

Hearts Back On The Winning Trail



Heart of Midlothian 1 Dundee 0

Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 8th April 2017 – Tynecastle

The 2016/17 season, which began with such high hopes back in June, trundles wearily towards its conclusion for Hearts. A top six finish in the Ladbrokes Premiership is assured but a place in next season's Europa League qualifiers looks a forlorn prospect. Apathy has replaced expectation among many of the Maroon Army and this was reflected in the atmosphere at Tynecastle on Saturday where the visitors were a Dundee side with their place in the top flight of Scottish football at stake.

Hearts Head Coach Ian Cathro made three changes to the team that lost 1-0 to St Johnstone on Wednesday. Tasos Avlonitis and Bjorn Johnsen dropped to the substitutes bench while Lennard Sowah was injured. In came Liam Smith, Prince Buaben and Arnaud Djoum.

Dundee have endured an even worse spell than Hearts of late and are slipping towards a relegation battle. This was evident in the early stages of the game as Hearts dominated possession but, as has been the case so often this season, keeping the ball means little if you're not actually doing anything productive with it. There were early opportunities for Jamie Walker and Isma Goncalves but the final pass towards them lacked accuracy and there was a feeling of déjà vu among the Tynecastle faithful.

However, the Maroon Army were celebrating in the 13th minute. A fine pass from Don Cowie set Goncalves through. The former St

Mirren striker evaded a challenge from McGowan to fire past Dees keeper Bain to put Hearts ahead despite the best efforts of O'Dea to clear on the goal line.

The impressive Cowie then delivered a fine cross to Goncalves who seemed certain to score but, in keeping with Hearts recent form, the striker swung at fresh air and the chance was gone.

It was all Hearts. Walker had a chance but was denied by keeper Bain before Cowie again danced his way through the Dundee defence before delivering a cross to Arnaud Djoum. The Cameroon international's header from eight yards produced a breath-taking save from the Dundee keeper.

Hearts nearly rued these missed opportunities when Hateley's free-kick was pushed on to the post by Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton.

Half-time Hearts 1 Dundee 0

Dundee manager, the former Hearts hero Paul Hartley, clearly had words to say to his team at the interval as the visitors looked more determined in the opening minutes of the second half. However, it was Hearts who almost doubled their lead when Jamie Walker set up Alex Tziolis but the Greek internationalist saw his effort saved by Bain.

Hearts fans frustration at their team only being one goal ahead nearly turned to anger after an hour when Andraz Struna gave the ball away to Wighton who eased past Krystian Nowak. Thankfully for the home support – and a relieved Struna – the Dundee forward fired well wide of the goal.

With 20 minutes left, Goncalves fired in an effort on goal which was unintentionally deflected by Hearts substitute Malaury Martin. The deflection nearly caught out keeper Bain but the Dundee man recovered well to save.

As the game drew to its conclusion, Hearts seemed edgy as a

first win in four games appeared on the horizon. But the Maroons held on for a much-needed win to keep alive their hopes of qualifying for next season's Europa League.

Hearts: Hamilton, L.Smith, Buaben, Nowak, Struna, Tziolis, Kitchen, Cowie, Djoum (Martin, 59'), Walker (Currie, 64'), Isma (Johnsen, 89'). *Subs:* Noring, Avlonitis, Beith, Choulay.

Dundee: Bain, Holt, Vincent, O'Dea, Hateley, O'Hara, McGowan, Haber, Ojamaa (Wighton, 58'), Kerr, Higgins. *Subs:* Mitchell, Ross, Dryden, Smith, Gomis.

Referee: Crawford Allan

Att: 16,304

Top Man: Don Cowie