

Hearts trump Diamonds in Scottish Cup five card trick

Heart of Midlothian 5 Airdrieonians 0

William Hill Scottish Cup 4th Round Saturday 18 January 2020 – Tynecastle Park

After a dismal 2019 Hearts began 2020 in the best possible fashion by hammering Airdrieonians in the William Hill Scottish Cup at Tynecastle on Saturday.

Daniel Stendel's men produced a performance which, while not perfect, was a marked improvement on much of the fare on offer last year. What's more, there were five different scorers in the 5-0 thrashing of the League One side and while one swallow a summer does not make there were encouraging signs at last for the long-suffering Gorgie faithful.

Stendel made four changes to the team that impressed against Aberdeen in the last game of 2019 with welcome returns for Conor Washington, John Souttar and Steven Naismith and the surprise inclusion of youngster Lewis Moore.

There was a decent sized crowd inside Tynecastle for a Scottish Cup tie with a sizeable travelling support from Airdrie, managed by former Hibernian player Ian Murray who was assisted by Hearts Scottish Cup winning legend Colin Cameron.

Stendel has impressed on his players the importance of scoring early and Hearts did exactly that after just seven minutes. Steven Naismith appeared to be fouled inside the Airdrie

penalty box, but the ball broke to Andy Irving and the youngster carried on where he left off against Aberdeen last month by slotting the ball home for the opening goal.

Hearts should have doubled their lead, but the returning John Souttar showed his rustiness by screwing his shot wide.

One thing that hasn't changed at Tynecastle is the injury jinx. While Washington, Naismith and Souttar returned Aaron Hickey and Michael Smith both hobbled off the field in the first half. With striker Uche Ikpeazu having to pull out after being injured in the warm up, one wonders when Hearts injury woes will end.

Hearts really should have doubled their lead before half-time when Washington cut the ball back for Naismith, but the Scotland striker fired over from just six yards.

Hearts did add a second ten minutes into the second half when the impressive Sean Clare – and how many times has that been said in the past year? – volleyed home a superb effort. Four minutes later Hearts ended the game as a contest when brilliant play from Euan Henderson set up Steven Naismith and this time the newly appointed Hearts captain blasted home from close range.

With 20 minutes to go Naismith returned the favour to the youngster and crossed for Henderson to stab the ball home to make it 4-0.

The icing on the Scottish Cup cake was added in stoppage time when Craig Halkett met Andy Irving's corner and volleyed home Hearts fifth.

Despite the emphatic nature of the victory Daniel Stendel wasn't going overboard after the game. He told BBC Sport Scotland:

“It was what we expected of our performance. It was good and

we had even more chances.

“For us it was important to get that experience after a period of time without winning a game. It will give us a lift for the next game against Ross County.”

The draw for the fifth round of the William Hill Scottish Cup takes place on Sunday evening.

Hearts: Pereira, Smith (Bozanic, 41'), Souttar, Clare, Washington, Naismith (Walker, 77'), Halkett, Moore, Irving, Henderson, Hickey (Garuccio, 27').

Airdrieonians: Hutton, MacDonald (Wedderburn, 63'), Kerr, Crichton, Fordyce, C. Gallacher (Roy, 74'), McKay, Carrick (Thomson, 67'), Smith, Millar, McCann.

Referee: Don Robertson

Attendance: 14,777

Top Man: Euan Henderson



Photo: www.scottishfa.co.uk