

Craig Levein Admits Hearts Failings



Hearts Director of Football, Craig Levein, emerged from a lengthy period of silence today when he addressed the media to acknowledge the club's disappointing season.

The former Scotland manager and a Hearts player of some distinction three decades ago said Hearts fifth-place finish in the Ladbrokes Premiership was 'frustrating and a tad disappointing'. However, Levein said he has 'high hopes' for Head Coach Ian Cathro.

"This is a tough place to manage, as I know myself. But the thing is the players like him."

Levein admitted to the club's failings in the transfer market over the last year. From last summer when Conor Sammon arrived, to the dismal January transfer window when nine players arrived – six of whom have now left – Hearts recruitment strategy has left a lot to be desired and had come under intense scrutiny from the frustrated supporters.

Levein said it was fair to assess Hearts transfer dealings as 'rushed'.

"We've had six transfer windows since the club came out of administration in 2014. Four of them have been really good, the last two haven't been particularly good. In hindsight, should we have given longer-term contracts to some of those players? The answer is probably no.

"But the fact we gave them short-term contracts has allowed us to still be in a position to be able to strengthen this summer and repair some of the damage."

Hearts Director of Football maintains Ian Cathro will succeed at Tynecastle despite his unconvincing start.

“For Ian to be a real success here we need to give him time and let him understand what this is all about. Then we can let him go and play how he wants to play, but we need to fix some other things first. His problem early on has been understanding Scottish football, not understanding how he wants to play.

“In this country just now, Celtic are in a class of their own, Rangers play a different style of football to other teams, but the rest play the same.

“If you can’t deal with long balls, second balls, wide crosses, then you can’t impose yourself on the match.

“His early experiences have been about understanding that part of it. Once he deals with that part of it I think it will allow his coaching abilities to come to the fore.”

It’s fair to say many Hearts fans remain unconvinced and Levein’s admission about the last two transfer windows ‘not being particularly good’ raises more questions about the effectiveness of the Director of Football. This is Levein’s remit, after all, and does little to instil confidence that the mistakes made over the last year will not be repeated during the summer. The recent signing of Christophe Berra is, hopefully, an indication of a positive change in signing policy.

Levein also stated that attacking midfielder Jamie Walker has said he wants to leave Hearts. Walker, 23, has a year left on his contract and it’s likely Hearts will listen to any offers made during the summer.

Meanwhile, Hearts striker Bjorn Johnsen has been called up for Norway’s forthcoming games against the Czech Republic and Sweden. Johnsen was born in the United States but can play for Norway as his father is Norwegian.