

Shankland goal not enough for Hearts

Hearts have a tough task to emerge from the UEFA Europa Conference League play-off and into the group stage of the competition after a reverse at Tynecastle in the first-leg against PAOK from Greece.

The home side came out flying and went 1-0 up but ended up losing 2-1 and it certainly looked promising early on.

The Jambos appealed for a penalty after Kenneth Vargas was brought down by Stefan Schawb in the box but the referee waved that one away.

But the home side were awarded a spot kick after eight minutes and skipper Lawrence Shankland (pictured by *Nigel Duncan*) had the fans on their feet with an clinical finish following a VAR check.

Two minutes later and it was Hearts to had to endure when PAOK were awarded a penalty and Schawb converted and slick play between Taison and Rafa Soares saw the latter send the ball into the side netting.

Three minutes later the Jambos had two great chances. Dominik Kotarski produced a quality stop to deny Shankland and Liam Boyce, following-up, sent a shot goalwards but the hot-stop was in the right place at the right time.

Inside injury time, Taison wasted a free-kick chance by

sending the ball into the wall but Hearts suffered an early scare in the second half when Taison forced Zander Clark to save with his feet.

Shankland had the ball in the net, curling the ball into the top right hand corner, but it was ruled off because of offside after a VAR check but home fans suffered a massive shock came soon when the visitors went ahead thanks to Andrija Zivkovic with 15 minutes to play, the playing picking up the ball after a short corner and smashing a left foot shot into the bottom right hand corner past Clarke..

Hearts rang the changes as the final whistle loomed and eight minutes of extra time were added but the home side could not find a way through and face a tough return in Greece next Thursday (19.30).