

# Hearts Frustrated in Dingwall

**Ross County 2 Heart of Midlothian 2**

**Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 3rd December 2016 – Global Energy Stadium**

An already emotional week for Hearts ended with a heart-wrenching finale to their Ladbrokes Premiership game at Ross County on Saturday. After a remarkable seven days during which the Maroons defeated Motherwell and Rangers at Tynecastle but lost Head Coach Robbie Neilson and his assistant Steve Crawford as they headed south to MK Dons, the Gorgie Boys missed a last-minute penalty in a pulsating encounter in Dingwall. Jamie Walker's spot kick calamity meant Hearts had to settle for one point from their visit to the Highlands instead of three.

With Messrs Neilson and Crawford having already said their goodbyes, it was interim coach Jon Daly who had the task of picking the Hearts team. Given the results and performances against Motherwell and Rangers respectively, it was no surprise when Daly opted to stick with the same starting eleven that did so well in those games.

Another impressive Hearts travelling support saw their team make a decent start and they were nearly rewarded with a goal after just 11 minutes. Don Cowie's corner was headed goal wards by Callum Paterson but his effort was cleared off the goal line. Minutes later, Bjorn Johnsen had an effort which went just wide before Arnaud Djoum tried a long-range effort which also went wide.

Fine play from the in-form Johnsen set up Cowie who slipped the ball to Paterson but his shot from inside the County penalty box was deflected wide.

County were giving as good as they got, however, and in the 32nd minute Gardyne's cross was only half-cleared by John

Souttar and Boyce's subsequent shot on goal was saved by Hearts goalie Jack Hamilton.

Two minutes from half-time, the home side went in front. More less than assured defending from Hearts following a County free-kick gave McEveley a sight of goal and from six yards he fired high into the net.

### **Half-time Ross County 1 Hearts 0**



County almost doubled their lead early in the second half when Gardyne forced Hamilton into a brilliant double save before the goalie prevented Boyce when it seemed easier for the County man to score.

The home side scented blood and Hearts were struggling somewhat. However, Bjorn Johnsen was always a threat and he had an effort saved by home keeper Fox.

Hearts appeared to have weathered the County storm and turned the game on its head in the midway through the second half. In the 63rd minute, the ever-dangerous Johnsen fired a rocket of a shot from the edge of the penalty box which flew into the net – possibly via a deflection from Djoum – to equalise for Hearts.

Joy for the Maroon Army which turned to jubilation four minutes later when their team went in front. Strong play from Callum Paterson saw the Scotland defender power his way into the County penalty box before he fired the ball past Fox to put Hearts 2-1 ahead.

Feeling somewhat aggrieved, County poured men forward in search of the equaliser. Boyce was thwarted yet again by Jack Hamilton and the Hearts defence were under the cosh somewhat. That said, Johnsen should have sealed the points for the visitors when he took advantage of careless play by home

keeper Fox but sclafted his effort into the side netting. Agony for Hearts and an opportunity they would regret not taking.

There were just four minutes to go when substitute Rherras was penalised by referee Willie Collum for handball inside the penalty box. Penalty to County which was fired home by Boyce.

The drama wasn't over yet, however. In stoppage time, Hearts were awarded a penalty kick of their own when Jamie Walker was brought down inside the penalty box. The young winger took the penalty kick himself but his effort was direct at the keeper and Fox saved easily.

Willie Collum sounded the final whistle soon after and Hearts had to settle for a share of the points which perhaps, on reflection, was a fair enough result.

It does mean, however, that with Rangers defeating Aberdeen, Hearts have slipped to third place in the Ladbrokes Premiership.

**Ross County:** Fox, McEveley, Gardyne, Van Der Weg, Chow (Woods, 83'), Boyce, Curran (Schalk, 67'), Davies, Fraser, Dingwall (Dow, 85'), Routis.

**Hearts:** Hamilton, Paterson, Souttar, Rossi (Ozturk, 77'), Rherras, Walker, Kitchen, Cowie (Buaben, 85'), Muirhead (Sammon, 64'), Djoum, Johnsen.

**Referee:** Willie Collum

**Att:** 4,042

**Top man:** Jack Hamilton