

Grant spot on as Hearts edge Saints

Hearts collected three valuable points to move onto 59 and consolidate third place in the cinch Premiership with a hard-earned 2-1 victory over battling St Mirren at Paisley.

Fifth-placed Saints were 2-0 down but scored late on to put pressure on the Gorgie men but the visitors held out to stay 11 points ahead of Kilmarnock who are fourth. They edged Ross County 1-0 at Rugby Park.

Earlier, travelling fans had a shock when skipper Lawrence Shankland was not named on the team sheet, and Hearts' head coach, Steven Naismith, explained that the Scotland striker had been ill.

Beni Banningime, who has ill in midweek, was another omission but Hearts threatened early on and Cammy Devlin had a chance from a free-kick but sliced his effort from 25 yards well wide of the Saints goal.

The home side, with the wind behind them, made it tough for Hearts who failed to find their rhythm but the visitors kept working and were awarded a penalty for handball on the half-hour mark after a VAR check.

Up stepped Jorge Grant who slotted home and the scoreline stayed the same until the break.

Toby Sibbick replaced Stephen Kingsley as Hearts made a change at half-time and Kenneth Vargas poked an effort wide from the edge of the box.

St Mirren upped the pressure and Hearts' goalkeeper Zander Clark saved at the back post following a corner.

The Jambos made another change, Aidan Denholm replacing 18-year-old Macaulay Tait as The Buddies continued to push for an equaliser and Clark was again involved, palming the ball away.

After 63 minutes the Men in Maroon doubled their lead when Alex Cochrane sent over a corner with the wind assisting and Mikael Mandron was credited with an own goal as the ball nestled in the net.

The Buddies recovered and five minutes later the home side were back in the game and it came from a breakaway. It ended with Toyosi Olusanya sending the ball behind Clark to open Saints account and set up a tense finish.

That signalled more changes from the Jambos as Nathaniel Atkinson and Barrie McKay were introduced with Alan Forrest and Dexter Lembikisa departing.

Then Hearts had a massive chance when Devlin robbed Alex Gogic and tried to find Vargas but the ball was scrambled away.

And the visitors survived a VAR check on a possible penalty before sending on Scott Fraser for Grant. Six minutes of added time were confirmed and Hearts survived to claim only their second win in six league games.

PICTURE: Jorge Grant playing the pain game earlier this season.