

One Club Man

September 2012

With the domestic close-season now restricted to June the focus switched to the European Championships. Sadly, as a Scot the only big tournament nerves I get are when I come to fill in the group tables on my wallchart. The use of Tipex looks so unprofessional. Nonetheless, the month still provided several additions to my collection.

On June 10th an ex-Hearts/Hibs select took on a Hutchison Vale XI in the annual Craig Gowans Memorial Match at Saughton Enclosure in Edinburgh. Craig was a promising 17 year-old Falkirk player when he was tragically electrocuted in a training ground incident in 2005. Although I couldn't make the match itself I did nip round in the morning to make a donation and pick up a copy of the attractive 24-page programme.

With a colour cover, inside there is a welcome from Craig's parents before further tributes from his schoolmaster and Eddie May, his coach at Falkirk. The centre pages reveal the prospective sides for the day with Hutchinson's including Steven Tweed. The Hearts-Hibs XI was more familiar with Henry Smith, Dave McPherson, Darren Jackson, Dave Bowman, Paul Hartley, Jimmy Sandison and Jose Quitongo all due to represent various eras of Hearts. The second-half opened with photos from previous matches which had seen 'Hutchie' take on Tynecastle FC, Dukla Pumpherston and an ex-Scotland XI. Thereafter it is adverts but on such an occasion the programme is hopefully a useful way of raising additional funds. The former professionals won 2-0.

The following Saturday there was the unusual prospect of a senior fixture at Tynecastle in June as Scotland took on Israel in a Women's European Championship Qualifier. This match would be dominated, on the park, by Scotland who won 8-0 and off it by a Palestinian demonstration that made up around 100 of the 817 crowd. The presence of the protesters - and their public threat to invade the pitch – meant a late switch for spectators from the Main to Wheatfield Stand. Nonetheless, the normal, superb 16-page programme was available on admission.

Coach, Anna Signeul opened the reading on page three with her comments reflecting on the qualifying campaign to date. SFA Chief Executive, Stewart Regan did likewise on page 5 with the even-numbered pages preceding these messages having Scotland-related adverts. Pages six and seven carried an interview with goalkeeper, Gemma Fay as she reflected on becoming Scotland's most capped women with an amazing 142 caps; having made her International debut at just 15. 'The 100 Club' then profiles each woman who has 100 caps or more for Scotland including arguably the best-known female footballer from these shores, Julie Fleeting. Amazingly she has 116 goals in 120 games. The centre-pages have a poster before 'The Campaign So Far' looks at wins over Republic of Ireland and Israel, a draw with Wales and defeat to France, Lisa Evans then answers a series of questions on her team-mates including, "[Jennifer]Beattie definitely has a few admirers and one specifically." We're left unsure if Jennifer knows that...

Israel have a single page made up of three player profiles before 'Latest News' covers items from the SFA. The teams are placed on page 14 and show Glasgow City making up the majority of the home squad and an entirely domestic

visiting side. Two adverts for 'corporate partners' complete a superb issue.

Four days later and there was what I believe to be a first-ever issue for a Hearts women fixture with a lovely little eight-page issue free on admission to the Second Division League Cup Final versus Aberdeen reserves at Recreation Park, Alloa. The cover features the badges of both clubs – Hearts' remaining the same and Aberdeen's amended from the men's version. Chairperson of the Scottish Women's Football League Stefano Faiella provides an extended welcome on page two and confirms that with the regionalisation of the Second Division this was the first meeting of the clubs. Opposite is a list of results in the competition thus far and these show that Hearts had a walkover versus Stenhousemuir in the opening round and then defeated Dee Ladies (12-0), Spartans Reserves (3-2) and Dunfermline (4-2) to reach the Final. As well as Aberdeen reserves the Dons also entered a Development side and the latter's exit to Dundee City was avenged by the reserves in the Semi-Final.

Looking at these results it is hard to not draw comparisons with the emergence of the men's game at the end of the 19th century with teams emerging and disappearing and spectacular mismatches. Hopefully the game prospers as clubs find their natural level.

The centre-pages are given over to the teams and squad photos before each Manager provides their own insight on page six; the excitement of reaching a Cup Final coming across from both. Page seven has contact details for each of the 35 Second Division sides – some related to senior or youth sides and others independent. The only advertising comes on the back page. On the night a healthy crowd saw Hearts win their first-ever trophy with a comprehensive 6-1 victory. As I couldn't make it along a big thanks to Julie Tudhope at the SFA for obtaining me a copy.

Finally, in this 'close-season', late June saw the much-awaited publication of the '2012 Winners Souvenir Cup Programme' from 442 Sports Marketing who are, of course, also responsible for the Hearts programme. The publication had been announced in the immediate aftermath of the victory and has been highly-anticipated in the clamour for souvenirs of the win. Although it was delayed slightly – not least by the fact that the Management team and several players subsequently left Tynecastle in the days after - pre-orders reached over 1,000. Initially it seems that sales were to be online only before agreement was reached with Hearts to stock it in the Club Shop. Strangely, however, purchases of the programme (£5) had to be made separately and in cash!

The term 'programme' may be unusual for a publication commemorating rather than previewing but it is very much in the style of the 2011-12 issue albeit extended to a (perfect bound) A4 in size and 84 pages in quantity. The cover features the celebrating players as well as fixture details and then, as with the programme the reading opens with now 'ex-boss', Paulo Sergio. Thereafter, there are eight pages of match reports from the run to the Final with the Semi-Final win over Celtic given a double-page spread. That is followed by 11 pages of photos from the Final which move from the warm-up to the post-match celebrations. The whole publication has just eight pages of adverts and seven of those contain congratulatory messages to Hearts. The best of these is for Charlie Irons' coaches who chose a photo of their coach returning with the Cup as it prepared to turn into MacLeod Street; where my friends and I were standing. Fortunately, I escaped the actual photo, however.

Continuing the links with the normal programme, there are contributions from regulars, Mike Aitken, David Speed and Mike Smith. Aitken pens 'History Makers' and asks if this was not the most dominant Cup Final display ever by a Hearts side. Individual player interviews then commence from page 32 with Andy Driver, Danny Grainger, Darren Barr first-up with accompanying photos. The centre pages have a photo of the team on the winners' podium at Hampden. Captain, Marius Zaliukas opens the second-half of the programme and is then followed by Stephen Elliott and Coach Gary Locke who had been the non-playing skipper of the winning side in 1998. Club Historian, David Speed then looks back at the previous seven victories; which means Hearts are now the fourth-most successful side in the competition's history. Further pieces then follow from Ryan McGowan – including my favourite photo of the weekend which shows him diving into score the fourth goal - Rudi Skacel and Ian Black before Assistant Manager, Alberto Cabral. There are six further pages of photographs from the celebrations and then two showing the stats and team line-ups from the season just gone. Mike Smith concludes the reading with his own thoughts on the game before a team photo taken with the Cup above the same group of players' doing the 'Poznan' beneath. The back-page has the team lines and scorers from the day. All-in-all a publication worth waiting for and a fine addition to the range of souvenirs. Certainly, this is the first dedicated Club special for a Cup win – because there have been so many obviously – since a special League programme for the 1956 triumph. In addition to the programme. 442 are also selling the front-and-back covers for framing. The company have also announced that next season's home programme will be extended by four pages to 68.

And there's still a DVD to come.

All that led neatly to the start of the new season. I will cover 2012-13 programmes from next month onwards but remarkably the first such match – the Under-20's visit to Berwick - was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch. Having been tempted to go and combine it with the evening speedway fixture at the same venue – also rained off - I then had an afternoon at home and I have to confess I rediscovered eBay.

I had browsed often enough before and purchased the occasional item through my girlfriend's account but the buzz of collecting returned this weekend and by the Sunday night I had picked up three Hearts connected items, two of which filled a little gap in my collection of games played at Tynecastle. Firstly, the Meadowbank Thistle v Rangers League Cup Semi-Final from 1984 (both clubs now, of course, in different guises) which was switched from the inadequate Commonwealth Stadium and then the Berwick Rangers v Kilmarnock issue from November 1989 when Berwick had to shift with Shielfield declared unsafe. That match was moved at short notice but strangely 'Tynecastle' is mentioned only once in the two issues; on the cover of the Meadowbank programme. After that came a 'Buy Now' Cup Final teamsheet and corporate menu. With the eBay app on my phone I may have a developing addiction.

Just as well the season has started.

Enjoy your collecting – whatever it may be!

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