

Lamentable Hearts Go Down Again



St Johnstone 1 Heart of Midlothian 0

Ladbrokes Premiership, Wednesday 5th April 2017 – McDiarmid Park

Three days after their mauling at the hands of league champions Celtic, Hearts headed to Perth on Wednesday evening to face the team vying with them for fourth place in the Ladbrokes Premiership – St Johnstone. Fourth place is still a gateway to the early qualifying stages of next season's Europa League – as long as Hibernian don't retain the Scottish Cup – so despite Hearts abysmal form of late there was still plenty to play for in the Fair City.

Gorgie Head Coach Ian Cathro – quoted in a tabloid newspaper as saying Hearts would have competed with Celtic on Sunday if there hadn't been any goalposts – went with the same team that started the game against the Hoops which, given the Maroon's defensive frailties, was a surprise to many.

Hearts made a decent start although Saints keeper Mannus wasn't unduly concerned. In fact, there was little happening of note for either side until the 18th minute when Saints Cummins latched on to a half-hearted clearance from Hearts Alex Tziolis but the home striker's attempt on goal was high and not-so-mighty.

After a quiet opening, it was the home side who began to take command. After half an hour, Paton fired a shot from 20 yards which brought out a fine save from Jack Hamilton.

Within seconds, Easton was given the freedom of Perth to shoot

for goal and his left foot effort smacked off the crossbar. Then it was Jack Hamilton to the rescue again as the Hearts keeper tipped Cummins header over the bar. Hearts were on the rack now and were mighty glad to hear the half-time whistle with the scores somehow still level.

Half-time St Johnstone 0 Hearts 0

The second half began in similar fashion to the way the first half ended – with the home side dominant. Craig went close with a shot from just inside the Hearts penalty box before Easton blazed an effort over the cross bar.

If you're wondering what the Hearts players were doing so were the Maroon Army who had travelled north for what was turning out to be yet another pitiful away performance.

Isma Goncalves at least showed some spark when he robbed Craig after 67 minutes and found Bjorn Johnsen. But the big American's effort on goal was like the Hearts performance – weak.

The only saving grace for the visitors was the fact the game was still without a goal. But this changed 17 minutes from the end. A corner by Craig saw no one in the Hearts defence bother to challenge for the cross and Shaughnessy headed home to put the Perth Saints ahead – a goal they richly deserved.

I would have liked to ended this match report there but Hearts still had one more lamentable action left when substitute Sam Nicholson was shown a straight red card with seven minutes left for what appeared to be a display of dissent towards the assistant referee.

Another miserable performance and another miserable result for Hearts. The only saving grace was that Kilmarnock's draw with Rangers on Wednesday means Hearts are guaranteed a top six finish in the Ladbrokes Premiership. On recent displays any hopes of finishing fourth are fast disappearing.

The end of the season can't come quick enough for Hearts and their angry supporters, many of whom have simply had enough.

St Johnstone: Mannus, Scobbie, Alston, MacLean, Wotherspoon (Millar, 84'), Shaughnessy, Smith, Paton, Easton, Craig, Cummins.

Hearts: Hamilton, Struna, Avlonitis (Buaben, 59'), Nowak, Sowah (Smith, 69'), Tziolis, Kitchen, Cowie, Walker, Johnsen (Nicholson, 67'), Isma.

Ref: Nick Walsh

Att: 4,197

Top man: You've got to be joking...