

Doochan dive denies Hearts full points at Pittodrie

Aberdeen goalkeeper Ross Doochan dived to his right to get his finger tips to the ball and send it onto the post to deny Hearts three points in the dying minutes at freezing Pittodrie.

Jorge Grant had stepped up to take the penalty in the third minute of injury time and he struck it well but Doochan guessed right and his save ended a five game losing streak for Jimmy Thelin's men.

Hearts remain in second bottom spot in the 12-strong table with 24 points from 23 games, a point behind Kilmarnock and Ross County, while their hosts are fourth with 35 points from 22 fixtures.

Earlier, Aberdeen lined-up with two new signings, Kristers Tobers and Jeppe Okkels, with former Hibs striker, Kevin Nisbet, leading the line.

Hearts, having enjoyed back-to-back wins for the first time this term, had newcomer Jamie McCart in their team with another newcomer, Elton Kabangu, on the substitutes bench for a game which has tended to favour the home side in recent seasons.

It as Aberdeen who showed first and Craig Gordon was called into action with a smart save from a corner after only 42 seconds after McCart sent the ball out of play. Tobers nudged

the ball towards goal only for the veteran goalkeeper to react.

The Dons, who led the William Hill Premiership early in the campaign but who have suffered an alarming form slump, continued to press. Topi Keskinen raced down the right and his cross hit the arm of McCart in the penalty box. The home fans called for a spot kick but play was waved on by referee Steven McLean.

Hearts were, however, hemmed in and had to work hard to get a foothold in the game on a ground where they have not won since 2016, and it was the home side who threatened next with Keskinen darting forward, but James Penrice was his equal, stopping the forward at the edge of the penalty box.

At the other end, Blair Spittal fed Penrice down the left and his cross was met by Musa Drammeh who failed to connect properly. The ball came to James Wilson near the penalty spot and the 17-year-old striker should have scored but he scuffed his shot.

Cammy Devlin was working hard for the visitors in midfield and his running troubled Jimmy Thelin's men. Beni Banningime and Daniel Oyegoke then linked down the right and Jorge Grant attempted a bicycle kick as the ball came into the box. He failed to trouble Aberdeen goalkeeper Doohan.

The home side had a great chance after 32 minutes when Nisbet picked up the ball in centre field inside Hearts' half. He spun and saw Keskinen racing towards the Hearts penalty box and he found the industrious winger with a superb pass.

The Finnish forward sent the ball wide inches wide of Gordon's left-hand post. He had to score.

It was the best chance if the opening session, but Hearts responded. Spittal sent a great ball down the left to Penrice but Keskinen felled the former Livingston player as he neared

the by-line. Hearts protested to the referee to no avail.

Tobers had to get his body across Wilson to deny the youngster after Oyegoke probed down the right but, so far, they had been unable to find the quality pass to put real pressure on the Dons rearguard.

Spittal then worked hard down the left and reached the by-line but failed to find the right ball at a critical time and, at the break, it was a blank scoreline with Aberdeen having enjoyed the best of the play and the chances.

Hearts threatened from a corner early in the second half with Penrice feeding Spittal and his shot from just outside the box flew over the bar. That signalled a change for Aberdeen with Nisbet making way for Duk.

Then Penrice sent the ball over from the left and Drammeh had a chance but failed to convert before Devlin sent the ball wildly over from the same flank before Keskinen threatened again at the other end.

James McGarry had an opportunity for Aberdeen but he failed to threaten Gordon as both sides toiled to find an opener. Duk had a shot blocked by McCart as the Dons upped the pressure.

Hearts pushed the ball around slowly, allowing Aberdeen to regroup, and that lack of penetration led to frustration in the travelling fans.

Penrice went into the referee's book after 64 minutes after a foul on Duk and Neil Critchley had seen enough, he signalled for Kabangu to replace Drammeh and he joined Wilson up-front.

Leighton Clarkson made way for Jamie McGrath and Dante Polvara also made an entrance for debutant Tobers as Thelin looked for three points.

However, it was Grant who carved out a superb opening for the visitors. He powered down the right after being sent away by

Oyegoke and Kabangu, lurking at the far post, headed for goal only for the diving Doohan to palm the ball over the bar with his right hand.

Defender McCart then had a chance close in at the near post. He saw the ball all the way from a corner and headed towards goal but it cannoned off the post. The former St Johnstone man held his head in his hands. He knows he should have found the net.

Wilson then did well to collect the ball on the right hand side of the box and send it back. Kabangu was inside the six yard box and fell to the turf after being challenged and the chance was gone.

The Dons upped the tempo by bringing on quicksilver Shayden Morris but Hearts broke and Spittal was inches away from finding Wilson. At the other end, Aberdeen responded and Morris shifted onto his right foot at the edge of the box before blasting the ball into the side netting.

Critchley made more changes and Kenneth Vargas and Yan Dhandu came on for Hearts with Spittal leaving the pitch along with Banningime as the clock ticked down.

The Dons seemed determined to snap their winless streak but a lack of composure in the final third was evident and Hearts attempted to up their game.

Vargas broke free but held on too long when he broke down the right. Graeme Shinnie showed great determination to reach the Costa Rica player and thwart the danger.

Alan Forrest then replaced hard-running Wilson and teenage defender Adam Forrester came on for Oyegoke in the final minute of normal time with four minutes of extra time signalled.

It was Dhandu who latched on to a pass from determined McCart

and he sent an inviting ball into the box for Kabangu but it was cleared, however, seconds later, Hearts had a great chance to snatch the three points when referee McLean pointed to the spot when Vargas was felled by Sivert Heltne Nilsen.

Grant stepped up to take the kick but, after a delay, Doohan took centre stage with his save. Seconds later the final whistle sounded with a 0-0 scoreline.

PICTURE: Jorge Grant (centre) in training at Riccarton earlier this season. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***