craig (MacLean, 66').

**Hearts:** Hamilton, Paterson, Ozturk, Souttar, Rossi, Djoum, Buaben (L. Smith, 82'), Cowie, Walker (Watt, 62'), Muirhead (Nicholson, 62'), Sammon.

**Referee:** Crawford Allan

**Att:** 4,214

**Top Man:** Callum Paterson