

# Hearts Slip Up at Motherwell



**Motherwell 2 Hearts 1**

**Ladbroke's Premiership, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2017 – Fir Park**

Hearts travel sickness, which afflicted the team so badly last season, returned today as the Maroons let slip a lead given to them by Kyle Lafferty to go down 2-1 at Motherwell.

Interim Head Coach Jon Daly, hoping for a victory to enhance his chances of getting the job on a permanent basis, made a couple of changes from the Hearts team that secured a goalless draw at Ibrox seven days ago. Rafal Grzelak replaced Jamie Brandon while striker Cole Stockton replaced Isma Goncalves.

It was the visitors who had the first chance after just two minutes when Kyle Lafferty raced through on goal before setting up Stockton but the Liverpoolian's strike on goal was deflected wide.

There was plenty possession from Hearts but without seriously threatening the Motherwell goal. Indeed, it was the hosts who nearly broke the deadlock when Bowman fired in a powerful shot which keeper Jack Hamilton did well to keep out.

Moments later, Motherwell's Rose delivered a dangerous cross but, thankfully for Hearts, the chance went begging.

Hearts then had an opportunity when neat play between Jamie Walker and Michael Smith saw the former hit for goal but Well keeper Carson saved well (literally)

However, on the half-hour mark, Hearts went ahead. It was the hard-working Kyle Lafferty who collected the ball in midfield and moved forward, his strike from 25 yards flying low past Carson and into the net.

Joy for the 2,500 travelling Maroon Army – but it didn't last long. Seven minutes later, Moulton headed across goal where Bowman moved past a static Hearts defence to head home the equaliser.

Worse was to follow four minutes later. Jamie Walker gave the ball away cheaply – practically for nothing, in fact – allowing Bowman to set up Moulton who lobbed the ball over Jack Hamilton from just inside the penalty box and the home side were in front.

### **Half-time Motherwell 2 Hearts 1**

Hearts created the first chance of the second period when Jamie Walker fired high and not so mighty from 25 yards. But the attacking midfielder almost grabbed the equaliser with half an hour left when he drove past a trailing Motherwell defence before shooting from 20 yards – only for Carson to deny him a fine goal.

There was controversy moments later when Moulton thought he had headed home Motherwell's third goal. But Hearts captain Christophe Berra headed the ball off the line and referee John Beaton waved play on despite protests from the home players and supporters alike.

Hearts poured men forward in search of an equaliser and Walker came close again with ten minutes left but his shot on goal was just too high.

A defeat in the end, then, for Hearts in a game they put much into. Jon Daly gave his thoughts to the official Hearts website after the game:

*"You can't fault the work-rate but that's not enough to win games of football."* he said.

*"You need to have that quality, which we have, we have more than enough quality in the team, good quality on the bench to*

*come on, but on the day our decision making let us down, especially in the final third where the game is won and lost.*

*"We didn't win enough first contacts, we didn't win enough second balls which then turns the game into a game that Motherwell want to play.*

*"The times that we looked good today were the times that we passed the ball, switched the play and we got ourselves up the park.*

*"When we got up the park we just lacked that quality in the final third where we maybe made the wrong decision, or the wrong the pass or the wrong shot.*

*"It's disappointing. They've worked just as hard today as they have in any other game for us so we can't fault them for that."*

With the international break next weekend, Hearts know they must have a man in charge before Aberdeen visit Murrayfield in a fortnight. There's a big decision for owner Ann Budge to make and today's loss may just have tipped the odds away from Daly getting the job permanently.

With the transfer window due to close on Thursday, an appointment is expected early next week.

**Motherwell:** Carson, Tait, Heneghan, Cadden, McHugh, Moulton (Fisher, 79'), Frear (Campbell, 67'), Bowman, Rose, Dunee, Kipre.

**Hearts:** Hamilton, M. Smith, Souttar, Berra, Grzelak, Cowie, Randall (Buaben, 79'), Djoum, Walker (Moore, 79'), Lafferty, Stockton (Isma, 60').

**Referee:** John Beaton

**Att:** 6,568

**Top man:** Kyle Lafferty