

# Tom Taiwo delighted to be back in manager's plans



Hibs' midfielder Tom Taiwo is delighted to be back in Terry Butcher's plans after a spell on the side-lines and the former Chelsea star is determined to retain his place for the remainder of the season and possibly beyond.

Speaking ahead of today's game against Kilmarnock, Taiwo said: "It's really good to be back playing. It's always disappointing when you are not involved when a Saturday comes around and you're either in the stand or on the bench, so it's nice to be our training feeling there is something to look forward to at the end of the week. I haven't really had to dig deep, injuries and suspensions have given me my chance, but what I am pleased about is that I seem to have shown the manager what I can do and he seems happy with the role I have played so far.

"I was in the stand so when that happens it is never nice and you have to think about your future but the future for me at the moment is Kilmarnock and the game after that and trying to stay in the team and not only win but perform well enough to keep some of the top players we have out of the side. It's about pride."

It was widely reported that Taiwo was one of a number of players who be leaving the club during the January transfer window, however he kept on training to the maximum so that he would be ready to return to the first team if required.

He continued: "The boys we have that haven't been involved are all good professionals, even the ones who have left. They train hard every day. We don't benefit by not training hard. If you do that you lose fitness and if we were to go somewhere

else we wouldn't be in top physical condition and able to take our chance there, so we have all worked hard and the reason is more personal pride than anything else.

"The manager just spoke to me and told me the role he saw me playing – which didn't look like a very prominent one at the time, but obviously things have changed quite quickly. I just spoke to my pals here, there is a big group who all get on really well if you are playing or not playing. It doesn't change the fact we are all good friends and they're the people you rely on.

"For example Scott Robertson was injured at the weekend but he still texted the boys to wish them good luck even though he wasn't in the squad. That shows you the team spirit and that we turn to each other when things aren't going well. It's not nice sitting in the stand.

Last week Taiwo scored what turned out to be the winning goal against Ross County and whilst he is keen to add to his goalscoring tally, he is more concerned about helping the team to climb into the top six.

"I've always tried to score goals – it's just that I haven't been very good at it! Goals are important and I feel I am energetic and I have a good side to my game defensively, and if I can offer more going forward then maybe I will get even more chances. I know what I am good at, I know what my strengths are, but all good players want to improve and aspire to something better.

"For me the next step would be to try and get five goals a season and then maybe ten. You set yourself these targets. At the moment it is just trying to get into the box, that's how the chance came on Saturday, and getting into those positions familiarises yourself with the kind of composure you need when you are in there.

"It's nice, I think it shows you how much playing games gives

you confidence. It kind of takes you out of your comfort zone in that you do things that you wouldn't normally do. Maybe six months ago I might not have been bursting into the box in that kind of position, but the manager has always said he wants one midfielder supporting the attackers, and in that instance it was my turn and Sammy held the fort. That comes with confidence and going forward it something I can do and contribute to the team."

As well as scoring, Taiwo made a last minute block to prevent Graham Carey from equalising which was just as important to him and his teammates as he explained: "I'm not sure if you saw my reaction but I was more elated with that than when I scored my goal! Players know what they're about, what they're good at and what their strengths are. Doing the so-called bread and butter is the most pleasing thing, and anything on top of that like goals or assists is an added bonus."

Taiwo's contract is up at the end of the season and like most of his teammates he is playing for his future at the club. "The manager has been the same with me; nothing has changed in terms of my role at the club. I have to keep working hard to keep my place in the team; however he has shown that if you play well and the results are coming he won't necessarily change things.

"That's how it should be especially with players like young Sammy. There are more experienced players in the squad but he has shown that he can handle it and he's been outstanding, hasn't he.

"It's nice when you come in as a young lad and know your efforts are going to be rewarded with more game time. So my aim is to keep the wins coming and the good performances. It was just about playing football for me, really.

"When I wasn't getting games I was looking at opportunities to try and get playing football because that's all any of us want

to do. But as the manager has said I have applied myself to my maximum throughout the training sessions and always given everything to the cause and that's why I think he has given me my chance and a chance to the others who haven't been in the squad and on the periphery."

Photo by John Preece

<http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>