

One Club Man

November 2012

The second match of the new season saw a trip across the City to Easter Road and there was a little bit of a shock with a flimsy, 32-page issue on sale for £2.50. It looks as if Hibs have gone back to the reduced programmes they previously issued; albeit more of a compromise between a full edition and the '£1 special.'

It has a full colour cover and on page three there is an innovative, Twitter-fed 'Q&A' with new goalkeeper, Ben Williams. Manager, Pat Fenlon has his say on page four and it's quite funny to note that the recent Scottish Cup Final where Hearts defeated Hibernian 5-1 is not mentioned anywhere in the issue. "Can you blame them?" my friend said but I'd like to think I'd take it on the chin. The Hearts' profile which follows is therefore based on the team put out the previous week against St Johnstone. 'If You Know Your History' then starts a series on the memorabilia at Easter Road with the medals of Gordon Smith. The article is really a biography of Smith's career although it is interesting to note that his winner's medals with Hearts – 1959-60, League Championship and 1959 League Cup – are also on display at Easter Road.

The seemingly omnipresent John Litster then has a page on the Great Britain v Europe programme of 1947 before a profile on the aforementioned Ben Williams. Whilst this is a simple affair it crams in as much reading to one page as some of these efforts do in three or four. As ever the second-half of a programme seems disappointing with just two articles of reading on the youth and womens teams respectively. All in all a disappointing if pragmatic issue to match a poor crowd of 12,879 for a lively 1-1 draw.

The following week the action returned to Tynecastle with the visit of Inverness Caledonian Thistle and an entertaining 2-2 draw was watched by 11,512. This issue is broadly similar to the St Johnstone issue a fortnight before. However, one article which attracted me was on Hearts goalkeepers. We have always been extremely fortunate to have excellent custodians in years gone by and I can remember standing on the terracing behind my all-time favourite, Henry Smith when I was a (very) young boy. Henry is also featured in Gary Cowen's article on Panini Stickers which I have to say I was never hugely into collecting. Perhaps my future business analyst attitude kicked in even at nine when I realised I couldn't easily collect all the stickers. I do give my completed Return of the Jedi album pride of place though.

Coincidentally to that article, I chanced upon www.footybits.com recently and picked up a batch of Hearts cards from different sets - including the John Robertson Pro-match card from 1998 illustrated here. I also picked up the Hearts set of Proset cards from 1991 – again featuring Henry Smith – as well as the six Hearts' Sun Newspaper cards from 1978 which feature colour drawings of players from a dreadful spell at Tynecastle. I've never actively collected cards or stickers but their relative cheapness - especially against age - makes these attractive additions to my collection.

Back to the current season and after Inverness it was another 'Battle of Britain' (following last year's trouncing by Tottenham) as Liverpool arrived in the UEFA Europa League Play-off 1st leg. It was no surprise to see the A5 issue become A4 and the price cover rise to £5. That inevitably generates some 'moans' but walking along Gorgie Road before the game the sales – from an increased run - seemed to justify it.

Although expanded to 76 pages it was essentially the normal issue 'blown up'. However, there were additional, match-specific, interviews with ex-defender David Weir who now coaches Everton reserves and a lovely montage of recent European wins (yes, all in colour.) Strangely, there were also four pages of Hearts pen pictures. All in all a suitably memorable issue for one of Hearts' biggest European nights. Arguably, the size increase to A4 is unnecessary but equally would people buy a £5, A5 issue?

Aside from the programme there was an eight-page, 'Hope In Your Hearts', Edinburgh Evening News pull-out special from that day's paper similar to last year's effort for the Tottenham game. The paper was also on sale outside the ground with the bonus of a free Scotch pie with every purchase. I assume these were cold. Plus they would be a tricky one to keep in the collection. I picked up a nice Liverpool badge to add to the collection of European opponents I have and there were also the usual plethora of special scarves on sale (£7 in the Hearts shop, £6 on a side-street stall and £5 from a cardboard box on Gorgie Road.) The latter were being perused by a small boy only for his father to comment "I'm not sure they are official". What made him think that?

Unofficial was most definitely the case with the two pirate issues for sale on eBay at around £3 each. One even included a fake teamsheet. In fairness these are clearly marked as pirates but I just can't see the attraction? A crowd 15,965 watched a late own goal secure a 1-0 win for Liverpool.

Three days later and it was off to take on another 'Reds' with the long journey to Aberdeen. As ever the 'Dons' programme is quite superb and having seen just three programmes this season I can already say it will be a huge favourite for Programme of the Year.

In fact the reading is almost overwhelming with the adverts barely noticeable amidst the content. The standard features of a programme such as the Manager's page are also hugely detailed. Indeed, Craig Brown has a wonderfully old-world style of writing; witness, his contradictory hopes that Hearts might be carrying injuries from the Liverpool game. "It is to be hoped that after their midweek experience against Liverpool Hearts are not deficient in terms of injury although one or two players took knocks." Skipper, Russell Anderson also provides a detailed page before perhaps surprisingly light coverage of Hearts which concentrates on the impact of Vladimir Romanov rather than current players.

Richard Gordon also provides a page before keeper Jamie Langfield has a lengthy interview. Hearts are given further coverage in a page of stats which makes the obligatory mention of Aberdeen in the eighties. That precedes a quite superb mini-section of historical coverage with a past photo given much more detail than the equivalent page in the Hearts programme and a continuation of the examination of 100 years at Pittodrie with a review of 1945-46. There then follows two interviews with past players before a slightly oddly-timed, history of the World Cup. Nonetheless, this review of the 1934 tournament is as in-depth as any other article in the issue. Three supporter written articles then follow and it is only then that the pace slows up with some club-related advertising. All in all another superb issue and the stunning cover by Paine Profitt illustrated here just tops it off.

The following Thursday it was off to Anfield for the return leg and another new ground for me. The programme was proving pretty popular with home and away fans and came in two formats. The programme only was £3 but for £5 there was also a first issue of the new Liverpool magazine (cover price £3.95) with a free DVD presented in a branded bag.

Given the occasion I opted for the latter and there is still an excitement about buying a programme from such a game.

The programme is very similar to the Tottenham issue of last year being perfect bound at 84 pages, giving it a 'journal feel'. Opening comments by Brendan Rogers and then Steve Gerrard both reflect on a "tough" game up at Tynecastle before Hearts are given seven pages of coverage. That includes an interview with former winger John Colquhoun who apparently regularly visits Anfield in his current role as a football agent although is probably unknown to home fans. There is also a four-page interview with former Hibernian and Liverpool player Peter Cormack. 'Far Foreign Lands' looks at players abroad with a connection to Liverpool and primarily at the recent resignation of John Toshack as Macedonian Manager. However, it also includes an unlikely mention of Hearts' winger, Suso moving to the Spanish Third Division with Tenerife which had probably also escaped the home fans' attention.

The youngsters have a dedicated four-page section book-ended by a clever 'Now and Then' feature which has two photographs of Luis Suarez in his Ajax and Liverpool days. 'Classic Clash' is another good feature with a photo of Liverpool v Aberdeen in 1980 dissected player-by-player. A photo from the first leg of that match was featured in the Aberdeen programme the previous Sunday.

A review of previous competitive encounters with Scottish sides then follows before a brief look at the last visit of Liverpool to Edinburgh for the 1958 charity match against an Edinburgh Select. 'In My Life' – a nod to the Beatles - is an interview with Coach, Mike Marsh before a profile of Ronnie Whelan closes the issue. A lovely looking issue with fluid content although the use of photographs possibly leads one to think there is more reading than there actually is.

The club magazine has a greater quantity of reading and again I wonder about the relationship between respective sales? The magazine opens with beautiful fold-out photo of Anfield from the upper tier of the away end but the true photographic highlight is the supporter who sent in a photo of former Red, Gary McAllister happily posing, alone in the chap's car. Surely the only cars you should be photographed in are you own or the General Lee?

As with the first-leg a pirate was available on eBay but it was more interesting to see that Liverpool programmes are sold through the Liverpool Echo newsstands throughout the city centre. A superb trip and 44,361 fans watched two late goals from either side see Liverpool sneak through.

Enjoy your collecting whatever it may be!

Scott Cockburn

SCockburn@hotmail.com

www.scottcockburn.moonfruit.com