

Flicker of hope for Hearts despite loss to Celtic

Heart of Midlothian 0 Celtic 2

**Ladbrokes Premiership, Wednesday 18th
December
2019 – Tynecastle**

Hearts' woes in this troubled season continued at a rain sodden Tynecastle Park on Wednesday evening as league champions Celtic strolled to a 2-0 win which means the Maroons have now gone six games without a win, five of them without a goal.

Celtic's victory opened a five-point gap at the top of the Ladbrokes Premiership and the champions were always going to be red-hot favourites against a struggling Hearts side. Yet, there was a flicker of hope for the Maroon Army. In the opening half an hour Hearts played with renewed vigour and purpose and a work-rate that wasn't in evidence against St Johnstone last Saturday. The players seem to be beginning to realise what new manager Daniel Stendel wants them to do even though he's only been in Gorgie for little over a week.



Photo: Thomas Brown
Hearts,

without ever troubling Celtic keeper Forster, were matching the champions in the opening 28 minutes – before they fell to a sucker punch. The ball was played forward to Edouard which drew the attention of Christophe Berra, Craig Halkett and Loic Damour. Three on to one spelt trouble but not for the Celtic player who cleverly backheeled the ball allowing Christie to fire a low shot past

Hearts keeper Joel Pereira to give Neil Lennon's side an undeserved lead.

When

Hearts injury curse struck yet again – right back Jamie Brandon limped off to

be replaced by Sean Clare – one could see some of the Hearts heads going down.

Celtic assumed control of the game and added a second goal five minutes before

half-time when Ntcham took advantage of more slack Hearts defending to fire

home.

The

visitors could well have added to their tally as the rain lashed Tynecastle in

the second half. But the game ended at 2-0 leaving Daniel Stendel with a huge

amount of work to rescue Hearts season.

Saturday's

relegation battle with Hamilton Academical is already looking like a

six-pointer.

Hearts: Pereira, Smith, Berra, Bozanic (Whelan, 46'), Mulraney (Henderson, 60'), Wighton, MacLean, Damour, Brandon (Clare, 31'), Halkett, Hickey.

Celtic:

Forster, Jullien, Brown, Hayes, Christie, Ntcham, Edouard (Griffiths, 83'),

Frimpong, Ajer, McGregor, Forrest (Bitton, 83').

Referee:

Bobby Madden

Attendance: 17,297

All photographs: Thomas Brown







