

One Club Man

December 2012

This month we have a combination of current season, unofficial issues and another addition to my collection.

Firstly, I was delighted to remove a couple of 'wants' from my list thanks to a combination of Programme Monthly and eBay. As I have mentioned before, I collect from 1957-58 - a Championship season for Hearts – and now need only 81 programmes. The majority of these are from foreign tours but equally every time I think “that’s it” another one pops up and can be scored off the list.

Firstly, my 'Wants List' advert in Programme Monthly came good with Iain McKee spotting that I needed the issue from the Rangers-Hearts U19 fixture of 2008. Iain, of course, produced programmes for Rangers' reserve and youth fixtures at Murray Park and Ibrox for a period and confessed he was surprised to find a spare copy of the Hearts programme in a box as they were apparently, normally keenly taken up. I say 'taken up' rather than 'sold' because these programmes moved from being initially, 'unofficial' to being allowed by Rangers as long as they were free. Thus, this 12-page issue is a 'complimentary souvenir match programme.' It contains two detailed match reports as well as good coverage of Hearts. From the visiting side Ryan McGowan, Eggert Jonsson (now of Wolves) and Gary Glen (now Ross County) stick out although Marc McCusker, Jonathan Brown, John Neill, and Jonathan Stewart have also progressed to careers in the lower leagues. As has David Templeton with Rangers...

Then, from eBay came the four-page effort from Penicuik Athletic for a reserve pre-season friendly in 2010. This has been a regular, recent fixture and Penicuik have issued a variety of programmes for these games from full-editions to more simple four-pagers like this. Actually, this one is more of a teamsheet folded into a four-page programme with fixture details on the cover and forthcoming fixtures on the back. The teams are listed in the centre. However, in a smart touch all this is set against a colour picture of Penicuik Park and printed on stiff card. Having chosen to go and watch the first-team lose at Dunfermline I thought it would be easy to pick up later. Wrong. Issued free on the night in limited numbers this is the first time I have seen the programme come up for sale.

Incidentally, another 'want' relates to a possible issue for the St Mirren v Hearts U19 match of April 9th 2011. Any collectors out there able to confirm either way?

Continuing with eBay there has also been a release of several reproduced programmes including an early fifties edition versus Leith Athletic and a 1956 friendly at Sheffield United. These are clearly described as reproductions but I e-mailed the seller out of interest and got some more information on his work. His stated aim is to allow collectors access to a copy of a programme which is likely to sell for £100 or more. Indeed, it is his opinion that more collectors should do the same. Naturally, I asked if the reproductions were 'marked' and I'm told they aren't. Rather, I am assured that the size, print and paper quality would identify them as modern reproductions. What do other readers think? Should there be a market for reproductions of programmes or should we be moving to increased use of online technology?

Away from programmes another interesting addition to my newly-burgeoning card collection came with the acquisition of a 1908 Smith's Cup-tie card of Tommy Hynds. This makes it the oldest item in my collection by some distance and it

is genuinely exciting to have something over 100 years old! It cost me £6 on eBay and I certainly wouldn't be able to get a programme of that era – if one was available – for that price. The card is illustrated here and the photograph just says “old”. As it was Hynds played just four games for Hearts but had enjoyed a lengthy career in England including a spell with Manchester City where he was one of the players banned amidst allegations of match-fixing in 1904.

Returning to the current era and there was an ordinary issue for the visit of Dundee although unfortunately the tight deadlines prevented any comment on the draw at Anfield. 12,446 watched Dundee sneak a 1-0 win thanks to an early penalty.

An International weekend followed and on the Friday Hearts took the opportunity to face The Spartans in a match for the Ronnie Swan Challenge Trophy at Ainslie Park. The heavy rains had seen Hearts use Spartans' more-advanced artificial surface for much of pre-season and this was a 'thanks'. A crowd of 1,169 created a real buzz at this superb community stadium and the home side issued a semi-regular edition of their normal issue – 'The Spartan' - for £1.50. The 24 pages open with welcomes from Chairman and Manager alike with the former admitting he had been at Hampden to see Hearts lift the Cup the previous May. Thereafter, there were two pages on Hearts before a profile of the service of 'Mr Spartans', Ronnie Swan who had played as well been secretary and president in over fifty years service. The centre pages had colour shots of the recent Scottish Cup exit to Wick Academy before 'Newsdesk' confirmed future fixtures against Heriot Watt University and a Scottish Amateur XI for the senior side and visits to Whitburn and Partick Thistle for the Juniors and U19s respectively. Next is a player-profile of Jack Beesley before two pages on the 'Spartans Smilers' which sees the club promote oral health with the local NHS board. Stats pretty much complete the reading with a small piece following on the mascots and a rising U19 player. The only thing missing is the seasons' results thus far. Nonetheless an excellent effort for a non-League side and they were almost rewarded with victory as Hearts scored twice in the dying minutes to force a 4-4 draw before winning 8-7 on penalties. There was also a colourful ticket issued.

Over the years Hearts have also played Philadelphia Spartans (1971) and Blyth Spartans (1981 and 1982) but the only other issue I have from the Edinburgh version is from a reserve friendly in July 2003. This match was played on a pitch within the Edinburgh Academy playing fields - I recall a cricket match taking place on an adjacent surface - and thus, provided an unlikely setting for a programme considering other venues which have been 'non-issues'. Actually, the issue was produced by a Hearts collector with proceeds literally handed to the Spartans secretary.

The issue was £1 for eight pages but equally was in full-colour on pink paper. It opened with a look at Spartans' King Cup win at the end of the previous season before a look at their ongoing pre-season friendlies. The teams were across the middle-pages and Hearts then received two pages with Craig Gordon identified amongst the most promising youngsters. The back-page had a history of Spartans; one of several indicators that this is an independent programmes. The same individual also produced several unofficial issues that pre-season which, as always with such issues, remain a matter for contention amongst collectors.

It was a trip to St Mirren on September 15th where it was another modest 32-page issue for £2.50. Saints have adopted a relatively simple model of using their supporters for a lot of the reading. I would presume it also means a 'thinner' programme like this is more likely to sell to home fans on a regular basis. With it being a Garthland production it also has a familiar look-and-feel.

After manager Danny Lennon opens the reading the first of the five supporter-written articles appears before 'Newsdesk'. This includes a plea for supporters to be more considerate in parking near the ground. Apparently complaints from the public were met with a "somewhat aggressive" response which I should imagine included impractical suggestions on where to place future double yellow lines. The same article includes an advertorial for 'Black and White', the bi-monthly magazine produced by the St Mirren Development Association with funds going to the Saints' youth academy. This appears to compliment rather than rival the programme. The second-half only has three pages of editorial and again the feeling is 'good reading but there needs to be more of it'. 4,307 watched Saints win 2-0.

Finally, as I have mentioned before I also collect programmes with a 'Hearts connection'. So my eBay shopping continued with the purchase of the issue for the Scotland-England Centenary Shield match at Tynecastle in May 1974. The B5 issue has a fairly traditional feel with small print opposite adverts on most pages. The irony of the Bank of Scotland advert declaring goodbye to "money worries" also shows how other things have changed. Teams for a pre-match Primary Schools fixture are listed on page three (the covers not being counted) and there is one name which sticks out from the Edinburgh side – Neil Berry who would sign for Hearts ten years later.

The 'Pink News' promises coverage of the match that night and the centre pages have the teams with pen pictures helping to identify future Hearts striker, Chris Robertson then with Rangers and brother of John. After profiles of the officials and competition results two adverts stick out; one for the forthcoming Subbutteo World Cup in Munich and another for "Edinburgh's swingiest disco", the Americana in Fountainbridge. Groovy indeed. Final reading comes with a history of Hearts which concentrates appropriately enough on Tynecastle.

More recently, there was the usual superb issue from the SFA for the women's International against France at Tynecastle on September 19th.

I also collect programmes where a Hearts player was capped although this is slightly more hap-hazard than my main collection not least because I wait to see if the Hearts player makes it onto the pitch. However, the recent Scotland-Australia friendly at Easter Road saw Andy Webster play for the Scots and Ryan McGowan debut for the visitors so I will pick that one up. More tricky are our foreign internationalists. Anyone know a good contact for a Greece-Lithuania programme?

Enjoy your collecting – whatever it may be!

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