

Humphrys lights up Tynecastle with wonder strike

A stunning strike from on-loan striker Stephen Humphrys from inside his own half helped Hearts get-out-of-jail and secure a welcome 3-1 win for over ten-man Dundee United at Tynecastle.

The 50-yard plus goal by the half-time substitute, who picked up the ball near his own box and drove forward before sending the ball towards goal, capped a sensational comeback from Hearts who went 1-0 down early on and struggled to find any real rhythm during a torrid spell which had the fans in the near sell-out crowd groaning.

Experienced former Scotland international, Steven Fletcher, had deservedly edged the Tannadice team ahead in nine minutes after a bright start from a club which props up the rest in the cinch Scottish Premiership.

Fletcher, who caused the Jambos rearguard all sorts of problems, profited from a sharp move down the left which exposed the home side's defence despite a valiant effort from Kye Rowles to clear the danger, but the 35-year-old man of many clubs, who had a fine game, muscled his way into the six-yard box was not going to pass up that opportunity.

That jolted Robbie Neilson's men who just could not click into gear so the manager made changes and that helped spark the rally which began when skipper Lawrence Shankland latched onto

a ball from the left from Barry McKay, cleverly made space for himself and turned before clipping the ball past United goalkeeper Mark Birighitti for his 21st goal of the season.

The goal arrived after 71 minutes and six minutes later a delightful, flowing four-man move initiated by Australian World Cup player Garang Kuol, who joined the action after 67 minutes, replacing on-loan defender James Hill.

The lively player, who is full of running, picked up the ball inside his own half, drove forward, fed Humphrys, who is on loan from Wigan Athletic and positioned to his left just over the half-way line. He found McKay who found another substitute, Alex Cochrane, who had darted into the box.

The Brighton-born defender then calmly slid the ball past Birighitti to goal No 2 but plucky United, who played some fine football to belie their lowly position in the table, refused to throw in the towel.

Hearts faced some nervous moments until Humphrys (pictured behind Orestis Kiomourtzoglou) took centre stage and how the bench and the majority of the 18,279 fans celebrated the strike which Neilson feels must be a candidate for the goal of the season.

The popular 25-year-old carried out his media duties and then slipped away to enjoy a low-key celebration, a well-earned bath and a Chinese meal.

The only downside for Neilson from the game was the red card for Josh Ginnelly deep into injury time for dissent. Earlier, United captain Ryan Edwards had been red carded after 29 minutes for a heavy tackle on Andy Halliday, a tackle which helped change the match.

Neilson urged his men pre-match to bounce back after their 3-0 home defeat to Rangers in midweek and they did just that and the victory extends Hearts advantage over fourth-placed

Livingston to seven points, but the men from West Lothian have a game in hand. They have 35 points from 24 fixtures after their 3-1 home victory over lowly Kilmarnock.

United, on the other hand, have not won in five league games and prop up the 12-strong table with 20 points from 24 fixtures, but a repeat of this form against a side third in the table must give Liam Fox's men heart.

Indeed, Glen Middleton also hit Hearts post during the game and Neilson admitted that the red card for Edwards had a major impact. He said: "They got the goal and were the better of the two teams, but the sending off changes the game. We started poorly and were poor in possession again."

Home fans vented their frustration during a torrid opening spell as the men in maroon tried to stroke the ball around to force an opening.

Fox said he was proud of his men and added: "They gave absolutely everything."