

The Final Word – Heart of Midlothian v Leeds United - 30.07.23

And so here we are again. Welcome to season 2023-24, snazzy pink shirts and all.

It's been a funny old close season. Firstly it was short given the Wrestlemania at the end of the Derby was as recently as May 27th. And then we had European finals and international matches right through to mid-June by which point some teams were in pre-season training.

Certainly, at Tynecastle it's been a quiet summer with the lack of signings at time of writing proving a bug bear for many. And that's understandable as we all like new things and with an injury record that would cause the NHS further stress, we certainly need the precaution of a larger squad.

But that said if we announced the signings of Liam Boyce, Beni Baningime and then Craigs Halkett and Gordon we'd be very happy. So, whilst it's a cliché to say returns from injury are like new signings when they've been out for so long, they are certainly ones which bolster us.

Given we have another month or so of the transfer window then we'll no doubt see more signings. In the meantime, we can be reasonably happy with the lot we have.

~~~~~

Speaking of summer this article is being written in the shade of the Cypriot sun. It used to be a summer thing maybe coincided with early pre-season friendlies but now you're potentially going to games before your own holidays. As was the case at sun-kissed Dunfermline three weeks ago.

That said there is a downside to not being in the League Cup group stages as I did feel we looked less ready than Ross County and Hibs this time last year. But we'd obviously rather be in Europe and fought hard (literally as it turned out) to get there.

Indeed, today being only our second, open-door friendly means we don't have much to judge on but at Dunfermline I thought we looked lively, quick to recycle possession but ultimately a little hesitant up front. You'd hope that will come with sharpness however.

Equally pleasing was the sight of so many youngsters making a positive impact. We really should be a club adding two or three Academy graduates a season. In turn success at that will mean less need for signings if no reduction in clamour for them.

So #announceanyone will still be here.

~~~~~

The Final Word – Heart of Midlothian v Leeds United - 30.07.23

Leeds are the huge name in town today albeit they are similar to Hearts in that they often seem to be architects of their own downfall.

They're also not a team I've seen before which makes today interesting in itself.

I was too young for the friendlies in the early eighties but do recall United winning the title with McAllister and Strachan in 1992 and then playing Rangers in the fledgling Champions League.

However, the main memories of Leeds – Clough, Michael Sheen, Revie and The Damned United aside – is of the tilt at the Champions League around 15 years ago and subsequent financial disaster. All akin to a similar idea and crash at Tynecastle.

Leeds however took much longer to return to the top-flight and there was then a further set back with relegation last season.

Further rebuilding looks required at Elland Road under Daniel Farke but 'Marching on Together' remains their mantra and surely one we can identify with.

~~~~~

Finally, back to holidays and this year we had the ultimate foreign experience by flying from Glasgow Airport. Celtic, Rangers 'taps' were prevalent although kudos to the sole Morton fan. And sympathy to the similar Hibe.

No pink jerseys to spot on that horizon but there are of course dedicated Rangers and Celtic shops airside. The Rangers' version seems to be in duty free so insert your own joke about paying less tax.

But seriously the prevalence of their kits, stores and brand reminds us what we're up against in terms of finance. That means we need every advantage we can get and further reducing nearly all away supports is one of them.

Tynecastle is a big plus for us and if we can sell out by ourselves then brilliant. But that aside we should relish every challenge in front of us. Otherwise, why are we here?