

Hearts throw it away at Pittodrie

Aberdeen 3 Heart of Midlothian 2

**Ladbroke's Premiership Sunday 4th August
2019 – Pittodrie**

Hearts

started their league campaign for season 2019-20 at Aberdeen in typical Hearts fashion.

A disappointing first half was followed by a stirring fight back with Hearts on the cusp of a fine victory – only for Craig Levein's side to self-combust and end up with nothing.

There

has been much criticism of Levein and his team following their stumbling Betfred

Cup performances, but the manager made just one change from the team that drew

with East Fife with John Souttar returning and Dario Zanatta dropping out. However,

there was a major boost for the Maroon Army who travelled north in numbers.

Talisman Steven Naismith – having just signed a four-year contract – was on the substitutes' bench.

The

home side had cruised to a 5-0 win in the Europa League on Thursday and they

started the game as if they wanted to carry on where they left off. Wilson

wasted an early chance before the Dons took the lead in the

13th

minute. A long ball bounced off the head of Hearts captain Christophe Berra. Keeper Bobby Zlamal appeared slow to come off his line and Cosgrove scored from an angle to the delight of the home crowd.

Aberdeen

looked rampant with Gallagher looking particularly dangerous. However, Hearts did have a chance when Berra dived to head Andy Irving's cross only to see Dons keeper Lewis pull off a quite brilliant save.

Hearts

John Souttar then departed the scene after a clash with Cosgrove and it seemed Hearts injury woes would continue into the new season.



A sizeable Hearts support at Pittodrie. Photo: Ian Bell

Midway

through the second half Craig Levein brought on Conor Washington and Steven

Naismith and the effect was immediate. Michael Smith launched a long throw

which was nudged on by Craig Halkett into the path of Naismith who nodded home

for the equaliser.

Four

minutes later, unbelievably, Hearts were in front. Naismith fed Uche Ikpeazu

who let in Jamie Walker and the winger drove the ball past keeper Lewis to put

the visitors 2-1 ahead.

However,

this is Hearts and one could tell what was going to happen next. Aaron Hickey fouled McGinn to receive his second yellow card of the afternoon and therefore an early bath. From the resultant free-kick McGinn was tripped needlessly inside the penalty box by Hearts substitute Clevid Dikamona. Cosgrove drove home the penalty kick and it was 2-2.

The roof duly fell in on Hearts afternoon five minutes later when Hedges blasted home a pass from McGinn to make it 3-2 for Aberdeen. A stirring Hearts fightback had been foiled by pressing the self-destruct button.

Craig Levein didn't want to hide his displeasure after the game. He told BBC Scotland:

"Even if we had come away with 2-2, I'd still be a little bit disappointed because I felt that we deserved more than that.

"The extra man made a difference. Clevid made a stupid decision to leave a foot in at the penalty area when he didn't need to. And that has cost us. So, I'm ruing those silly decisions that we made."

Aberdeen: Lewis; Logan; Considine; McKenna; Leigh; Ojo; Ferguson; Wilson; Gallagher; Wright; Cosgrove.

Hearts: Zlamal; Smith; Souttar; Berra; Halkett; Hickey;
Walker; Clare; Irving; Mulraney; Ikpeazu. Subs – White;
Bozanic; Washington;
Doyle; Naismith; Cochrane; Dikamona

Referee: Don Robertson

Attendance: 16,410

Top man: Steven Naismith

Thanks to Ian Bell for the photographs