

Hearts hammered at Celtic Park

Celtic 5 Heart of Midlothian 0

Ladbrokes Premiership – Wednesday 12th
February 2020 – Celtic Park

It was that old, sad familiar feeling for Hearts supporters tonight as their team succumbed to an inevitable thrashing at Celtic Park to remain at the foot of the Ladbrokes Premiership.

Despite a spirited display in the opening half an hour, Hearts keeper Joel Pereira fumbled a shot for Celtic's first goal and the roof fell in during the second half as the champions scored four more.

Hearts boss Daniel Stendel promised his team would attack Neil Lennon's side and he certainly named an attacking line up as Jamie Walker returned to the team with Steven Naismith and Liam Boyce the other attacking options. There was also a welcome return for young Anthony McDonald, a fine talent who has been used far too sparingly in maroon.

However,

Celtic at home are a formidable beast and they created a few early chances. They forced Hearts keeper Joel Pereira into a fine save early on. But any thoughts the much-maligned Hearts keeper would start to win over the Hearts support disappeared in the 30th minute. After half an hour of keeping Celtic at bay and, indeed, creating a couple of chances of their own Hearts good early work was undone by another mistake from their goalkeeper. Edward fired a shot straight at Pereira but the Manchester United loanee could only spill it to Ntcham who drove home the opening goal. Again, when Hearts go a goal down you can see the confidence drain from the players.

If Stendel's message to his players was to keep things tight at the start of the second half they clearly hadn't paid attention at half-time. Within 60 seconds of the re-start Celtic doubled their lead when Julien leapt to head home a corner with Pereira, again, looking less than convincing. McGregor then added a third in the 52nd minute before substitute Christie added a fourth 15 minutes later.

Hearts were desperately hanging on now and a fifth Celtic goal duly arrived when Simunovic completed the rout when ten minutes to go. Hearts misery wasn't wholly complete, however, when substitute Marcel Langer recklessly lunged in on Brown with four minutes to go and was shown a straight red card from referee Willie Collum. The German will now miss Hearts crucial bottom of the table

clash with Hamilton Academical at Tynecastle on Saturday – a game Hearts simply have to win.

Celtic: Forster, Julien, Taylor, Simunovic, Brown, Griffiths, (Christie, 64') Ntcham, Edouard, Ajer, McGregor, Forrest.

Hearts: Pereira, Smith, Souttar, Clare (Langer, 46'), Walker, Naismith, Garuccio, McDonald (Washington, 29'), Halkett, Boyce, Irving.

Referee: Willie Collum