

# Lacklustre Hearts Pay the Penalty Once More



**Heart of Midlothian 1 Inverness Caledonian Thistle 1**

**Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017 – Tynecastle**

Hearts produced another disappointing performance as they threw away two points against Inverness Caledonian Thistle in their Ladbrokes Premiership clash at Tynecastle on Saturday. A shocking first half display from the Gorgie team saw the visitors – without a win in 13 games – lead at half-time and although Hearts improved in the second half and equalised through Arnaud Djoum it was not enough to clinch all three points – Jamie Walker's second half penalty miss proving costly.

Hearts Head Coach Ian Cathro made four changes to the team that huffed and puffed for a draw against Hibernian in the Scottish Cup six days ago. Arnaud Djoum, Bjorn Johnsen, Choulay and captain Perry Kitchen started ahead of Sam Nicholson, Jamie Walker, Malaury Martin and the injured Don Cowie.

An indication of the way the afternoon was to unfold came right at the beginning when Hearts lost possession immediately from kick-off. It was a strangely lethargic start from the hosts – usually Hearts begin home games at a high tempo. That said, Goncalves was the first to threaten after nine minutes but his shot on goal ended somewhere in the Roseburn Stand.

The former St Mirren striker went closer midway through the first half – in truth, not a lot happened in the intervening period – when Avonlitis headed on Choulay's corner and Goncalves struck for goal only to see his effort foiled by

Draper.

In the 24<sup>th</sup> minute, Caley Thistle stunned another sell-out home crowd by taking the lead. A free kick from Tansey was met by Tremarco who had the freedom of Gorgie Road to head past Jack Hamilton.

Five minutes later, Hearts almost grabbed the equaliser when skipper Perry Kitchen thrust forward to set up Bjorn Johnsen but the striker's attempt on goal took a deflection before bouncing off the crossbar.

Andraz Struna then tested Caley Thistle keeper Fon Williams before Goncalves headed a Choulay corner well wide of target.

A disappointing first half ended with the boos from the home support telling their own story.

### **Half-time Hearts 0 Inverness Caledonian Thistle 1**

Hearts looked far more determined as the second half got underway and Perry Kitchen fired wide after clever play from Johnsen.

It was Johnsen's last involvement in the game as he sustained an injury and was replaced by Jamie Walker.

Six minutes into the second half, Hearts were again cursing their luck when a cross from Choulay was met first time by Goncalves but the striker's effort bounced the wrong side of the post and the danger was cleared.

However, Hearts weren't to be denied and they snatched a deserved equaliser in the 64<sup>th</sup> minute. A fine cross from Kitchen found Arnaud Djoum and the African Cup of Nations winner forced the ball past Fon Williams. 1-1 and it was game on at last.

Hearts pressed for a winning goal but they were susceptible to

the Highlanders hitting them on the counter-attack. With 15 minutes left, a corner from Doran was met by Draper and his header hit the post much to the relief of the home side and their despairing support.

If Caley Thistle agonised over that miss, they were distraught a minute later when Hearts were awarded a penalty kick. Goncalves was fouled inside the penalty box and despite the visitors' protests, referee Bobby Madden awarded Hearts a penalty. Sadly, Hearts record in penalty kicks this season has been poor and Jamie Walker's effort – as it was at Ross County a few weeks ago – was weak and easily saved by Fon Williams.

Tziolis then had a chance but his flick towards goal was more in hope than expectation.

The game ended 1-1 and it was another two points dropped by Hearts who really should have done better against the team at the bottom of the league.

After the game, Ian Cathro couldn't mask his disappointment. He told the official Hearts website:

"I think we dominated the game," said the frustrated Head Coach. "We created enough chances to win a game and a half today. We played well at times, and we did a lot of good things, but we suffer the disappointment.

"This is a game we should be winning. Perhaps we can be more clinical inside the box, but we suffer as a result of the fact we failed to defend a set piece."

Hearts now head across Edinburgh for the William Hill Scottish Cup replay against Hibernian on Wednesday evening. The poor state of the Tynecastle pitch may have been a factor in another shoddy performance but there were still far too many misplaced passes from the home team and the lacklustre performance in the first half, in particular, was a real concern.

There's little doubt the Maroons will need to perform a whole lot better if they want to progress in the cup at Easter Road.

**Hearts:** Hamilton, Struna, Hughes, Avlonitis, Sowah, Kitchen (Martin, 76'), Tziolis, Djoum, Choulay (Currie, 62'), Johnsen (Walker, 49'), Isma.

**Inverness CT:** Fon Williams, Raven, Tremarco, Polworth, Draper, McCart, McKay (Anier, 80'), Mulraney (Doran, 62'), Tansey, Laing, Cole.

**Referee:** Bobby Madden

**Att:** 16,372

**Top Man:** Arnaud Djoum