

Ozturk Departs as Hearts Eye Hughes



Hearts centre-half Alim Ozturk has left Gorgie to return to his native Turkey, signing for second division side Boluspor.

The 24-year-old was renowned more for his long-range shooting rather than for his defensive prowess but he will forever be remembered by Hearts fans for his incredible 40-yard last minute equaliser against Hibernian at Easter Road in October 2014 when both clubs were in the Championship.

Ozturk was a dependable figure in the lower league and a key member of Hearts Championship winning team. When Danny Wilson left Hearts in the summer of 2015 to return to Rangers, the Turk was appointed Hearts captain by then Head Coach Robbie Neilson.

However, Ozturk made a less than impressive start to season 2016/17 and was dropped from the team following uncertain displays against Birkirkara in the Europa League qualifiers and St Johnstone in the Betfred Cup at the start of the season. Consequently, he lost the captaincy and has made only fleeting appearances in the first team since.

Hearts, who have also cut short winger Tony Watt's season-long loan and have sent him back to Charlton Athletic, have been linked to Northern Irish international Aaron Hughes. The defender has been capped 103 times for his country and lists Newcastle United – he made his debut for the Toon in a Uefa Champions League tie in Barcelona in 1997 – Aston Villa, Fulham and Queens Park Rangers among his clubs.

Hughes is a free agent and recently played for Indian side Kerala Blasters. Although he is 37 years of age, his vast

experience at the top level will be seen as vital for the likes of Hearts young defenders John Souttar and Liam Smith.

An announcement is expected from Tynecastle later this week.