

Cathro's Words Mean Little to Angry Hearts Fans



Hearts Head Coach Ian Cathro was licking his wounds today as the aftershock of Hearts Betfred Cup tremor in Peterhead last night continued to be felt around Gorgie. With the game tied at 1-1 – a source of embarrassment itself given Peterhead are now in the fourth tier of Scottish football – the tie looked to be heading towards a penalty shoot-out to decide who would get a bonus point. It was indeed a penalty that decided the game – but a shoot-out wasn't required. Instead, Peterhead's Rory McAllister – a plumber in his day job – pulled the plug on Hearts hopes of snatching a win when he scored from the spot after a foul from Hearts Arnaud Djoum.

Cathro's words in the aftermath cut little ice with an angry Hearts support.

"We sum it up by saying that we expected to win the game," he told the official Hearts website. "The result is a simple thing, in that we're disappointed, because the expectation was to do better.

"We didn't start the game particularly well, which gave Peterhead some momentum and some extra energy, but we got ourselves on top. When we're on top, we need to make better decisions.

"We also need to respect that we have a number of new players who are still working on building relationships on the park, which takes time."

"It's disappointing relating to the cup, not the league at this point. We wanted to go top of the table, but we haven't done that.

“The demand was always on ourselves to try and win the match on Saturday, but now we know we have to win to go through, so that’s where our focus is.”

Just over a year ago, Hearts also suffered humiliation when they became the first Scottish club to lose a European tie to Maltese opposition when Birkirkara won 2-1 in a Europa League qualifying tie at Tynecastle. Robbie Neilson received some flak this time last year but the wrath he faced is nothing to the anger currently being directed to the present incumbent of the Head Coach position in Gorgie.

Those who have lost faith in Cathro point to the fact that, under his tutelage in the last seven months, Hearts have suffered their worst home defeat in 44 years (the 5-0 loss to Celtic in April); needed a replay (and extra-time) to see off Championship side Raith Rovers in the Scottish Cup; lost to another Championship side in the next round; and have won just one Ladbrokes Premiership game away from Tynecastle (at Motherwell)

Hearts huffed and puffed to a win in the Betfred Cup at Elgin last week and although the performance against East Fife at Tynecastle on Saturday was better, it speaks volumes that Hearts are struggling in a group that includes lower-league opposition and two part-time clubs.

Saturday’s opponents, Dunfermline Athletic, have been in impressive form and presently top the group. Coached by former Hearts favourites Allan Johnston and Sandy Clark, they will need little motivation to add to Hearts woes this weekend. If the Pars do what League Two side Peterhead did there’s a very real possibility Hearts will even miss out on second place in the group and, therefore, qualification to the knock-out stages.

If this happens the angry voices of an increasingly disgruntled Hearts support will surely get louder.

Off the pitch, Hearts continue to progress and the new main stand will be the jewel in the Tynecastle crown come the autumn. On the pitch, however, it's a different story. Yes, Hearts have new players this season and, yes, it can take time to gel. But when this reason is used when the team lose to a group of players, most of whom had been working in their day jobs in the build up to kick-off – some even travelled from Dumfries and Glasgow on the afternoon of the game – it is just an excuse.

And, like Hearts performance in the Blue Toon last night, a pretty poor one at that.