

Hearts Go Down in Ian Cathro's First Game in Charge

Rangers 2 Heart of Midlothian 0

Ladbroke's SPFL Premiership, Saturday 10th December 2016 – Ibrox

A dramatic week for Heart of Midlothian FC ended in somewhat underwhelming fashion when Head Coach Ian Cathro's first game in charge ended with a disappointing defeat at Ibrox Stadium as Rangers exacted revenge for their 2-0 reversal at Tynecastle ten days ago.

Under Robbie Neilson – who began his league career at MK Dons today with a 1-0 win over AFC Wimbledon – Hearts were prone to changing the team depending on who their opponents were. However, for his first game in charge, Ian Cathro decided to go with an unchanged team from that which drew at Ross County last Saturday; in fact, this was the fourth game in a row Hearts were unchanged.

After the media hype which surrounded Cathro's appointment, it was something of a relief for Hearts new Head Coach and his players to finally get on the park. However, Hearts started the game in a less than certain manner and they almost fell behind in the 13th minute when former Jambo Lee Wallace fired in an effort from 20 yards which went just wide.

A minute later, Rangers came even closer to opening the scoring. Wallace was the instigator and he set up Miller who beat Hearts forlorn offside trap but, with just keeper Jack Hamilton to beat, the former Hibs and Scotland striker put his effort wide.

It was a let-off for Hearts but it was Rangers who were feeling relieved soon after when Hearts thought they had scored. Robbie Muirhead's cross was met by Bjorn Johnsen who

forced Gers keeper Foderingham into a brilliant save. The ball rebounded to Arnaud Djoum who fed Callum Paterson. The Scotland defender crossed for Don Cowie to drive the ball into the net – only for the assistant referee to flag for offside. It was a close call but the anger among the Hearts contingent was more about the delay in the decision being made.

Direct play from Bjorn Johnsen caused panic in the Rangers rear-guard. The ball broke to Jamie Walker and the winger's effort from 20 yards was just wide.

At the other end, Jack Hamilton saved well from Wallace and it seemed only a matter of time before the game would see a goal. It did in the 29th minute when Tavernier's free-kick for the home side was headed home by Kiernan to the delight of the home support in the crowd of over 50,000.

Hearts appeared shaken by this and almost lost another goal five minutes from half-time when a careless pass back from Callum Paterson forced Jack Hamilton to race from his goal line. He was chased down by Garner who thwarted the keeper's clearance but the ball spun away from danger.

Half-time Rangers 1 Hearts 0



The second half was just six minutes old when Rangers went 2-0 up. Again, the Hearts defence looked none-too-clever as Wallace delivered a long throw into their penalty box. McKay was able to take a touch on the ball before firing past Hamilton.

It was difficult to see Hearts coming back from this, particularly as the home side now had their tails up. Waghorn and Garner both had chances to increase their lead further but didn't take them.

Jack Hamilton then produced heroics when he saved brilliantly from Waghorn twice in the closing stages.

Hearts were now offering token resistance although a fine pass from Faycal Rherras found Bjorn Johnsen but the American striker fired his effort high over the bar.

It was very much role-reversal from this fixture at Tynecastle ten days ago, with Rangers ending the game comfortably and Hearts looking a beaten team well before the end. The game ended at 2-0 for Rangers and it was job done for Mark Warburton's side.

After the game, Ian Cathro was philosophical in defeat.

"It's not the most fun I've ever had in my life," the new Head Coach told the official Hearts website. "That's what happens when you lose a game and the idea is not to lose. Personally, if the question is about me, I feel fine. As for the game, I've learned a lot about the team immediately.

"When you make defensive mistakes, which happen, of course, it becomes more difficult but those things happen and we'll work hard on them."

"We will be better. That team is better than that. I want the fans to know that, I don't want to hand out the card of 'we need time' because there's a good team that needs to be better.

"It's not a dramatic day, by any means. No drama, no disaster, a game we need to learn from and improve from, simply, and we will improve."

Rangers: Foderingham, Hodson, Wilson, Kiernan, Wallace, Halliday, Holt, Tavernier, Miller (Waghorn, 61'), McKay (Burt, 90'), Garner (Dodoo, 88').

Hearts: Hamilton, Paterson, Souttar, Rossi, Rherras, Walker (Watt, 50'), Kitchen, Cowie (L. Smith, 81'), Djoum, Muirhead (Sammon, 69'), Johnsen.

Referee: John Beaton

Att: 50,039

Top man: Jack Hamilton – a young man maturing into a fine goalkeeper.