

# Lacklustre Hearts Go Down Again



**Hearts 1 Kilmarnock 2**

**Ladbrokes Premiership, Sunday 5th November 2017 – BT Murrayfield Stadium**

Remember, remember the 5th of November. Sadly, unless you're a Kilmarnock fan, there was little to remember about Hearts Ladbrokes Premiership game with the men from Ayrshire and there were certainly no fireworks unless you count the verbal rockets aimed at Hearts Head Coach Craig Levein both at half-time and the end of the game. Killie won 2-1 to inflict a third successive league defeat on Hearts who will be hoping this will be their final fixture at the home of Scottish rugby.

Levein made three changes to the Hearts team that was brushed aside by Rangers at the same venue eight days ago. The injured Jamie Walker missed out as did Harry Cochrane – who the Head Coach thought needed a rest – and Rafal Grzelak, from whom the fans needed a rest. Levein is prone to springing surprises with his team selections and while the return of Don Cowie and Connor Randall into the side was expected the name – and frame – of defender Daniel Baur wasn't. At 6ft 6" he was bound to make an impression.

The Edinburgh Reporter likes to tell it like it is. The first half was, quite frankly, awful from a Hearts point of view. Hapless defending, misplaced passes, coming second best in far too many 50-50 balls. It was little wonder the home support let their feelings known.

The highlight of a turgid first half came from something off the pitch – the fifth minute applause around the stadium for

Hearts legend Stefano Salvatori. The Italian, a member of Hearts 1998 Scottish Cup winning team, died earlier this week at just 49 years of age. Stefano wore the number five jersey during his three years in Gorgie, hence the 5th minute tribute from the fans. Boy, could we have done with his quality on Sunday.

It was in that fifth minute that Hearts did their only thing of note of the first half. Isma Goncalves forced former Tynecastle keeper Jamie MacDonald – also a former Hearts Scottish Cup winner – to push his shot against the post.

After half an hour Killie took a deserved lead. Boyd got the better of Michael Smith inside the penalty box and fired past Hearts keeper Jon McLaughlin.

As the Hearts players trooped off the field at half-time the boos would probably have been heard at Tynecastle Park.

### **Half-time Hearts 0 Kilmarnock 1**

After another sluggish start Hearts finally looked like they were up for it in the second period. Goncalves came close to equalising with a shot that bounced off the post and there were a couple penalty shouts from the home side which referee Kevin Clancy chose to ignore.

Hearts best spell of the game was rewarded with 15 minutes to go. Isma Goncalves, having struck the post earlier, produced a rare moment of quality when he bent a brilliant shot past MacDonald and into the net to level the game at 1-1.

Hearts scented victory now and fine link-up play between Goncalves and substitute Carl Stockton set up the Portuguese striker with a one-on-one situation with the Killie keeper. But Goncalves shot straight at the former Hearts keeper and the chance was gone.

Moments later, Hearts chances of even a point also disappeared

when Killie raced up to the other end of the field. O'Donnell burst into the Hearts penalty box and cut the ball back for Frizzell who blasted the ball past McLaughlin and into the roof of the net to seal all three points for the visitors.

Hearts at least showed some urgency in the final 15 minutes, but one must ask where this was up to that point. The Maroons looked lethargic, clueless and unable to cope with Killie's counter-attacking.

After the game a clearly disappointed Craig Levein told the official Hearts website:

*"We didn't do enough in the first half at all, we were really poor. We created our own problems by being too negative, passing back the way and making the crowd anxious, rightly so.*

*"The second half was a hell of a lot better, but I did not envisage us losing the match once we levelled it. We had a few chances, but it was sods law that we'd miss our chance, then they would go up the park and score.*

*"I'm disappointed we didn't perform properly and to our capabilities, but now is the time to stick together, and work hard."*

Hearts next game will hopefully be the long-awaited return to Tynecastle in two weeks' time. Levein hopes to have Jamie Walker, Arnaud Djoum and Aaron Hughes available for selection. Hearts certainly need inspiration from somewhere.

**Hearts:** McLaughlin, M.Smith, Souttar, Berra, Baur, Cowie, Randall (Henderson, 76'), Callachan, Moore (Milinkovic, 87'), Isma, Lafferty (Stockton, 76').

**Kilmarnock:** MacDonald, O'Donnell, Greer, Broadfoot, Power, McKenzie, K. Boyd (Erwin, 66'), Jones, Taylor, Findlay, Burke (Frizzell, 72').

**Referee:** Kevin Clancy

**Attendance:** 16,347

**Top players:** The Royal Scots Association Pipe Band who played far better than those in maroon – and who got closer to Killie's attacking players than John Souttar did..