

Levein Fury as Hearts Are Humiliated by Livingston

Livingston 5 Heart of Midlothian 0

Ladbrokes Premiership, Friday 14th December 2018 – Tony Macaroni Arena

Hearts produced as inept a performance as this reporter has seen for many a year as they were thrashed 5-0 by Livingston in the Ladbrokes Premiership at the Tony Macaroni Arena on Friday evening.

Hearts knew that a win in West Lothian would see them as joint league leaders with champions Celtic – albeit Hearts have played three games more. Hearts manager Craig Levein made two changes from the team that edged past Motherwell on Saturday – Callum Morrison and Ben Garuccio came in for Sean Clare and Marcus Godinho.

A fairly close first half saw both teams hit the post with Demetri Mitchell going close for the visitors. Hearts were dealt a blow in the 24th minute when Clevid Dikamona was forced to leave the field with what looked like a hamstring injury. Will Hearts injury woes ever end this season?

With the game goalless with 18 minutes to go Hearts conceded a penalty kick when goalkeeper Bobby Zlamal made an error of judgement and brought down Halkett. Referee Nick Walsh immediately awarded a penalty kick to the home side before booking the Hearts keeper. Bizarrely, the official then flashed a red card and it appeared Zlamal had been ordered off. However, the ref soon realised his mistake and Zlamal stayed on the pitch. He probably wished he hadn't given what was about to transpire.

Halkett converted the penalty in the 72nd minute to put Livvy ahead. Two minutes later Hearts Arnaud Djoum received his second yellow card of the evening and the blue-shirted Hearts team were down to ten men. Two minutes after that Menga doubled the home side's lead with a spectacular goal after waltzing through a static Hearts defence and the roof fell in spectacularly on Hearts evening.

Hardie then scored twice in three minutes before Byrne added a fifth four minutes from the end. Hearts, once renowned for their defensive capabilities, had conceded five goals in 14 minutes to a team who, this time last year, were in mid-place in the Championship.

Those Hearts supporters still in the stadium – and around 2,500 of them had travelled through – made their feelings known at the end of the game.

Craig Levein was enraged by the performance of his players. He told BT Sport:

"I didn't see that coming. It's beyond belief. Some things went against us but after we went down to ten men it was unacceptable. The one thing I pride myself with my teams is that the players never give up. But I felt we chucked it tonight. And I can assure the Hearts supporters that level of performance will never happen again – not under my watch."

From looking like they may sneak a goalless draw with 18 minutes to go to be on the receiving end of a hammering – Livingston's biggest ever win over Hearts – is wholly unacceptable. There were shades of Hearts 6-0 thrashing from Falkirk at Brockville Park in 1993. 48 hours after that game chairman Wallace Mercer sacked the manager, Joe Jordan...

Livingston: Kelly; Gallagher, Halkett, Lithgow; Lawless, Jacobs, Byrne, Cadden (Robinson 68); Pittman; Menga (Saunders 82), Hardie.

Hearts: Zlamal; M Smith, Dikamona (Hughes 24), Berra, Garuccio (Lee 76); Djoum, Haring, Bozanic; Morrison (Clare 46), MacLean, Mitchell.

Referee: Nick Walsh

Attendance: 4,201

Top man: Santa Clause who warmed up for the festivities ten days from now by appearing in the Hearts defence, bearing gifts to all...