

One Club Man

October 2017

It's pretty obvious that close seasons are almost a thing of the past and so after finishing 2016-17 in mid-May 2017-18 opened up on July 1st with a friendly at Livingston.

Before, that, however, the summer provided interest with the ongoing construction of the new Main Stand at Tynecastle – or more pointedly the auctioning of memorabilia from the old one. The auction took place at Tynecastle with the 100-year old structure all but demolished and fortunately cleared of anything of value before the wrecking ball fell.

Accordingly, Hearts were able to muster an eclectic group of items ranging from the baths from the home dressing room through to signage and various photographs and even bricks and seats. The top item on the day strangely, however, was the plastic owl which used to ward off avian friends from the Stand – selling for £4,100. Indeed, what a hoot.

My own favourite had I attended and released my cheque book would have been the beautiful sign which stated “Any person committing a nuisance in the grounds will be prosecuted” - a veritable bargain for £2,450. All in all £63,000 was raised for the new stand and some memorabilia is now finding new homes - and perhaps some hostile partners.

Also over the summer was an Edinburgh Evening News series, ‘Hearts in 50 Objects’ – Hibs had a parallel series – which showed off various items of history from the Club's recently opened museum. Fortunately, it didn't fall into the trap of simply highlighting already well-known items but delved reasonably far and wide into the club's history.

The trip to Livingston on July 1st proved programme-less for the appropriate crowd of 1,874 as did the U20s match against Lothian Thistle the same day. I had intended to attend but was unable to confirm it was even going ahead never mind where and when.

So it wasn't until the first team travelled to Ireland for a two-game training camp that we saw the first issue of the season – from St Patrick's Athletic. Three Euros purchased a double-issue for the preceding match against Galway and overall 32 large-pages of colourful content.

Alongside a couple of well-observed articles were a look at previous meetings with Hearts including the programme covers from the 1988 UEFA Cup meetings. Later on there are also match reports and statistics as well as a further page on the current side. The News page includes an item on what seems to be an impressive Programme Shop that draws its stock from home and abroad. Finally, something I have never seen before closes the issue – a colouring in page. Overall, a great issue. The home side won 1-0.

Three days later Hearts crossed into Northern Ireland for a match against Linfield who produced a more modest A5 issue for £2. The cover photo of a close-up Roy Carroll clutching the Irish Cup works very well and gives way to a colourful little issue which endeared itself to the visitors by describing them as “one of the foremost football clubs in Britain.” Do they mean us?!

After Manager David Healey's thoughts there are several pages on Hearts including their Northern Irish trio of players. There's also a look back at Linfield's 2003 pre-season when the sides last met including a withering appraisal of then, new-signing, Paul Dalglish. Hearts won 4-1 in front of 1,854.

The same day the U20s were across Edinburgh for the Ronnie Swann Memorial tournament alongside hosts, Spartans, Hibernian U20 and Edinburgh City. The 16-page programme opens with a biography of Swann before a two-page scene setter. That's followed by 2016-17 stats including the results across the centre-pages. Each side is then given a brief, one-page profile before further tributes to the late Swann. Hearts had previously contested the Cup in 2012 when it was a one-off match but the group format here saw Spartans triumph with two wins.

The first home programme of the season is much anticipated and perhaps this season more than most when the club announced there would be a new, movie theme to their covers this season. Each will also be accompanied by an A2 poster of the cover. Naturally, the suggestions for covers against Rangers and Hibs in particular were wide-ranging but overall, this has the potential to be 'Good, Bad and Ugly'. More importantly it is something different. As Barry Norman would have said, "And why not?"

Thus, friendly visitors, Newcastle were greeted with the sight of a prostrate Cole Stockton in 'Platoon'. Inside this full-size issue the look and feel is largely similar to last season although there have been some positive style changes.

Manager, Chairwoman and skipper all provide welcomes with a player interview in-between. Match reports follow but now have a single, large photograph as the background which works well. 'My Ultimate' eleven is a new series although this started with goalkeeping coach, Paul Gallagher who hasn't played for the club.

Also new is the 'Class of 1998' which looks back 20 years to the famous Scottish Cup winning season and mirrors successful series in other programmes. David Speed returns with a look at previous matches against Newcastle and Gary Cowen compliments that with a look at some of the programmes including one from 1899. 'It's a Date' also looks back at events on the fixture date and finally, 'Photo Finish' closes with a look back to a linked image. All-in-all the historic content looks to be the strongest element once again and overall, it's a promising debut. The Geordies won 2-1 before 10,001.

Newcastle are Hearts' most common English opponent and on May 10th 1975 travelled north to mark the 'Innovation of the new Lothian Regional Board' with a friendly at Tynecastle. A gala day was outlined on page three including the Royal Scots pipe band although the 'Board' is barely mentioned. Newcastle are given four-pages including photographs and the remainder of the programme is pretty much a series of news items largely reflecting on Hearts' successful bid to qualify for the newly-formed Premier League. In more innocent days it's also announced that skipper, Don Murray has moved to Linlithgow. 8,500 saw a 2-2 draw.

The League Cup then opened with a first competitive visit to Elgin City. The 'Black and White' was on sale for £2 and the cover has a lovely framing which is repeated through the issue. Chairman and Manager provide opening welcomes before a look back at the 2010 League Cup meeting at Tynecastle and then a player-interview. The second-half has less

reading with only statistics and a page of Club news before a brief history of the League Cup itself. A narrow 1-0 win ensued for the visitors before 1,303.

Once again the U20s were in action the same night with a trip to Christie Gillies Park, the home of Civil Service Strollers. An eight-page, unstapled issue was available and provides an admirable bespoke content and in particular an article on the return of John Souttar from injury which was completed with 45 minutes in this match – during which he managed to score an own goal in a 2-1 defeat!

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