

It's The Bobby Madden Show at Tynecastle



Hearts 1 Hamilton Academical 1

Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 2nd December 2017 – Tynecastle Park

It's become something of a cliché that when you don't mention the referee in your match report it's a sign the official has done a good job. After all, football fans want to read about goals, exciting play and talented players – they're not bothered about the ref, he's just there to officiate the game. On Saturday at Tynecastle, however, the majority of the 15,357 crowd were talking about referee Bobby Madden – and not in a good way.

The man in pink gave one of the most baffling displays of refereeing this writer has seen in a long time. When the dust settled on a tumultuous afternoon, Mr Madden had booked eight players – five wearing maroon – sent off young Hearts defender Jamie Brandon and ordered Hearts Head Coach Craig Levein and his assistant Austin MacPhee to the stand. Yet the visitors spoiling tactics of persistent fouling went, for the most part, unpunished. Little wonder Mr Madden was escorted from the Tynecastle pitch with officers from Police Scotland although his actions of laughing as he made way up the tunnel didn't help pacify a Hearts support who directed their understandable anger towards the hapless official.

Despite playing with ten men for 55 minutes Hearts salvaged a 1-1 draw from an afternoon which, at times, beggared belief. Their winless run now extends to six games, but every cloud has a silver lining. There was a spirit about the team and a coming together of players and fans for a collective cause

which energised itself on the field and gave Hearts a point that may prove valuable come the end of the season.

Levein made a couple of alterations to the team that played well but without reward against Ross County last Saturday. The welcome return from injury of John Souttar and a return to midfield for Prince Buaben – at the expense of Aaron Hughes and Harry Cochrane respectively – gave Hearts further options.

The game was fifteen minutes late in kicking off because of a fire alarm being activated which meant those early birds already in the stadium had to be evacuated – and those looking to get in had to queue patiently. Two out of the first three games Hearts have had at the new-look Tynecastle have had to kick off fifteen minutes late; last week the game started on time but one of the floodlight pylons didn't work. Hopefully there will be no more teething troubles for Hearts new baby.

Hearts began brightly and almost scored in the fourth minute. David Milinkovic, who has hinted at wanting to remain in Gorgie at the end of his loan deal, hared down the right but his lay-off was cleared by Accies defender Sarris.

Former Jambo David Templeton, now playing for Accies, set up Rojano, but his effort proved less than troublesome for Hearts keeper Jon McLaughlin.

After Cole Stockton came close for the home side, Accies had another chance through Rojano but he lashed his effort into the Gorgie Stand.

It was end-to-end stuff, but the pendulum swung the way of the visitors ten minutes before half-time. The aforementioned Rojano appeared to have been shot by a sniper from Hearts new main stand and the Argentinian fell to the ground holding his face. Bobby Madden decreed the Accies man had been caught by Hearts Jamie Brandon and booked the youngster. As this was his second yellow card, Brandon was ordered off. There did appear to be contact but the reaction of the Accies player upset the

home support and they vented their anger towards Rojano and referee Madden who seemed to be giving the visitors considerable licence given the number of fouls they were committing.

Hearts were up against it now and Jon McLaughlin pushed Templeton's header over the bar as the first half drew to a close.

Half-time Hearts 0 Hamilton Accies 0

Bobby Madden had been booed off the field at the end of the first half and he was booed back on to it when the teams appeared for the re-start. The Hearts support upped the noise in support of their team and they were celebrating just two minutes into the second half when Hearts went ahead. Lewis Moore – who had replaced the ineffectual Isma Goncalves at half-time – burst forward and was inevitably fouled twenty yards from goal. Jamie Walker took the free-kick and fired a magnificent shot over Accies defensive wall and into the net for a sensational opener.

With the fans buoyant, Hearts were on fire now and brilliant play from David Milinkovic nearly doubled Hearts lead, the wide player firing a half-volley agonisingly close with the Accies keeper beaten.

A simmering afternoon boiled over when Bobby Madden ordered Craig Levein to the stand for reasons which weren't obvious. It later emerged Levein had voiced his displeasure at some of the referee's decisions and, like an insolent schoolboy, was told to sit on the naughty step. Minutes later, Accies MacKinnon clattered into Hearts Assistant Coach Austin MacPhee on the touchline. Both men fell to the ground and grappled like a couple of wrestlers on the canvas. Tut-tut said referee Madden who promptly sent MacPhee to join his boss in the stand – but took no action against the already booked MacKinnon. Accies manager Martin Canning signalled his relief by

immediately substituting MacKinnon as the home support bellowed their disgust towards the hapless official.

Templeton then hit the post for Accies before the less than popular Rojano saw his effort brilliantly saved by McLaughlin.

The question on the lips of the home support was could ten-man Hearts hold out? They got their answer with twenty minutes to go when Tomas headed home Accies equaliser from a corner kick on the left.

Hearts were beginning to tire now as the visitors pressed for a winner. However, cometh the hour cometh the hero and keeper Jon McLaughlin pulled off two brilliant saves as the game headed to its conclusion, one of which from Skondrass was sublime and had the Hearts support on their feet in admiration.

In the aftermath of an afternoon when emotions ran high, Craig Levein struggled to make sense of it all when he spoke to the official Hearts website after the game.

“That was hard work for everybody,” said the Gorgie gaffer. “Firstly, I’m really pleased with the players’ response after the red card. If Jamie’s done something untoward, we’ll deal with it, as it left us with a difficult task for the rest of the game.

“All credit to the players for getting the goal and even looking likely to get another. You wouldn’t have thought we were a man down at that point, but ultimately, it’s a draw when we wanted a win.

“I don’t know why I was sent off, the referee hasn’t told me why. He ran 25 yards over to me, then wanted me to walk five yards to speak to him. As for Austin, I don’t know how he can be blamed for the situation, he was rugby tackled. Hamilton knew their player was lucky to get away with it, and they took him off.

“I don't think I did anything wrong, I haven't been told why I was sent off, if it's for not walking four yards then I think that's bizarre. Someone said they thought the referee had lost control, and I would agree with that.”

Another afternoon without a win for Hearts who, despite the two points dropped, are back in the top six of the Ladbrokes Premiership. However, it won't have escaped the attention of Levein and the Hearts support that the Jambos are now just three points above the relegation play-off spot.

Motherwell are next up for Hearts at Tynecastle next Saturday. Hopefully, the referee will be someone who knows what he is doing.

Hearts: McLaughlin, M.Smith, Souttar, Berra, Walker (Lafferty, 79'), Buaben, Djoum, Milinkovic (Hughes, 72'), Stockton, Brandon, Isma (Moore, 46').

Hamilton Accies: Woods, Skondrass, McMann, Tomas, Imrie, Docherty, Templeton, MacKinnon (Bingham, 57'), Rojano, Lyon, Sarris.

Referee: Bobby Madden (for it was he)

Attendance: 15,357

Top man: Jon McLaughlin