

Cup prices just not the ticket for fans

Tynecastle Park. Hearts and Rangers battle it out in a tense Scottish Cup quarter final. With tensions high, Hearts score the only goal of the game in the second half and Tynecastle erupts. Unbridled joy among the home support who file out of Tynecastle after the game into the streets of Gorgie to spend the rest of the evening acclaiming a famous win and contemplate a place in the semi-finals.

However, I'm not talking about Saturday evening's heroics. I'm referring to Wednesday 13th March 1968 when Donald Ford scored Hearts winner three minutes from the end to send the majority of the 44,094 fans into dreamland. That's right – a crowd of more than 44,000. On a chilly Wednesday evening. The gate receipts were just over £10,000.

More than half a century later and Hearts Scottish Cup quarter final with Rangers at Tynecastle attracts an attendance of just 11,428.

Unlike the tie in 1968 this wasn't a midweek game. It was

played on a Saturday evening. The reason for the disappointing attendance wasn't difficult to fathom. Namely the cost of a ticket for the game.



Scottish Cup Quarter Final – Heart of Midlothian v Rangers.
Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.
29/02/2020.

Pic shows: Hearts beat Rangers 1-0 in the quarter final of the Scottish Cup at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

The price of an adult ticket for the Hearts v Rangers tie was an eye-watering £30 with concessions at £20. Both clubs had to agree the ticket prices but it would have been a decent gesture from the home club to suggest that, as a token of goodwill to the long-suffering supporters who have endured an awful season and a fight against relegation, the prices should have been a more reasonable £20 for adults and £10 for

concessions. But this doesn't appear to have been considered an option and the decision seems based on the premise of 'it's Rangers, we're bound to sell out so let's go with £30...'

However, taking the fans for granted was always going to backfire. For a Scottish Cup quarter final against Rangers to attract under 12,000 spectators on a Saturday evening shows the folly of the decision. Yes, the game was live on television, but this was the Premier Sports channel which is hardly in every household given their propensity to cover only Celtic and Rangers ties. Many fans simply couldn't afford to go, particularly those with children. An adult taking two children could expect little change from £100 – even accounting for the £16 price for under 16s. Add in the cost of something to eat, a match programme and the cost of travelling to the game and it proved to be an expensive Saturday evening. Taking my grandson Jack to the game set me back more than when we went to the cup final itself last May (if you exclude the cost of travel to the National Stadium)



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Across the city there were less than 10,000 at Easter Road to see Hibernian's Scottish Cup Quarter final win over Inverness Caledonian Thistle while only 4,479 period attended St. Mirren's home tie with Aberdeen. This afternoon the last of the Scottish Cup quarter finals between St. Johnstone and Celtic takes place at McDiarmid Park and even if the capacity of 10,000 is reached it means the aggregate attendance figure for all four Scottish Cup quarter final ties this season will be considerably less than for that memorable cup replay at Tynecastle in 1968.

**HEART
OF
MIDLOTHIAN**

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JIM CRUICKSHANK successfully challenges Alex. Ferguson in the Ibrox tie.

**SCOTTISH
CUP**

**HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN
v.
RANGERS**

AT TYNECASTLE PARK

Wednesday, 13th March, 1968

KICK-OFF 7.30 P.M.

The SFA says it wants to encourage more families to games and the William Hill Scottish Cup is its best avenue for doing so. Exorbitant ticket prices and ridiculous kick off times – not one of this season's quarter finals was played on a Saturday at 3pm – has had the opposite effect.

The message is clear – don't take the fans for mugs. The embarrassing number of empty seats at what was once one of the most anticipated weekends in the football calendar is testament to that.

Photos: Ian Jacobs. Hearts programme cover from London Hearts.