

Djoum Shines as Hearts Defeat Dundee



Heart of Midlothian 2 Dundee 0

Ladbrokes Premiership – Saturday 15th October 2016, Tynecastle

October is something of a curiosity for Hearts. After the break for the somewhat depressing World Cup qualifiers, Hearts were back in action for the first time in over a fortnight when Dundee visited Gorgie on Saturday afternoon. However, with Hearts next Ladbrokes Premiership game not due for another ten days – next weekend's opponents Rangers will be in League Cup semi-final action – this month has something of a stop-start feel to it for the Maroons.

Head Coach Robbie Neilson took charge of his 100th game for Hearts and he was up against a familiar face in the opposition dug-out. Dundee manager Paul Hartley was a team-mate of Robbie's a decade ago and both played in Hearts 2006 Scottish Cup final triumph over Gretna.

Neilson was forced to do without the services of winger Sam Nicholson who has been ruled out of action until January following knee surgery. He was forced into one other change from the team that won 3-1 at Motherwell 15 days ago as defender Faycal Rherras, who was taken ill when on international duty for Morocco during the week, missed out and was replaced by Alim Ozturk.

The game began in ominous fashion for the hosts when Callum Paterson gave the ball away in the opening seconds allowing El Bakhtaoui – who Robbie Neilson admitted during the week could have been a Hearts player – to run through on goal.

Thankfully, John Souttar was on hand to deny the Dundee man with a superb tackle.

Five minutes later and it was Dundee's turn to gift a chance when Gomis was woefully short with a back pass to his keeper Bain. Hearts much-maligned striker Conor Sammon was quick to pounce but his effort was saved by the Dundee keeper.

Callum Paterson, keen to atone for his first minute howler, raced into the Dundee penalty area and his left foot shot was only just wide.

Ten minutes in and Don Cowie delivered a more than tempting cross but Tony Watt – who didn't have the happiest of afternoons – headed over. The former Celtic striker had an even better chance three minutes later when a cross from Sammon from the right landed at the feet of Hearts number 32 – but his effort on goal caused more trouble to the visiting Dundee fans in the Roseburn Stand than the Dundee keeper.

Hearts were far from having things their own way. Hateley's free kick in the 20th minute grazed Jack Hamilton's crossbar and the visitors were causing Hearts more than a problem or two on the counter-attack.

After Callum Paterson fired an effort wide from 25 yards, there was another chance for the unfortunate Tony Watt who connected with a cross from Sammon only to see Jamie Walker get in the way of his attempt on goal.

Hearts continued to create but fail to take their chances. Paterson delivered another dangerous cross from the right which skimmed along the six-yard box but eluded both Don Cowie and Conor Sammon.

The impressive Arnaud Djoum was next to try his luck with an effort from 20 yards but Dees keeper Bain produced a fine save to push the ball out for a corner.

As the first half drew to a close, the game was beginning to resemble Hearts last home game when they failed to break through a stubborn Ross County defence. Hearts fans were hoping there would be a different outcome on this drier October afternoon.

Half-time Hearts 0 Dundee 0

Paul Hartley appeared to have told his Dundee players at half-time that Hearts were there for the taking as the visitors came out after the interval with all guns blazing. Hartley's effort from 20 yards spun off Igor Rossi and hit the post with Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton beaten.

The Hearts number one then produced a superb save from El Bakhtaoui before the crossbar saved Hearts when Gadzhalov's header from a corner bounced off the bar. The Dundee fans scented blood and increased their noise volume but it was Hearts who responded when Jamie Walker collected a fine pass from Djoum but the winger's shot on goal was straight at keeper Bain.

Dundee's Teijsse then became the latest white-shirted player to be denied as his effort from the edge of the Hearts penalty box came back off the post.

The visitors were left to rue their misfortune when Hearts took the lead in the 68th minute. Substitute Robbie Muirhead – on for the ineffective Tony Watt – delivered a fine free-kick from the left which found the head of Callum Paterson who headed into the corner of the net. The Scotland defender stood to take the acclaim of a relieved home support.

Igor Rossi had the chance to double Hearts lead when he had a free header from Cowie's corner – but headed into the Gorgie Stand. Then Arnaud Djoum had another effort on goal which was straight at Dundee keeper Bain. It was Bain who kept his team in the game with a brilliant save to deny Hearts substitute

Bjorn Johnsen – but the American wasn't to be denied for long.

After Dundee's Teijsse headed wide when it seemed easier to score, Hearts stormed to the other end of the field. Great pace from Jamie Walker saw the winger deliver a teasing cross into the Dundee penalty box which was met by Johnsen who duly scored his first goal in a maroon shirt – and clinched all three points for Hearts.

It wasn't a game for the purists and Dundee can perhaps feel aggrieved at not taking a point from the game, given the guilt-edged chances they missed. For Hearts, however, it was another welcome three points which lifts them into third place in the Ladbrokes Premiership table.

Robbie Neilson was naturally pleased with a win that was, to resort to cliché mode, 'hard-fought'. He told the official Hearts website:

"The first-half felt a bit like Groundhog Day. We're still creating chances, but just not taking them early enough. We played against an inspired Scott Bain as well today.

"Our goals are coming towards the end of games now. Teams sit in against us, and they're hard to break down. Players like Cowie, Djoum and Sammon do a lot of work tiring out teams.

"That makes it easier for our substitutes to come on and steal the glory like Muirhead and Johnsen did for us today"

Hearts: Hamilton, Paterson, Ozturk, Souttar, Rossi, Cowie (Buaben, 86'), Djoum, Kitchen, Walker, Sammon (Johnsen, 72'), Watt (Muirhead, 56').

Dundee: Bain, Holt, Vincent (Duffy, 75'), Hateley (Kerr, 75'), Williams, O'Hara, McGowan, Teijsse, El Bakhtaoui, Gadzhalov (Loy, 85'), Gomis.

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Att: 16,512

Top man: Arnaud Djoum. On an afternoon when the midfield area was by-passed all too frequently, the Cameroon internationalist showed his undoubted class.