

One Club Man

May 2014

The final weekend of February saw two matches against Glasgow opposition at Tynecastle. On the Saturday, Celtic were the visitors and as with their previous visit there was a poster given away with the programme. This time, however, both were themed to the Foundation of Hearts who had just announced their plans for funding the Club's removal from Administration and longer-term future.

The A2-sized poster had a montage of images from Hearts' history to tie-in with the Foundation's slogan of 'Create History' and within the programme there was an interview with Foundation Chairman, Ian Murray MP and an open-letter from financial backer, Ann Budge. With publishers, 442 donating money from each sale to the Foundation – raising £500 – the programme received wide-publicity in advance and felt like the first tangible evidence the future for Hearts might be positive after-all. Celtic, however, were too strong on the day and won 2-0 before 15,801.

The following day a more modest crowd of 315 saw the U20s reach the Semi-Final of the Youth Cup by defeating Queen's Park 3-0. Once again a teamsheet was available on entry (which itself was by donation) and this marked the first visit of any Queen's side to Tynecastle in over 30 years.

Six days later it was a trip to Fir Park and an excellent home issue which might have expected to do better in the recent Scottish Programme Awards although perhaps the £3 cover price counts against it. Nonetheless, despite a crowd of only 4,914 watching a 4-1 home win there is a wealth of bright and well-written content. Highlights included an interview with Calum Elliot who played for both clubs and then a look back at when the two clubs met in the Texaco Cup. The only other souvenir of a dreadful defeat was a receipt on entry. That and the incongruous mixture of depressed Hearts fans, celebrating Celtic supporters and hyper 'X-Factor Live!' attendees which assembled on the train home.

Another week on and it was a trip to Kilmarnock and a poor crowd of 3,510 witnessing even poorer defending from Hearts as the home side won 4-2. As ever the Killie issue is a fine, if light and irreverent read at £2.50 for 52 pages. Accordingly, reviews of recent poor performances are alongside the news that skipper, Manuel Pascali looks like ITV's, 'Mr Selfridge.' Showing a rare interest in programmes my wife expertly adjudicated that Alexei Eremenko would be a better fit.

Two historical articles stand out with the first a series of photographs of the dismantling of the old enclosure as Rugby Park was reconstructed as an all-seater stadium which also reminds us that the ground used to be a bowl shape more akin to Firhill or Celtic Park. Killie erected three new stands in the space of a year and in November 1994 the Hearts fans stood in the former home end which had been replaced by a stand by the time of the second visit the following April. (Both ended in defeat for some consistency, however.) Secondly, there is the cutting from the Ayrshire Football Annual which reported on a floodlit football match at Rugby Park in 1878 in which three lights were used – two behind one goal oddly – which Portland won 3-2 although two Killie players were so badly injured they never played again!

Equally, however, the Killie programme is never one to apparently let go of a grudge and it manages a dig at the local rugby reporting and at Celtic for poaching then-Manager, Tommy Burns...in 1994.

Three days later the U20s travelled to Peterhead to take on Aberdeen and there was another of the fine issues from the Aberdeen Heritage Trust for £1. They sell the issues at cover price on eBay which also seems eminently sensible. In colour throughout there are columns from Coach and Captain alike along with a couple of general articles on 'Crazy Football Facts' and a history of Scottish International football. Add in two match reports and the only thing lacking is coverage of the visitors who capitulated 4-0.

I particularly like the old style masthead incorporated into the Aberdeen cover and as I mentioned recently I believe these would be a worthy addition to modern day covers. Last month I wrote about the Hearts reserves-Leith Athletic issue I had picked up and mentioned the first-team programme from the previous day for the visit of Hibernian. This has a fine masthead consisting of sketches of City landmarks which combined with a photograph and striking font draws the reader in whilst leaving them in no doubt of the character, history and prestige of the City and this fixture.

There was a first – Derbies aside – competitive, Friday fixture for fifty years when Dundee United visited Tynecastle on March 21st. On a pouring wet night – the double scourge of the supporter-programme collector - there was still a crowd of 13,488 to see United win 2-1. The Hearts issue included a listing of all previous Friday games which shows that, pre-war, it was a relatively popular day to hold local Cup and League matches. Once again there was also a free poster; this time the first of a three-part series featuring 'Derby Heroes'.

That same night Edinburgh were taking on Ulster at Murrayfield which was ironic as Hearts' last Friday fixture - against Falkirk in January 1964 - had been brought forward to avoid a clash with the Scotland-New Zealand Test match. The programme made no mention of the switch and the Editorial instead concentrated on the forthcoming Scottish Cup-tie at Queen of the South. 'Pavilion Panorama' also covers the draw and looks back at the previous four meetings all of which Hearts had won. The full draw was below and Duns would travel to Ibrox and Fraserburgh to Dunfermline.

A match report on the previous week's 4-0 win over East Stirling was opposite the programme of music from the City of Edinburgh Band (this as the Beatles prepared to storm America). A review of the season's three meetings revealed that Hearts led by an aggregate of 11-4 and the home side would add more with a 4-1 win before just 8,000. Interestingly that was 3,000 less than East Stirlingshire had attracted which suggests that Friday night football was not as attractive then as apparently now.

A more recent Friday fixture was in March 1991 when Hearts filled-in a blank weekend due to an early Scottish Cup exit with a friendly against IFK Gothenburg. The match was supposed to take place the previous evening but fog delayed the Swede's journey to Edinburgh. Nonetheless, the programme is dated correctly and is an eight-page, wider-than B5 version of the normal A4 issue, sold for 50p. Space was still found for Chairman, Wallace Mercer to open the reading and he alludes to reduced prices for this game as a gesture of apology for previous issues with ticket prices for the UEFA Cup-tie versus Bologna. After Manager, Joe Jordan's comments came 'News' and then two pages on IFK who included International goalkeeper, Tomas Ravelli. An equally modest 4,530 watched a 2-1 home win.

Enjoy your collecting – whatever it may be!

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