

Accidents Will Happen: Cathro & The Scottish Cup Draw



Photo: Scottish Football Association

Family commitments meant I wasn't at the Raith Rovers-Hearts William Hill Scottish Cup fourth round tie at Starks Park on Sunday. These commitments meant I couldn't even watch the game on television, which was particularly frustrating as it was on 'coouncil telly' i.e. BBC 1 Scotland.

Those who were at the game tell me it was the proverbial game of two halves. Hearts, with their four January transfer window signings Aaron Hughes, Lennard Sowah, Malauray Martin and Andraz Struna all starting the game, apparently played decent enough in the first half and were deservedly ahead thanks to Jamie Walker's strike eight minutes before half-time. The second half, I'm told, was a poorer showing from the boys in yellow and pink and although they left it late, Raith Rovers grabbed a deserved equaliser to ensure the teams must do it all again this Wednesday evening at Tynecastle.

The tie was an accident waiting to happen. Hearts were back in action for the first time this year following their winter break; the defence had barely been introduced to each other before the game; and Hearts were playing a Raith Rovers side with several ex-Jambos and managed by a former Hearts captain and manager, with more than a point to prove.

Walker's strike looked have been enough to ensure Hearts would face Hibernian in the next round. However, as Elvis Costello once sang, 'Accidents Will Happen' and it was through a man who shares a name with the legendary songster that Raith scored a late equaliser (Declan McManus rescued Rovers; Elvis Costello's real name is Declan MacManus)

Of course, through the years Hearts fans have been accustomed to seeing their team snatch a draw or defeat from the jaws of victory. But the reaction of some of them to Head Coach Ian Cathro's post-match comments are over-the-top. Cathro told BBC Scotland:

"It's okay. What's difficult, we've just to beat them again. We were okay in the game, we could have played better but there's no need for an over-reaction. We don't have any doubts in our work, we just need to keep working."

Now some of the Maroon Army have objected to Cathro saying 'it's okay' to what they see as their team throwing away a victory and now requiring a replay with the additional expense, time and effort this now incurs for the team and supporters. The Hearts Head Coach was as disappointed as anyone else of the maroon persuasion to not getting the job done at the first time of asking. But he was probably mirroring the reaction of many Hearts fans – me included – at the loss of a late goal. Hearts didn't lose the game. They will now be firm favourites to progress to another Edinburgh derby in the Scottish Cup, given they will be at home with the Hearts support behind them (hopefully).

I was upset when I heard Raith Rovers had equalised – even more so when I discovered Hearts legend Rudi Skacel was involved in the goal – but I soon accepted that Hearts have the chance to immediately put things right. That, I suspect, was the reason Cathro said what he did.

It won't be easy on Wednesday but it will be another opportunity for Hearts new boys to get to know each other's game. And it will be an opportunity for Hearts fans to say goodbye to their idol Rudi Skacel – it's unlikely we'll see the great man playing at Tynecastle again.

So, yes, we would have liked to have been already preparing for a fifth-round tie at home to another Championship team.

But we are Hearts – we never do things the easy way!

Talking of ‘accidents will happen’, the SFA managed to make Scottish football a laughing stock yet again with the farce that was the fifth-round draw made live on television on Sunday.

Now the SFA are not the most commercially savvy of organisations and have cocked up more than one cup draw in recent years. At least this time they thought it would be something of a coup by inviting rock legend Sir Rod Stewart to help make the draw, alongside former Hibs manager Alan Stubbs.

Now the flamboyant Stewart, sporting a leopard-print scarf, appeared to many to have been enjoying some SFA ‘hospitality’ prior to the draw which would explain his bizarre behaviour in making the draw. Using an over-arm style to pluck the balls from the bowl, he then brandished each ball in front of the television cameras with a grin and bellowing out the number concerned.

The much more sensible Alan Stubbs, however, wasn’t immune from contributing to the farce. The man who led Hibs to the cup last year confused ball number 9 with number 6 leading to a look of sheer panic on the face of SFA President Alan McCrae.

At the end, it was another case of Scottish football being made a laughing stock to the rest of the world.

Accidents will happen – especially when it comes to cup draws in Scotland...