

Daly Turns on Rodgers After Hearts Go Down at Celtic Park



Celtic 4 Hearts 1

Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 5th August 2017 – Celtic Park

A disappointing week for Hearts ended somewhat inevitably with a defeat in their opening Ladbrokes Premiership fixture at the home of league champions Celtic.

It was an all-too familiar story for the Maroons in the east end of Glasgow; a decent start before losing a goal around the half-hour mark and folding in the second half.

With Ian Cathro now checking his laptop for job vacancies, interim Head Coach Jon Daly made three changes to the team that lost on penalties to Dunfermline Athletic in the Betfred Cup seven days ago. Veteran defender Aaron Hughes returned to the defence along with Rafal Grzelak while Daly sprung a major surprise by including 19-year-old Lewis Moore whose only first team appearance in the league came on the final day of season 2015/16.

Celtic were presented with the Ladbrokes Premiership trophy and there was the expected raucous atmosphere at Celtic Park. Just four minutes had elapsed when Griffith's corner was headed just wide by Bitton.

Hearts, however, threatened in the 12th minute when Prince Buaben had an opportunity but his weak effort was easy for former Hearts goalkeeper Craig Gordon.

Christophe Berra came to Hearts rescue midway through the first half when he made an important block to deny McGregor

opening the scoring for the hosts. Griffiths then had a chance but fired wide when it seemed easier to score. However, the Scotland striker made amends seconds later when slack defending from Grzelak allowed Griffiths through on goal and while Hearts keeper Jack Hamilton saved his first effort the former Hibs man made no mistake with his second and Celtic were 1-0 ahead.

Hearts Aaron Hughes was then caught out by Griffiths but thankfully for Hearts, youngster Jamie Brandon deflected the striker's effort over the bar.

McGregor should have made it easy street for the hosts right on half-time but he dragged his shot wide.

Half-time: Celtic 1 Hearts 0

Hearts went on the offensive after the re-start and a corner from Don Cowie was met by Christophe Berra but his close-range header lacked conviction. Then Kyle Lafferty, barracked by the home support all afternoon, just failed to connect with Michael Smith's cross and it looked like Hearts were gaining in confidence. However, six minutes into the second half Sinclair doubled Celtic's advantage from a corner and you could sense the deflation among the visitors.

In the 63rd minute it really was game over when Griffiths grabbed his second and Celtic's third when he headed home McGregor's cross.

McGregor added to Hearts woes ten minutes later when he blasted past Jack Hamilton.

With just seven minutes left Hearts substitute Isma Goncalves raced through on goal and he fired past Gordon for what was merely a consolation goal for the Maroons.

After the game Jon Daly was critical of Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers pre-match comments when the Parkhead manager

questioned Hearts signing policy and whether these players understood the style Ian Cathro wanted to play. He told BBC Sport Scotland:

"I've followed Brendan's career for a long, long time. I've got a lot of admiration for him and I've never heard him make a comment like that when he was at Liverpool, commenting on Man United's structure or Chelsea's structure or Man City's structure.

"He's obviously come up to Scotland and think he's the biggest fish in the biggest pond, with the best squad, with the best budget and he thinks he can comment on other people's teams, other people's structures or clubs and it's unacceptable.

"He wouldn't have done it in the English Premiership so I don't see why now he all of a sudden he thinks he can start doing it."

On his own team's performance, Daly said *"It was a difficult afternoon. I thought the structure of the team was quite good but the first goal is obviously an error on our part, we should probably have let Griffiths run offside.*

"Overall I think we got punished for a couple of mistakes. You come to places like this and you know you're going to need to have a day where Celtic miss chances and you take yours, but unfortunately, we made a couple of mistakes that cost us.

"I can't fault the boys' effort, however, as they never stopped going even at 4-0 down. The fact they dug in and kept fighting is important."

Celtic: Gordon, Simunovic, Bitton, Brown, Griffiths (Hayes, 66'), Sinclair, Ntcham, Lustig, McGregor (Rogic, 75'), Forrest, Tierney.

Hearts: Hamilton, Brandon, Berra, Hughes, Grzelak (Isma, 67'), M.Smith, Buaben (Randall, 62'), Cowie, Djoum, Moore, Lafferty

(Sammon, 71').

Ref: Kevin Clancy

Att: 58,843

Top Man: Lewis Moore