

Alex Harris named in Butcher's squad for Pittodrie



Hibs' teenage winger Alex Harris is in the squad for tonight's game against Aberdeen at Pittodrie.

The highly rated youngster injured his ankle in the opening league match of the season against Motherwell in August, and boss Terry Butcher believes that the news is like a new signing for him.

Speaking to Hibernian TV, Butcher said: "Alex has been training very well and he has been close to being in the squads for the matches against Hearts and Dundee United.

"But he'll be in the squad against Aberdeen and we'll see if he can get onto the bench or not; it's good to see him back.

"Sometimes you have got to be careful with younger players that have had their first major injury that you don't bring them back too quickly.

"Unfortunately with the under-20s being away in Turkey and with their Christmas and New Year shut down there have not been a lot of games that he can play in.

"If we try to play bounce games we don't have that many bodies that we can field two teams. We haven't been able to give him games and the match sharpness that he requires but he'll get there, he's young and there is a lot of adrenaline in his body – and I'm sure there will be when he gets his recall to the first-team.

"It is exciting to have someone like that coming back and it's like a new signing for me, so I'll just be very happy to see him back on the pitch.

"It is a big boost and it is nice to have him available, and we want to keep everyone as fit and sharp as they can be.

"They've got good competition and I keep going on about that because players are now looking over their shoulders and saying: 'He's coming back' or 'he's fit and available and itching to get into the team'.

"The players are doing well in training and trying to impress. It's good and we want to keep that going, we've set a standard now in the last eight or nine games and we want to maintain that and improve on that because there is always more."

Striker Paul Heffernan returned to first team action against Dundee United on Sunday and Butcher believes the Irishman will contribute goals to the team.

He added: "Paul has been like a pogo the last couple of days because he has been so stiff. The first 10 minutes he said he thought he only had half a lung because he couldn't breathe and it was his first competitive 90 minutes for a long time.

"He only had five minutes against St Mirren in our first match, so he had bided his time with the injury, but he has got great experience and you can see in his link-up play, his two snap-shots with his left foot in the last two games that he has played he has nearly scored, so you think that goals will come.

"The sharper he gets and the more used he gets to the pace of the Premiership and the way that we want to play – the better. He is a very good asset to us, but he will be an even better asset when he can forge a partnership with James Collins.

"We have also got alternatives to Heffers, we've got the younger players Jason Cummings and Danny Handling who want to get back into the team, so we've got good competition there."

Photo by John Preece

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