

Hearts Crash Out of the Scottish Cup



Motherwell 2 Hearts 1

**William Hill Scottish Cup Quarter-Final, Sunday 4th March 2018
– Fir Park**

Hearts bowed out of the William Scottish Cup on Sunday after an uninspiring performance at Motherwell. The Maroons got an indication it wasn't going to be their day when the influential Demetri Mitchell failed a late fitness test and his place was taken by 20-year-old Marcus Godinho, the Canadian full-back making his first team debut.

Head Coach Craig Levein made two other changes to the team that drew with Kilmarnock at Tynecastle Park on Tuesday evening. Centre half John Souttar and midfielder Ross Callachan returned to the side with Don Cowie and David Milinkovic dropping to the substitutes' bench.

Hearts were backed by a near 5,000 strong Maroon Army who were in fine voice despite the freezing conditions in Lanarkshire. However, their voices were silenced as they watched their team make a horrendous start to the game.

Just three minutes had gone when Motherwell thought they had scored. Hearts keeper Jon McLaughlin was challenged for the ball and put his hand on it as he fell to the ground. Motherwell's Tanner poked the ball from the keeper's grasp and it trundled over the goal line. However, referee Andrew Dallas blew for a foul on the Hearts goalie much to the relief of those Hearts fans crammed in the stand behind the goal. Sadly, their relief was short-lived.

Just four minutes later Motherwell went ahead with a bizarre

goal. A corner kick from the right should have been cleared by Hearts Ross Callachan standing at the near post. Inexplicably, the former Raith Rovers player lifted his foot, the ball ran underneath it, bounced off keeper Jon McLaughlin before it hit the post allowing Main to prod the rebound over the line. The Hearts keeper looked aghast as accusing stares were directed towards the bemused Callachan.

Hearts seemed stunned by this turn of events and the home side dominated the rest of the first half. Half-time came as something of a welcome relief for the blue-shirted visitors who threatened only sporadically in that dismal first half.

Half-time Motherwell 1 Hearts 0

Craig Levein replaced the unfortunate Callachan with David Milinkovic at the start of the second half, appeasing much of the Maroon Army who wondered why the French born winger hadn't been on from the start. His presence was felt immediately as Hearts looked far more of a threat and they equalised just six minutes into the second half.

Steven Naismith's run into the Motherwell penalty box was halted illegally by Kipre. Penalty said referee Dallas and Kyle Lafferty, who was criticised by Craig Levein for his missed spot kick against Kilmarnock on Tuesday evening, made no mistake this time and Hearts were level.

Hearts looked much more cohesive with Milinkovic linking well with Naismith and Lafferty but still the finishing touches were missing for the Gorgie men.

Just as it looked like there would be a replay at Tynecastle on Wednesday week, the roof fell in on Hearts Scottish Cup hopes for this season. With just four minutes to go, Motherwell's McHugh took advantage of slack defending from Hearts to control the ball on his chest before lashing home a spectacular shot beyond the helpless McLaughlin for the winner.

Huge disappointment for Hearts and their supporters whose dreams of cup glory are over for another season.

Motherwell: Carson; Kipre, Aldred, Dunne; Cadden, Campbell, McHugh, Tait (Frear 78); Tanner (Rose 90); Main, Ciftci (Bowman 55).

Hearts: McLaughlin; Souttar, Hughes (Amankwaa 88), Berra; Godinho, Callachan (Milinkovic 46), Adao, Cochrane, Randall (M Smith 90); Naismith; Lafferty.

Referee: Andrew Dallas.

Attendance: 7,564.

Top People: The men, women and children in maroon and white who travelled to Fir Park on a wretched day, both on and off the park.