

One Club Man

November 2014

Life in the second-tier commenced with an unlikely trip to Ibrox. However, it did make for an appropriate fixture to mark the opening of the newly-named, Sandy Jardine Stand. The programme was also an appropriate marker and featured a blue-and-white image of Sandy on the cover along with tributes inside. Elsewhere, the Rangers issue still primarily relies on interviews to provide reading and as such, Ian Black, David Templeton and Lee Wallace all preview the visit of their former club and ex-Hearts' defenders Alan McLaren and Dave McPherson pick out the favourite memories of their Rangers career. The sole historical piece is an excellent article on the origins of Ibrox itself. Overall, Rangers might be expected to produce more but equally they peg it at £3. 43,683 saw Hearts spring a surprise with a 2-1 win.

Seven days later and it was the first-ever, lower-League Edinburgh Derby between Hearts and Hibs. Perhaps not cause for celebration but the programme did proclaim the fact on the cover. With 2014 marking the centenary of the side that signed-up to fight in the Great War and the opening of the Main Stand the issue is a good balance of modern and reflective with the cover a 'sepia-ed' design akin to something you might find in the Hearts' handbooks of the fifties. Surprising though was the return to B5 size – still perfect bound – but perhaps less so the retention of the £3.50 cover price. Indeed, this was the third differently-sized issue of the season and shows the flexibility and creativity of publishers, 442 Sports Marketing.

Overall, the internal layout is similar to last season - with a traditional font used for headings to recreate something of 1914 - but perhaps feels less constricted in B5. Equally one quickly took to the handbook size of A5. Perhaps this size is a compromise and it certainly makes storage easier with most issues being around that dimension. To mark the start of a new era the Board are profiled – including Director of Football, Craig Levein – and an A3 team-and-fixture poster was also given away. All the columnists looked back at previous wins over Hibernian and perhaps the only disappointment is the continuing, basic coverage of the visitors with just pen-pictures. A sell-out crowd of 17,280 watched a tousy 2-1 home win.

It was a contrasting story three nights later when a virtual-reserve side lost 4-1 to Livingston in the Petrofac Training Cup 2nd Round. Hearts made it obvious they weren't too fussed for the tournament and I was glad I had opted to miss the game. That said the large travelling support amongst a total of 3,807 may have felt different. Once again I contacted the club in advance and for a third time there was no response from a 'big' club. Fortunately, current season specialist GP Football Programmes came to my rescue with a copy. The issue is a fairly substantial one but a curious mixture of glossy and home spun with the thick-ish paper and shiny print. The teams open on page three although you would have to read well down the Hearts squad to find the starting XI. Former, Hearts Manager John McGlynn provides a welcome before pages of news precede a review of the League win over Cowdenbeath which attracted just 1,147. John Litster contributes 'This Week in Livi History' which of course only stretches back 20 years. That is complimented by an 'A-Z of Livi' which is already on letter B. A chapter will need to be dedicated to the various names of the Almondvale Stadium over the years too with Livi' embracing a number of different sponsors. The second half has less reading although Hearts are given an extensive welcome including a fine two page article on McCrae's Battalion. Overall, once again, an excellent issue amidst low crowds.

In a way the first real Championship experience came with the visit to Kirkcaldy the following Saturday although once again this is familiar territory with Hearts having played a Testimonial, friendly and League Cup tie there in the last two years. The 'Rovers Review' was on sale for £2 – another plus for the Championship – and printed on glossy yet flimsy paper it stretches to 36 pages in full-colour. The reading is pretty decent with interviews with a current player and several smaller articles. The player interview is with Mark Stewart who “interrupted his honeymoon” to sign for Rovers and at 24 has already played seven clubs one of which was Bradford whom a tribunal eventually ruled had to fork out £215,000 for Stewart – after they had already freed him. The adhoc articles are sprinkled 'here-and-there' including another on the link between the clubs of McCrae's Battalion which makes the next meeting, at Tynecastle on November 8th all the more appropriate. On a more trivial note I did like the supporter's club notice for a bus to Dundee which left from a railway station, two bars and a Mormon church – the latter at the very precise time of 6.13pm. A crowd of 6,105 saw Hearts go clear at the top with a 4-0 win.

Finally, this month a rare trip to Stenhousemuir – indeed only the second competitive visit there since the Second World War. Unfortunately my arrival 30 minutes before kick-off wasn't enough to secure a programme. That meant I spent the first part of the evening looking longingly over the wall that separated me from the hut apparently selling issues to the home support. At least I know how an East German felt. Thankfully, the following day I was in touch with Ochilview Editor (and General Manager), Margaret Kilpatrick to get a copy and she subsequently advised that the young boys selling them perhaps hadn't taken up the best positions. Margaret happily sent out a copy for cost plus postage which made a mockery of those selling for over £6 on eBay.

The only colour in the issue is on the cover and Manager, Scott Booth opens the reading with brief notes that include “[the disappointment of the] manner in which we lost our goals. However we did look excellent at times going forward.” Which is his summation of a 5-4 defeat to Stirling. The main reading comes from detailed match reports of two other games although the highlight is a look back at the three previous League Cup meetings and then a list of results between Stenhousemuir and Hearts sides over the years including the Central League of the twenties. 1,708 watched a tight 2-1 win for Edinburgh Maroons.

I've covered my own two previous visits to Ochilview in other articles but for the reserves' trip to Ochilview on August 4th 1990 there was a basic 16-page issue sold for 40p. Dominated by adverts - including golf professional Donald Slicer – yes, really - and the Strathclyde Programme Shop – the only reading comes with the beginnings of a preview of the Warrior's forthcoming League opponents although a lengthy quiz is opposite. A 1-1 draw ensued with former Rangers keeper, - and then Hearts coach - Peter McCloy making an appearance at the age of 43.

Enjoy your collecting – whatever it may be!

Scott Cockburn

SCockburn@hotmail.com

www.scottcockburn.moonfruit.com

Twitter: @scottcockburn

