

Queen of the South pile on the misery for Hearts

Hearts 2-3 Queen of the South

Hearts rounded off their week from hell with a home defeat to mid-table Queen of the South in a game dominated by comedic individual errors.

In a performance that had no reaction to Tuesday's embarrassing [cup exit at the hands of Brora Rangers](#), the Jambos were a goal down after just sixty seconds when centre back Mihai Popescu gifted the ball to Connor Shields who finished well past Ross Stewart.

Shields had his second on 22 minutes when he curled impressively to take advantage of some lax positioning by Stewart in the Hearts goal.

The league leaders were poor. Confidence was clearly lacking and with no fluency or energy to the attack it made for another infuriating 90 minutes for the Hearts support. Strike pairing Liam Boyce and Armand Gnanduillet did their best to bring some focus to the front, and Andy Halliday attempted to grab the game by the scruff of the neck. However, others looked totally off the pace and out of their depth – Gary Mackay-Steven turning in another under-par shift.

Perhaps most perplexing was the manner of the second half performance from the JTs. With Popescu converting a header on

34 minutes, Neilson's side had something to at least build on. Whilst an impact would surely have been expected after the 15 minute regroup, there was no material change to the home side's intensity or focus. The Jambos did get back on equal terms though when Gnaudillet nodded in after 72 minutes. A ground out three points started to become a possibility until the 82nd minute when Andy Irving inexplicably diverted into his own net when defending a cross one-on-one with the Doonhammer attacker comfortably in check.

Gnaudillet did have a second equaliser chalked off after substitute Jamie Walker's cross was deemed, wrongly it appeared, to have crossed the byline.

It's been a weird old season for Hearts but the mood at Tynecastle has darkened sharply since Brora. A pocket of around 150 fans gathered outside pre-match to make their sentiments on boss Robbie Neilson and Chairman Ann Budge. That noise and feeling is growing strongly throughout the fanbase, perhaps irreversibly so now.

The league lead now sits at 13 points, however closest challengers Dunfermline have their two games in hand to play this week before they welcome Hearts to Fife next Saturday afternoon. As things stand, amongst other potential options, that game could either see the Jambos lead cut to a single-digit seven points or, amazingly, see the Gorgie Boys crowned champions.