

Hearts Hang on for Draw at Dens Park



Dundee 1 Hearts 1

Ladbrokes Premiership, Sunday, 1st April 2018 – Dens Park

Hearts are a slice of Dundee cake away from securing a top six finish in the Ladbrokes Premiership, but it was another less than spectacular performance from the Gorgie boys in Tayside on the first day of April.

The visitors made the perfect start when Ross Callachan gave them the lead after just two minutes, but the home side deservedly equalised later in the first half through Moussa and it was yet another missed opportunity for Hearts to take three points from their travels.

Hearts Head Coach Craig Levein was forced into making one change from the team that brushed Partick Thistle aside a fortnight ago at Tynecastle with Michael Smith succumbing to injury. He was replaced by Ross Callachan.

It was the Hearts supporting Callachan who gave the travelling support something to cheer with the game just a couple of minutes old. Marcus Godinho set up the midfield man and the former Raith Rovers player turned a Dundee defender before firing a superb shot beyond Dees keeper Parish to put Hearts ahead.

With the home team lacking in confidence after a few recent defeats, the Maroon Army were hoping their team would take the opportunity an early goal gives to go on to dominate the game. Sadly, as has been so often the case this season, things didn't turn out that way and Dundee almost equalised within minutes. Kamara raced through the middle to set up Murray, but

the on-loan Hibernian striker was thwarted by the quick thinking of Hearts keeper Jon McLaughlin who raced off his line to deny the Dees striker.

Don Cowie then had a chance for Hearts in the 14th minute when he exchanged passes with Steven Naismith but his effort on goal was well saved by home keeper Parish.

Hearts Kyle Lafferty was then pushed to the ground, but referee Kevin Clancy flashed a yellow card to the Northern Irish striker for 'simulation' which seemed a ridiculous decision although not all together unsurprising given the referee's performance – he would book no fewer than eight players by the end of the game.

In the 27th minute, Hearts had a chance to double their lead when Steven Naismith dummied Godinho's cross into the Dundee penalty box allowing Kyle Lafferty the opportunity to score but Parish again came to the rescue for the home side.

It was an opportunity Hearts immediately regretted not taking as Dundee equalised seconds later. A deep cross was from Deacon met by Moussa in acres of space to prod the ball into the net to level the score.

Don Cowie had a chance ten minutes before the break, but he could only find the side netting and half-time arrived with the teams' level.

Half-time Dundee 1 Hearts 1

There isn't much to say about the second half although the home side dominated and, at times, had Hearts on the ropes.

With half an hour to go, Caulker's header was met by O'Hara for the Dees, but Steven Naismith cleared off the goal line for Hearts before Ross Callachan denied Moussa with a fine tackle.

Callachan had a chance to grab his second goal of the

afternoon with 20 minutes left but his shot from just inside the penalty box was saved comfortably by Parish.

With Dundee embroiled in a relegation battle one could argue they had the greater need for all three points. They certainly seemed to have more desire as the game drew to a close and Deacon danced his way through the Hearts defence before firing in an effort which McLaughlin pushed around the post.

It was the Hearts keeper who saved his team again when he denied Deacon once more with the Hearts defence at sixes and sevens.

McGowan then curled a shot just over the crossbar as Hearts clung on and the game ended one goal apiece.

Hearts are now six points clear of seventh placed Motherwell who play Aberdeen on Tuesday. The Well not only need to win both their league games before the split they also need to turn around a negative eight goal difference.

Hearts play Aberdeen at Tynecastle Park on Saturday but will need to up their game considerably if they want to preserve their unbeaten run in Gorgie.

Dundee: Parish, O'Dea (Kusunga, 54'), Caulker, Moussa (Leitch-Smith, 85'), O'Hara, Aurtentxe (Holt, 80'), Murray, Deacon, Meekings, Kamara, McGowan.

Hearts: McLaughlin, Souttar, Hughes, Berra, Amankwaa (Henderson, 71'), Lafferty, Naismith, Cowie, Godinho, Callachan (Moore, 71'), Adao (Cochrane, 79').

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Attendance: 5,496

Top man: Jon McLaughlin