

Hearts out to erase memory of Ross County collapse

One point separates Hearts and Saturday's visitors, Ross County, after 29 fixtures in the William Hill Premiership table with the Jambos sitting in seventh spot and the men from Dingwall in eighth.

Hearts have accumulated 36 points so far this term having won six games at Tynecastle and recorded three draws, scoring 21 goals and conceding 18 in Gorgie.

The Men in Maroon have won four times on the road adding three draws and have scored 20 goals and let in 22.

Ross County have won five and drawn five of their games on their home ground and scored 20 goals and shipped 22.

On their travels, The Staggyies have won four and drawn three of their games, scoring 11 goals and letting in 27. Don Cowie's men have an overall minus 18 number in their goal difference column, the third most leaky defence in the division behind bottom club St Johnstone (minus 22) and second-bottom Dundee (minus 20).

A recent 1-0 defeat at St Johnstone has jolted confidence in the Dingwall men have only collected one point in three matches against the Perth side. The reverse arrived after back-to-back wins over Motherwell (3-0 at Fir Park) and Dundee (3-1 at home) where they scored three goals in successive Premiership matches for the first time since December 2015.

However, last weekend they bounced back from the Perth defeat to edge Kilmarnock 1-0 in Dingwall and their fans still harbour ambitious of sneaking into the top six at the cut off point.

So far this term, the sides have met twice, 26-year-old, Belfast-born striker, Ronan Hale, looking to have secured three points for The Staggies at Tynecastle only for Lawrence Shankland to level in the sixth minute of injury time on September 28 at Tynecastle. On the day, Ross County had 30 per cent of the possession and Hearts had 70 per cent with the home side accumulating a total of 577 passes against 261.

They next met on December 29 and who can forget the dramatic ending to that clash. The scoreline ended 2-2, James Wilson scoring after two minutes and 48 minutes before Aussie-born midfielder Josh Nisbet opened the account for The Staggies after seven minutes of injury time and 33-year-old, Bellshill-born forward, Jordan White, sensationally capitalised on a defensive mistake to equalise with nine injury-time minutes on the clock.

On the day, County had 49 per cent of possession against 51 per cent from Hearts who made 329 passes against 312 from their rivals.

Hearts are currently buzzing after reaching the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup semi-final where they face Aberdeen at Hampden in April. The club are also boosted by news that 18-year-old teenage striker Wilson will join veteran goalkeeper Craig Gordon in the Scotland squad for next week's clashes with Greece in the Nations League.

Steve Clarke, Scotland's manager, said Wilson had made a big impression on the national coaching staff last year and the fact that he is playing regularly was another reason he was named. His scoring record of six goals in 24 games this season also boosted his case.

Kick-off on Saturday is 15.00.



19th December 2024 Edinburgh – Action shots from the Hearts v Petrocub match at Tynecastle. Photo Thomas Brown

PICTURE: James Wilson (centre) on duty for Hearts this season.
Picture **Thomas Brown**