

Gordon breaks record as Hearts take control of Group A

Goals from Andy Halliday, Liam Boyce and Gary Mackay-Steven led to a Hearts win against Cove 3-0, whilst at the other end Craig Gordon kept his ninth consecutive clean sheet – breaking a personal clean sheet record for a Hearts goalkeeper.

Hearts fans were back inside Tynecastle for the first time in 494 days, and one player in the Jambos ranks who seems to feed off any kind of atmosphere is Andy Halliday. The former Rangers man put in an early crunching challenge on his opposite number Iain Vigurs to the delight of the home crowd.

Before that, the visitors nearly silenced Tynecastle, when Vigurs' free kick was knocked down and struck sweetly by Leighton McIntosh, but Craig Halkett was well positioned to block the forward effort. McIntosh again went close moments later when lobbing Craig Gordon, only to see Michael Smith in the right place to clear the ball off the line.

Cove had started the better of the two teams, they looked confident in possession and dangerous on the break, but they soon found themselves behind when Andy Halliday answered the calls of "shoot" from the home support, hitting a low drive

which skidded off the Tynecastle surface and into the bottom corner, past the outstretched hand of Kyle Gourlay.

It came as no real surprise that Josh Ginnelly created openings for Hearts in the early stages. The winger's pace was giving Cove left back Harry Milne plenty to think about and the defender could do little to stop Ginnelly, who looked in the mood.

Liam Boyce's intense pressing forced a mistake from the Cove back-line. Hearts broke up field with academy graduate Finlay Pollock, and after overhitting his pass to Ginnelly, the ball was returned to the 17-year-old, who fashioned a half yard for himself and got a shot away, which glanced the outside of the post after 20 minutes.

After a bright start from the visitors, they were under the cosh midway through the half, Boyce and Smith were the latest to go close for the hosts, who were by then in search of the second goal their play deserved.

Hearts did double their lead in first half stoppage time. A vicious cross from Michael Smith was parried by Gourlay, straight to Liam Boyce, the Northern Irishman composed himself and hit the ball into the net from close range to allow the Jambos to go into the dressing room 2-0 up at the break, which overall, was a fair score-line.

Ten minutes into the second half Hearts made it three. Halliday, who was relishing the chance to play in the centre of the park, having often featured at left back, robbed Vigurs of possession on the edge of the Cove penalty box, he found Mackay-Steven who lashed the ball into the back of the net to make it two goals in two games for the winger.

Halliday went down injured with fifteen minutes to go and was replaced by another one of the Hearts academy graduates, Aidan Denholm.

McEneff and Boyce came close to adding a fourth in the dying embers, but Gourlay denied them both and the score-line finished a comfortable 3-0 to the home side.

Hearts are not in Premier Sports action on Saturday, instead entertaining Lee Johnson's Sunderland in a friendly at Tynecastle, before travelling to Stirling on Tuesday.

Cove travel to Peterhead on Saturday, before hosting Inverness on Tuesday in their final group game.