

Hearts Appoint Craig Levein as Head Coach



After weeks of speculation, Hearts have finally named their new Head Coach. In contrast to the former incumbent Ian Cathro, the new appointment is someone who has managed in Scotland, England and has managed at international level. Step forward Craig Levein – Hearts Director of Football.

The 52-year-old was a centre half of some style at Tynecastle in the 1980s and 90s, two serious knee injuries putting paid to what may well have been a glittering career in England had he been given the chance. He was forced to retire as a player in 1997 and took on his first managerial role at Cowdenbeath. He transformed the Blue Brazil from perennial strugglers to a team who would gain promotion – although Cowden's step up came after Levein had left Fife to return to Hearts as manager in 2000, replacing the Bradford City bound Jim Jefferies.

Levein took Hearts to third place in the SPL in two successive seasons and guided them to one of the club's finest results in Europe when a Mark De Vries goal secured a famous 1-0 win in the Uefa Cup in Bordeaux. However, Levein's inexperience at this level showed in the return leg when the French side won 2-0 at Tynecastle to knock the Jambos out of Europe.

His impressive record in Gorgie saw Levein move to England to manage Championship side Leicester City. One of his first signings for The Foxes was the Hearts pair of Alan Maybury and Mark De Vries. But things didn't work out south of the border and Levein was sacked after just 14 months.

Levein returned to Scotland to manage Raith Rovers and Dundee United before he was appointed Scotland manager at the end of 2009. However, his time in charge of the national team was

viewed by many as being too negative, a view underlined when Levein opted for a 4-6-0 formation against the Czech Republic in a Euro 2012 qualifying match in October 2010 – effectively playing without any forwards. Scotland lost 1-0. Levein left the Scotland job at the end of 2012.

With Hearts in crisis – the club fell into administration and were relegated to the Championship at the end of season 2013/14 – Levein was appointed the club's Director of Football in May 2014 by Hearts new owner Ann Budge.

Mrs Budge released the following statement on the official Hearts website this afternoon:

I am very pleased to be able to announce that, at the request of the board, Craig Levein has agreed to take on the role of First Team Manager at the club. He will continue to hold a seat on the board and, as such, will retain the overall responsibilities associated with the wider role of Director of Football. However, his focus and priorities will change. To enable Craig to focus fully on the Football Manager remit, some minor changes to roles, responsibilities and reporting lines will be implemented within the current coaching team setup and within the youth academy structure.

The youth academy has developed significantly over the last 3 years, under Craig's leadership, but is now entering a period of stability. Various development programmes have seen the club invest substantial sums, in terms of new staff, new processes, new facilities and new systems. We are now reaping the benefits of that investment. Our Head of Academy, Roger Arnott, has full responsibility for running this operation on a day-to-day basis and he will continue to do so.

On the coaching front, Craig will be implementing some changes to the roles/responsibilities of some of our coaching staff, such that each member of the team will be given the opportunity to continue with his personal development. He will

be assisted on the training ground by 4 first team coaches, namely Jon Daly, Liam Fox, Austin MacPhee and Paul Gallacher. Each coach will have clearly defined areas of responsibility, both on and off the training ground. Jon's first team responsibilities mean that Andy Kirk will now take charge of the U20s on a permanent basis.

In deciding how best to move forward, the board took into account the fact that we are facing a unique set of circumstances this year, with the first match on our home ground not coming until three months into the season. Given this situation, we believed it was essential to call on experience.

Against this backdrop, we drew up our selection criteria and invited a number of experienced managers/head coaches for interview. The candidates we interviewed were, without exception, first-class. However, as the interview process progressed, it became clear to the board that the ideal candidate was already with us. Not only does Craig satisfy all of our requirements, in terms of experience and personal attributes, he also offers continuity and stability. During a time of great change at the club, it is of paramount importance that we consolidate progress already made and learn from our experiences.

Having presented our plan to all members of the coaching staff and to our captain, I can confirm that everyone is fully behind it. We are, therefore, delighted that Craig has agreed to take on this challenge and for the avoidance of doubt...yes...he will be taking his place in the dugout...and yes, for the first time in the last 3 years...he will indeed be picking the team!

Source: www.heartsfc.co.uk

When he first took on the role of Director of Football at Hearts, Levein appointed Robbie Neilson as Head Coach. It was

an appointment which brought immediate success with Hearts racing away with the Championship title in Neilson's first season, thus securing promotion back to the top flight of Scottish football – an impressive achievement given Rangers and Hibernian were also in the Championship at that time.

When Neilson left for MK Dons nine months ago, Levein appointed Ian Cathro as his replacement but the move didn't work and Cathro was sacked at the beginning of this month.

Now, after weeks of speculation with names such as Steve McClaren, Billy Davies and Steven Pressley being linked with the job, Hearts have opted to appoint Craig Levein, initially until the end of the season. Ann Budge's last sentence in her statement is clearly aimed at those in the media who have questioned Levein's role as Director of Football.

It's an appointment likely to divide opinion amongst Hearts supporters and adds to the transitional status of this season, with Hearts having to play their Ladbrokes Premiership games away from home during the first quarter due to the delayed opening of the new main stand.

When all is said and done, however, Levein's record as a Hearts manager is a decent one and the Maroon Army will be looking for the stability the big Fifer provided a decade and a half ago when he forged Hearts as the main challengers to Celtic and Rangers.