

One Club Man

March 2018

The long-awaited return to Tynecastle Park came on November 19th when the new Main Stand was pressed into action for the first time against Partick Thistle. It had been 'touch-and-go' in the run-up to the game as last-minute works were carried-out to ensure the Stand could open and the game go-ahead. Accordingly, the programme apparently went to print a little later but nonetheless the full-issue was able to celebrate the completion of the initial phase of construction.

Featuring a 'Manhattan' cover the main features were a history of Tynecastle by David Speed which reminded readers that the first stand at Tynecastle was considerably simpler – moved across Gorgie Road from 'Old' Tynecastle and remaining unroofed for the 250 capacity. The feeling of relief at returning to Tynecastle is covered in the various individual columns and poignantly, there is also further tribute to the recently lost, Italian midfielder, Stefano Salvatori who was a key member of the 1998 Scottish Cup-winning side. 16,999 watched Thistle equalise late-on for a 1-1 draw.

With home games now arriving in quick succession the programmes would provide a veritable 'Edinburgh Film Festival' of covers. First up was 'Jurassic Park' for the visit of Ross County with the highlight being reproduced newspaper reports of the sides' first meeting in 1934 as part of Hearts end-of-season tour. A 0-0 draw ensued for the 15,601 crowd.

After a partial floodlight failure during the County game there was then an evacuation of the ground prior to the match against Hamilton. 'Vertigo' inspired the cover this time but there was no need to worry for Hearts as they climbed to just sixth after a 1-1 draw before 15,357. That was then followed by the appropriately-chosen, 'Wild at Heart' although it was more a case of 'Frozen' as Hearts finally go their first win back at Tynecastle, 1-0 against Motherwell in front of 15,984.

'Tuesday Night Lights' welcomed Dundee the following midweek and 15,566 saw a convincing 2-0 win for the home side. In a neat mirroring of September's programme at Dens Park there was another profile of Neil McCann and a match report from an away win – this time Dundee's shock 7-1 victory over a title-chasing Hearts side in February 1965. Equally of interest to both was the recollection of Bobby Flavell's (literal) flight to the non-regulated world of Colombian football in 1950. A quick return to Scotland followed and a move to Dundee - after an SFA ban.

The following night – surprisingly given that both clubs were in-action on the Tuesday – there was a four-page issue with front-page Editorial at Kilmarnock for the SFA Youth Cup-tie between the sides.. Killie won 3-1 and thanks to Richard Cairns for my copy. Thanks also to Derek Drennan who recently sent me a teamsheet from the Challenge Cup-tie against St Mirren in September.

Returning to Tynecastle, 'Burn After Reading' is perhaps not the ideal film for accompany a programme but it provided a historic issue for the visit of Celtic as Hearts finally ended the Glasgow side's record-breaking 69-game unbeaten run with a stunning 4-0 victory before 18,555.

And then it was time to hit the road once more with a trip to Perth. Surprisingly, the Saints' issue has risen to £3 despite being only 40-pages. That makes it both a quick read and questionable value. After a brief opening welcome and even briefer Managerial notes – unusually not having a page to themselves – there is photographic coverage of recent matches followed by five basic-pages on Hearts. There is a double-page interview with a player interspersing various historical articles which are undoubtedly the highlight. News items open the second-half but the final 16-pages are bereft of reading. A more rigid content-order would improve matters as design is excellent – especially the cover. However, neither could or would disguise the lack of true reading. 4,975 watched a 0-0 draw.

The match ticket is similar to the one issued for Hearts' first visit in December 1990 with a drawing of McDiarmid Park feinted through the background. Unusually despite initially being all-ticket our family-stand tickets had no seat numbers on them.

Four days later, the Edinburgh Derby was appropriately greeted with 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly' and although content had undoubtedly varied issue-by-issue there was still much interest in this eighth home issue in just nine weeks. Appropriately, David Speed looked-back at the 1949 match against East Fife in which the referee called the players together to tell them-off for rough play. Although it appeared to have the desired effect the official was nonetheless booed off at the end as the crowd had been quite enjoying the spectacle! 19,316 saw a not dissimilar match which ended 0-0.

Returning to the days of the former Tynecastle Main Stand I recently picked up issue for the 1988 East of Scotland League Cup Final contested by Spartans and Whitehill Welfare. A folded-piece of A4 it had a price of 20p and thanks to some of the smallest print I have seen, plenty of reading. That allows histories and pen-pictures of each side across-the-centre with league tables and a sponsors message on the back. Whitehill took the trophy and included future Hearts Coach and Manager, John McGlynn. Spartans, meanwhile, listed veteran goalkeeper Murray McDermott who would join Hearts four months later as cover and promptly make his debut in the UEFA Cup!

The final match of the 2017 presented arguably the best programme in the League from the trip to Pittodrie. It's undoubtedly a sumptuous production and the small print allows for maximised reading with photographs complimenting. Indeed, first-up is a delightful image of Pittodrie in the snow from the nearby hillside. The reading opens with with Manager' and skipper's thoughts and match-reports followed by several player interviews. 'The Numbers Game' is then a clever dissection of a photograph from April 1970 with brief pen-pictures of the players captured. There is then a lovely profile of former Hearts and Aberdeen keeper Gordon Marshall by his son – now a coach at Pittodrie. Further profiles follow in the guise of an assessment of Aberdeen players by a colleague and then a Q&A with an U20 player.

The centre-pages have an amalgam of 2017-18 covers revealing a variety of styles. The historical coverage then dominates the second-half although there is a feeling that some of the ground may have been covered. Nonetheless, there is a fine profile of former player Bobby Wilson and 'That was the Year That Was' allows each player to pick their highlights - ranging from “when we found out that Gary [Mackay-Steven] was still alive” and “climbing a volcano in Bali” to “knowing 2018 will be better.” Statistics then close it out. Overall, it cannot be legitimately faulted and it's

ahead of most in both content as well as layout and design. Equally, with the programme amongst at top for many years now it would be interesting to see how it might push-on.

The ticket for the match – and a crowd of 18,371 – is unusually 'portrait' and QR codes to gain entry. A third successive 0-0 draw ensued.

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