

Shankland goal only joy for 'sloppy' Hearts

Steven Naismith blamed sloppy goals for Hearts' 4-1 defeat at home to cinch Premiership pace-setters Celtic who brushed the opposition aside with ease on a glorious afternoon for football, but not for the Jambos.



Kenneth Vargas shoots v Celtic. Picture by *David Mollison*

The men from Parkhead enjoy a seven-point gap at the top of

the table and they now prepare for a joust with Atletico Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday before travelling to Easter Road to square-up to Hibs on Saturday (15.00).

Rodgers believes his men will go into Europe with great confidence but Hearts must pick themselves up for a visit to second-placed Rangers next Sunday (15.00).

Naismith must lift his men to went 1-0 down after only three minutes after a delightful move initiated by a deft flick from Luis Palma and a superb, over-the-shoulder finish by Matt O'Riley into the bottom corner.

Daizen Maeda added No 2, bundling the ball home from close range at the far post, after 23 minutes and Kyogo Furuhashi added a third after 51 minutes after Reo Hatate had sent Hearts' goalkeeper Zander Clark the wrong way but thumped the ball against the upright.

The spot kick was given by referee Nick Walsh after Alex Cochrane was adjudged to have fouled Furuhashi and Hearts' fans, silenced by the scoreline, briefly came to life, but The Bhoys weathered that brief verbal storm.

Substitute Tomoki Iwata claimed his first Celtic goal after 81 minutes after Lawrence Shankland (pictured), Hearts' captain, had fired home on the turn from the edge of the box which proved only a cancellation for the home side. Time 64 minutes.

In truth, Hearts were a long way behind Celtic in this encounter played under blue skies and with no real wind.

Brendan Rodgers, Celtic' manager, said that Celtic needed to start with real energy to make things difficult for the home side and they did and he added: "We were very, very good and we tried to bring and energy and speed to the game in the beginning to make it difficult for Hearts.

"I've been here enough times to know if you don't make a good

start then it can be a challenge and the players played some wonderful football and worked every so hard in the game.

“This is constant evolution, this is not a destination to where we want to go, it is continual improvement and trying to get to higher levels and the big thing is that this is a very difficult ground to come to.

“I love challenges like this here, coming to really hostile environment, because it is an opportunity to show your value as a team and show your worth as a team. I think the players dealt with it every so well today.”

This was Celtic’s tenth straight win over the Jambos in all competitions and Rodgers’ only criticism is that he felt his men could have had more goals. He added: “Their keeper made some great saves and then, when we got to 4-1, we could have managed the ball a wee bit better.”

His opposite number Naismith did not pull his punches in the post-match briefing. He said: “We gave up really sloppy goals, that’s the biggest thing. In the last two games the goals we have conceded are not at a level we should be at and where we want to be.

“How sloppy they were and when we concede them is crucial, it does not give you a chance to get into the game. To lose a goal after three minutes and then that was the theme throughout the game as the four goals were avoidable.

“Then you are trying to get back into a game you lose a goal at the wrong time and it kills the game off and that is what happened.”



Sibbick and Kent look on as Celtic clear. Picture by **David Mollison**



Lowry shoots with Greg Taylor in attendance. Picture **David**

Mollison



Cochrane sends a ball flashing in front of goal. Picture **David Mollison**



Forrest sent spinning by Carter-Vickers during the clash at Tynecastle. Picture **David Mollison**