

Scottish Cup Final Countdown – can Hearts defy the odds again?

On the eve of the

*William Hill Scottish Cup final between Hearts and Celtic, The
Edinburgh*

*Reporter's Mike Smith recalls Hearts recent Scottish Cup final
appearances.*

**My first memories of Hearts in a
Scottish Cup final are from
1976 when I was 14 years old. A
Hearts team which had struggled for
most of
season 1975/76 played a Rangers
team who wanted the Scottish Cup to
complete a
domestic treble.**

The 1976 final was the last one not to be televised live.

The game kicked off early, at two minutes to three. Hearts
lost a goal in the opening
minute and were, therefore, a goal down before the official
kick off time! It

was no surprise that John Hagart's struggling Hearts team lost
3-1 but I still

felt a sense of pride when Graham 'Shuggie' Shaw scored Hearts
consolation

towards the end.

It was to be another ten years until Hearts made it to another final. The 1986 Scottish Cup final with Aberdeen came in the aftermath of Hearts infamous collapse at Dundee seven days earlier when a man called Albert Kidd destroyed the dreams of thousands of Hearts supporters by scoring twice in the final eight minutes of the league season thereby ending Hearts eight month unbeaten run and enabling Celtic to snatch the league title from under Hearts noses. The Dons, managed by Alex Ferguson, capitalised on Hearts despair and added to the anguish by winning 3-0.

Fast forward another ten years. Hearts met Rangers again in the Scottish Cup final of 1996 but, revitalised though they were under manager Jim Jefferies, couldn't handle a Brian Laudrup inspired Rangers and lost 5-1.

But Hearts fans only had to wait another two years to finally taste Scottish Cup glory. Again, Rangers were their opponents in the final. But this time, Jim Jefferies team had learnt their lesson. Like the 1976 final there was a goal in the opening minute. This time it was for the white-shirted Hearts team as Colin Cameron blasted home a penalty kick. When Stephane Adam added a second goal early in the second half we dared to dream. Was the agony of 36 hurtful years without a trophy about to end? Despite Ally McCoist pulling a goal back it was. Hearts supporters partied all weekend. Their team were winners at last!

With the year ending in a six, the 2006 Scottish Cup final was always likely to feature Hearts. The Maroons had destroyed Hibernian 4-0 in the semi-final – the final before the final – but, in typical Hearts fashion,

nearly undid all their good work by struggling against third tier Gretna in the final. Hearts won only after a penalty shoot-out, but the trophy was on its way back to Gorgie.

Six years later (that number again) the 2012 Scottish Cup final was the Edinburgh derby to end all Edinburgh derbies. For once there was no Old Firm in sight as Hearts and Hibernian clashed in the first all-Edinburgh cup final since 1896. Hearts won that Victorian final 3-1. In 2012, they memorably hammered the Hibeese 5-1, a result that will be celebrated forever more. Forget a meaningless league game from 1973 when Hibs scored seven offside goals at Tynecastle – this was the mother of all Edinburgh derbies.



Mike Smith with his eldest grandson Jack Peacock at Hearts semi-final at Hampden. Jack seems more enthusiastic than his Grandad!

And so, to 2019. My grandson Jack will accompany me to the game at Hampden on Saturday. This will be his first final. He has just turned 14 years old. Hearts are playing a team going for the domestic treble (and, as has been widely trumpeted, opponents Celtic are going for the treble treble) Like 1976, Hearts will be the underdogs. But decades of following Hearts means I never lose hope. Through the dark years of relegation in the 1970s and the early 1980s, to the even darker year of 2013 when administration threatened my club's existence, I always hoped Hearts would defy the odds. And quite often

they have.

Saturday is another occasion when Hearts will need to defy the odds to succeed. But, despite some truly awful performances and results this season, Hearts fans will travel to the National Stadium in hope. It's less than 18 months since Jack and I headed to Tynecastle to see an injury-ravaged Hearts take on a Celtic team unbeaten in 69 domestic games. We agreed we would leave when the score got to 4-0. The score did reach 4-0 – but not for the league champions. Hearts demonstrated that day that anything can happen in football.

Who is to say Saturday can't be another of those days?

Mike's book [The Team For Me – 50 Years Of Following Hearts](#) – is still available in all good bookshops or from [here](#).