

Hearts Make Their Point at Pittodrie

Aberdeen 0 Heart of Midlothian 0

Ladbrokes Premiership – Saturday 13 August 2016, Pittodrie

Hearts travelled to the Granite City on Saturday looking for their first points of the new Ladbrokes Premiership campaign. They didn't get all three but returned to the capital city with a single point to open their account for the season after a lively but ultimately goalless encounter at Pittodrie.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson made three changes from the team that capitulated in the Betfred League Cup at St Johnstone on Wednesday. Faycal Rherras, Sam Nicholson and Tony Watt returned to the starting line up in place of Alim Ozturk, Robbie Muirhead and the suspended Jamie Walker.

On the substitutes' bench for the home side was former Hearts goalkeeper Neil Alexander.

It was the Dons who made the brightest start and fine work from Pawlett set up Stockley after just three minutes but he headed wide. Then, slack play from the much-maligned Hearts defence – heavily criticised by Neilson on Wednesday evening – meant O'Connor rose unchallenged to a high ball in the Hearts penalty box but he headed wide.

In the 12th minute, McGinn cut through the Hearts defence and looked set to open the scoring but Hearts John Souttar saved the day for the White and Maroons with a fine challenge and the ball was deflected to safety.

It was all Aberdeen at this stage but an impressive volley from Callum Paterson had Dons keeper Lewis scrambling as the visitors threatened at last. Paterson almost repeated this

feat soon after but this time his effort went over the bar.

Eight minutes from half-time, a brilliant pass from Tony Watt was chased by Sam Nicholson who appeared to be brought down by Logan inside the penalty box. However, referee Kevin Clancy waved away Hearts penalty appeals. Perhaps the fall-out from the Jamie Walker 'incident' last Sunday will be felt for some time yet...

Half-time Aberdeen 0 Hearts 0

The home side had the first real chance of the second half in the 52nd minute when Logan set up Pawlett but the chance went begging.

As he did last week against the champions, Hearts Tony Watt was proving to be a real threat and in the 65th minute he forced a save from Lewis before, moments later, he set up Don Cowie but the stand-in skipper ballooned his shot over the bar.

Dons substitute McLean headed wide as both sides pushed for a winner – which should have come Hearts way four minutes from the end when fine play from Conor Sammon set up Tony Watt. The former Celtic player took a touch and looked certain to score – only to see his shot sail yards over the bar. And that, boys and girls, was that.

Robbie Neilson was in philosophical mood after the game. He told BBC Radio Scotland: "It was a tough game and I thought that Aberdeen had the better of the first half while we had the better of the second half.

"Tony Watt had a chance to win it for us but I think fatigue played a part in him missing it as it was his first full 90 minutes in a long time, but he showed what he will bring to this team.

"We have had a tough start to the season playing the champions

at Tynecastle then going to Perth and Aberdeen in the first week.

“Those are the teams that finished first, second and fourth in the league last season so they are some of the toughest games we could have got.

“We could have done better in these matches but we have got a point at a difficult venue and now we look to build on that against Caley Thistle next weekend now.”

Aberdeen: Lewis, Logan, Shinnie, Taylor, Reynolds, Burns (McLean, 56'), McGinn, O'Connor, Pawlett (Storey, 72'), Stockley (Rooney, 56'), Jack.

Hearts: Hamilton, Paterson, Souttar, Rossi, Rherras (L. Smith, 46'), Djoum, Buaben (Kitchen, 46'), Cowie, Nicholson (Muirhead, 71'), Watt, Sammon.

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Att: 13,559

Top man: John Souttar