

# Kevin Thomson wants to see Easter Road 'rocking' for European tie



When Pat Fenlon was asked about the possibility of Kevin Thomson returning to Easter Road last season after leaving Middlesbrough by mutual consent, he quipped "only if he is prepared to play for nothing."

To everyone's amazement, that's exactly what he did, and whilst most fans thought he was merely putting himself in the shop window for this season, he has instead extended his stay and signed a one year deal with the club he supported as a youngster in Peebles.

The midfielder is now determined to have Easter Road 'rocking' by keeping the tie alive when Hibs face Malmo in tomorrow's Europa League Qualifying tie.

Thomson has appeared in European campaigns for both Hibs and Rangers in a ten year career, and he hopes to pass on his knowledge to his team-mates.

He said: "Two legged-ties will be a new experience for the boys and that's where experience comes in. Most teams will go chasing the game if they go a goal down but a 1-0 first-leg defeat wouldn't be the worst result in the world. It's almost a game of chess. They'll want to score goals to come over here and make it a bit more comfortable for the second leg, whereas we'll hope to stay in the tie, bring them back and have a go.

"The young boys will need to show discipline, not just for the first ten minutes but for the whole 90 minutes to give us a live chance of progressing."

“Europe has been great for me. I’ve played 11 Champions League games and managed to get to a Uefa Cup final with Rangers. When I look back at some of the teams we managed to beat that season, it was breath-taking. Then you get the disappointments but that’s just what happens in football. Just look at the end of last season here – we beat Hearts at Tynecastle for the first time in four years and then a couple of weeks later it was heartbreak again when we lost the Scottish Cup Final.

“It’s definitely difficult for Scottish clubs at this stage of the season when you play teams like Malmo who are midway through their domestic season. They definitely have an advantage, there’s no getting away from that. But it’s not an excuse. We have been in early for pre-season training; we’ve had three warm-up matches. The preparations over in Portugal were spot-on. Jimmy Nicholl has come in as assistant manager and he’s been fantastic.

I’d like to think I could pass on some of my European experience. How you do that? I don’t know. When you play in Europe, the ball doesn’t change hands as much as it does in SPL games. So we are going to need to be bright and organised.

“We’ve got a group of boys who would run through brick walls. There are plenty of legs, enthusiasm and quality in this squad. We know we are up against it, we know Malmo are a good team. But you expect to play good teams when you are in Europe.

Thomson accepts that Malmo have good European credentials, but he was heartened after speaking to a former team-mate with recent experience of the Swedish team.

“I spoke to Steven Whittaker at the weekend who played for Rangers when they lost to Malmo two years ago. He said they are decent, although he felt Rangers were the better team and would have beaten them if they’d taken their chances.

“I don’t think we will be going over there to park the bus.

But we need to not be naive and think we can go hell for leather, that's where the experience comes in. Normally, if you go 1-0 down in a game, you feel you have to go chasing for an equaliser. A 1-0 defeat wouldn't be acceptable in Malmo, but it wouldn't be the worst result in the world."

The Scotland international has first-hand experience of Easter Road 'rocking' for a European tie, although he watched the game from the side-lines; "The AEK Athens night was probably as good as I can remember for atmosphere. It's the only time I've been genuinely nervous sitting watching a game. I sat behind the bench, I had only just signed for the club at 16, and it was just amazing; the Hibs' crowd were unbelievable. Could we replicate that atmosphere this season in Europe? I don't know, but if we stay in this tie I know our punters will get behind the boys. When the fans produce that kind of atmosphere, it gives the players that extra edge and extra yard. We are going to need that in the second leg.

The players fly out from Edinburgh Airport this morning.