

Hearts Win Well to Go Second

Motherwell 1 Heart of Midlothian 3

Ladbroke's Premiership – Friday 30 September 2016, Fir Park

Hearts had their first taste of Friday night football this season when they headed to Fir Park to face a Motherwell team vying with Robbie Neilson's side for second place in the Ladbroke's Premiership. The Maroons were looking to win at Motherwell for the first time in nearly six years.

Neilson was forced to make one change from the team that was held to an insipid goalless draw by Ross County at Tynecastle last Saturday. Veteran Don Cowie sustained a calf injury and was replaced by Jamie Walker.

The game was switched to Friday evening for live television coverage by BT Sport. Quite what the BT Sport viewers thought of the first forty-five minutes, however, is anyone's guess – suffice to say it wouldn't have been 'what a splendid game this is'.

The first half was, quite frankly, awful. Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton produced a stunning save from Clay in the 20th minute and that, dear reader, was the highlight of the first forty-five minutes. Yes, even more memorable than Hearts goal which came as referee Steven McLean prepared to blow his whistle for half-time and put us all out of our misery. Sam Nicholson attempted a shot on goal that wasn't particularly threatening until McManus stuck out a leg to divert the ball past Well keeper Samson.

Half-time Motherwell 0 Hearts 1

The start to the second half at least had more of an edge to it. Jamie Walker, who had a decent chance in the first half but took too many touches on the ball, fired a more direct

effort which took a deflection and went wide.

The home side thought they had equalised eight minutes into the second half but McDonald's effort was ruled out for offside.

Tony Watt was causing the Motherwell rear-guard all sorts of problems and the former Celtic winger forced a decent save from home keeper Samson.

Midway through the second half, Hearts doubled their lead with a sensational goal from Callum Paterson. After Jamie Walker made a hash of a shot, Paterson strode forward and lashed a left foot shot from 25 yards which almost burst the net. Joy for the travelling Maroon Army who were behind the goal.

Hearts had their tails up now and Watt showed great footwork before hitting the post. But with seven minutes left, Hearts wrapped up all three points with another sublime goal. After a corner on the right, Arnaud Djoum stepped forward and placed the ball beyond the unsuspecting Samson for a finish of some quality and the points were Gorgie bound.

In a game that was never above the 'average' category, it was curious that it should contain such wonderful goals. Motherwell contributed to this with a magnificent free kick from James McFadden in injury time which gave Jack Hamilton not an earthly.

Although disappointed not to have kept a clean sheet, Hearts will be content with a 3-1 win which takes them back to second place in the Ladbrokes Premiership.

Motherwell: Samson, Tait, Hammell, Heneghan, McManus, Moulton, Bowman (McFadden, 70'), Cadden (Lucas, 25'), Lasley (Ainsworth, 70'), Clay, McDonald.

Hearts: Hamilton, Paterson, Souttar, Rossi, Rherras, Nicholson (Buaben, 80'), Djoum, Kitchen, Walker (Muirhead, 82'), Watt,

Sammon (Johnsen, 68').

Referee: Steven MacLean

Att: 4,666

Top man: Callum Paterson