

Hearts Break Accies

Resistance



Heart of Midlothian 3 Hamilton Academical 1

Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership – Saturday 10 September 2016, Tynecastle

The Ladbrokes SPFL Premiership resumed on Saturday after its international hiatus with Hearts looking to make it three wins in a row after their impressive victories over the two Thistles – Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Partick. On Saturday it was the turn of the Accies to face the Maroons as Hamilton Academical visited Tynecastle.

Martin Canning's side threatened to put a dent in Hearts recent winning run by taking the lead early in the second half but Robbie Neilson's side responded with a brace of goals from Jamie Walker and a fine volley from Sam Nicholson to clinch a 3-1 win.

A fortnight ago Neilson had picked an unchanged team to face Partick Thistle at Firhill – something of a rare event. The Maroon Army headed to Tynecastle on Saturday wondering if it would be three unchanged Hearts teams in a row. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't. Sam Nicholson was replaced by Jamie Walker – the former apparently feeling his exertions from Scotland Under 21 duty in the Ukraine during the week.

In their last home game – the 5-1 demolition of Inverness Caledonian Thistle – Hearts began the game in blistering fashion. This time they were again camped in the visitors' half as they sought to make an early breakthrough. Jamie Walker had an early chance but his shot wasn't powerful enough to test Accies keeper Matthews.

Fine play from Tony Watt had the Accies defenders trailing in his wake but his shot from just outside the penalty box was direct at the Accies keeper. Conor Sammon had Hearts next chance but he was denied by Sarros.

Hearts latest Scotland internationalist, Callum Paterson, wasn't having the best of afternoons and he also looked like he was suffering from the exertions of international duty. However, the full back leapt to head Don Cowie's fine cross inches over the bar. Another header from the 21-year-old then went wide.

Hamilton looked dangerous on the counter-attack but Hearts John Souttar looked more than capable of dealing with anything that came his way. Back at the other end the procession to the Accies goal continued. A cross from Paterson was touched by Sammon for Tony Watt but the former Celtic man's shot again lacked power. If Watt was frustrated by this he was exasperated moments later when he appeared to be fouled inside the Accies penalty box – only for referee Craig Thomson to book the Hearts winger for diving.

Sammon, Paterson and Reherras all had chances as the first half drew to a close but their efforts were in vain as the afternoon began to take on a look of 'one of those days'.

Half-time Hearts 0 Hamilton Academical 0

This was a feeling enhanced when the visitors took the lead five minutes into the second half with their first attempt on target. Gillespie skipped past the unfortunate Callum Paterson before crossing for Crawford to volley home.

Tynecastle was stunned but the Maroon Army rallied behind their team. Jamie Walker produced a brilliant shot ten minutes into the second half which crashed off the crossbar before keeper Matthews saved Don Cowie's follow-up shot.

Robbie Neilson then threw on Sam Nicholson for Arnaud Djoum –

another player who had been on international duty during the week for Cameroon – and the move paid off almost immediately. After showing fine skill down the right wing, Nicholson delivered a brilliant cross which was superbly headed home by Jamie Walker for the equaliser.

Tynecastle was a cacophony of noise now and the home crowd urged their favourites forward to complete the job. Callum Paterson thought he had put Hearts in front only to see his header bounce off the crossbar and then cleared off the line.

With just ten minutes left, Hearts got the chance to go ahead. Again it was Nicholson who was tormenting the Accies defence and when he surged past Want, the defender brought him down inside the penalty box. Penalty said referee Craig Thomson despite furious protests from the visitors who accused Nicholson of diving. From where I was sitting, there appeared to be contact and Jamie Walker made no mistake from the resulting penalty kick.

Having spent much of the game wasting as much time as possible, Accies were now transformed into a team going for broke in a bid to salvage something from the game. Ironically, it was in time added on by referee Thomson for those aforementioned time-wasting tactics by Accies, that Hearts sealed the victory. A cross from substitute Robbie Muirhead was brilliantly controlled by Sam Nicholson who blasted the ball past Matthews to clinch a thoroughly deserved win for the Maroons.

Robbie Neilson was naturally delighted with the victory.

“We’re delighted with that,” he told the official Hearts website. “Hamilton are a really hard side to break down, and we’ve had it tough against them recently. We knew we might need to be patient, they’re a good unit.

“We had a lot of pressure in the first half, but we were frustrated with some missed chances in the first half too. We

lost a good goal soon after half time, but we showed great character to respond and win the match.”

“Jamie Walker is one of our best players, but the team’s been doing so well that he’s found it hard to get back in,” said Robbie. “With Sam Nicholson feeling a bit tired today, we gave Jamie a chance and he certainly repaid us.

“Sam is a player with real quality, but he was a bit tired from his international break and we wanted to rest him a bit, and let him loose for the last half hour of the match, when they would be tiring.

“We knew he could give us something different and make a real impact, so we’re delighted with the contribution from both the wingers today.”

A hard-working Hearts team never gave up in a game they might not have won a year ago and now sit in second place in the Ladbrokes Premiership table.

Hearts: Hamilton; Paterson, Souttar, Rossi, Rherras; Walker, Cowie, Kitchen, Djoum; Sammon, Watt.

Hamilton: Matthews; Lyon, Seaborne, Sarris, Gillespie; Donati; Imrie, MacKinnon, Docherty, Crawford; D’Acol.

Referee: Craig Thomson

Att: 15,947

Top Man: John Souttar – the young defender strolled through the game.