

# Four Goal Hearts Back on Song



**Heart of Midlothian 4 Hamilton Academical 0**

**Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 11th March 2017 – Tynecastle**

Without a win in five games, it's fair to say Hearts were beginning to feel the pressure when Hamilton Academical visited Gorgie on Ladbrokes Premiership business on Saturday. The Maroons have struggled since being knocked out of the William Hill Scottish Cup by city rivals Hibernian with defeats from Partick Thistle and Ross County in the league adding to the feeling of despondency over Tynecastle.

However, the Maroons returned to form with a fine display against an Accies team who had recently defeated Aberdeen. A goal right on half-time from Arnaud Djoum was followed by second half strikes from Isma Goncalves, Jamie Walker and substitute Malaury Martin and gave the much-maligned Jambos a 4-0 win.

Hearts Head Coach Ian Cathro made a couple of changes to the team that lost to Ross County a week past Wednesday. Jamie Walker replaced Choulay while Isma Goncalves returned from his one match ban at the expense of Bjorn Johnsen.

The sun was threatening to break through the clouds in Gorgie and Hearts certainly made a bright start. Just four minutes had gone when Alex Tziolis crossed towards Jamie Walker whose header was saved well by Accies keeper Woods. It was to prove to be a busy afternoon for the visiting goalie.

Goncalves was then through on goal and was denied by Woods who raced from his line to minimise the danger.

Sam Nicholson then fired in a long-range effort but, again, Woods was equal to the task with a fine save.

It was one-way traffic towards the Hamilton goal with the visitors rarely threatening. It looked like Hearts had made the breakthrough when Lennard Sowah's cross was headed goal wards by Goncalves and the home support began celebrating. But they reckoned without keeper Woods who threw himself to tip the ball away. It was a quite brilliant save and it kept Accies on level terms.

The procession towards the Hamilton goal continued. On the half hour mark, Tziolis met Don Cowie's corner but again Woods was the hero for the visitors.

He was at it again two minutes later when he pushed aside Jamie Walker's effort. Then, with half-time approaching, the over-worked keeper thwarted Goncalves again after the former St Mirren striker drove a shot from inside the penalty box.

The afternoon was beginning to take on a familiar look for Hearts. Totally dominant, having the bulk of possession but being unable to score. But this was rectified on the stroke of half-time. The Hearts players were queuing up to pepper shots on the hard-pressed Accies keeper before the ball broke to Arnaud Djoum who blasted home from six yards. The feeling of relief around Tynecastle was palpable.

### **Half-time Hearts 1 Hamilton Academical 0**

The second half soon took on the characteristics of the first – Hearts attacking relentlessly. Just four minutes in, it looked like the Maroons had doubled their lead when Isma Goncalves fired past Woods but the celebrations soon died down when assistant referee running the line at the Wheatfield Stand raised his flag for offside.

Hearts weren't to be denied though and did score again in the 55<sup>th</sup> minute although there was an element of farce to their goal. Jamie Walker appeared to be the victim of a crude foul and while the crowd bawled for a free-kick, referee Craig

Thomson saw nothing amiss and play continued. However, Accies keeper Woods clearly believed a foul had been committed for when he received the ball from a team mate he picked it up. Pass back roared the home support although it had to take Hearts captain Don Cowie to forcefully make the point to referee Thomson before he awarded a free-kick inside the Accies penalty box. Cowie himself took the kick, tapping the ball to Goncalves who blasted the ball high into the net. 2-0 to the home side.

Hearts were on fire now and ended the game as a contest two minutes later. Jamie Walker was fouled just outside the penalty box. This time a free-kick was awarded. The attacking midfielder took the kick himself and fired in a brilliant shot which not even the heroic Woods could keep out.

Jamie had his tail up now and he jinked his way into the Accies penalty box only to see his shot at goal hit the side netting.

Hearts then took their foot off the gas somewhat but there was still time for another sublime free-kick two minutes from the end.

With Walker having just been substituted, substitute Malaury Martin took a free-kick from twenty yards which deceived keeper Woods at his near post and the scoring was complete at 4-0 to Hearts.

Ian Cathro was understandably a happy man after the game but wasn't going overboard with a tough trip to Aberdeen beckoning next Saturday. He told BBC Scotland:

"I think one of the biggest positives throughout the first-half was the character of our players to keep pushing.

"We created a lot of chances, we were dominant in the game early, we played with good possession, mixed our attacks as well.

“There were a lot of good stops from him [Hamilton goalkeeper Gary Woods], but the fact we never felt any stress, we stayed calm, we stayed patient, we kept doing the right things and we very much deserved the goal before half-time.

“When you suffer a bad week and three unacceptable results, which was the case, the focus day-to-day has to be on making improvements and making sure you give the maximum every day.

“That’s not changed because of this performance and this result. What it means is that everything we had to do today we have done and we will also work again very, very hard tomorrow.”

A fine performance and a fine win for Hearts who still harbour hopes of clinching a place in next season’s Europa League qualifiers.

**Hearts:** Hamilton, Struna, Avlonitis, Nowak, Sowah, Tziolis, Cowie, Djoum (Martin, 63’), Nicholson (Choulay, 69’), Walker (Johnsen, 87’), Isma.

**Hamilton:** Woods, Skondras, Imrie (Gogic, 55’), Docherty, Redmond, Crawford, Bingham (Tierney, 73’), Brophy (Gillespie, 64’), Donati, McMann, Sarris.

**Ref:** Craig Thomson

**Att:** 15,881

**Top Man:** Jamie Walker – when Jamie is on top form so are Hearts.