

# Levein Won't Forsake His First Love



It was high noon in Gorgie on Tuesday as many of Scotland's media gathered, less than 24 hours after the announcement that Hearts Director of Football Craig Levein was take on the job of Head Coach/Manager, chief cook and bottle washer at Tynecastle. In the famous western film of the 1950s, Gary Cooper played a Marshal who was planning to retire only to discover a vicious outlaw was out of jail and planning to return to town. The Marshal's sense of duty and honour was strong and rather than take his leave he remained to face the challenge.

It was, therefore, rather fitting that Hearts hosted a press conference at 12.00 noon to add some meat to the bones of yesterday's story that Craig Levein was to return to the dugout for the first time in five years.

Hearts had hinted yesterday that Levein's appointment would be until the end of the season although The Edinburgh Reporter surmised it would be *initially* until then. The club confirmed today that Levein had been given a three-year contract as Head Coach while retaining his place on the Tynecastle board as Director of Football.

Levein told the assembled media: *'I was manager and director at Dundee United – and I've missed being out there. Now I have responsibility for all the results, not just the defeats'* said the former Scotland manager with typical wry humour.

*'I was asked and I wanted to do it. There's a moment when it's right and that moment is now. Jon Daly did a fantastic job in the interim period. I've no doubt he'll go on to be a successful manager.'*

*'The club is in a fairly healthy place. In my role as Director of Football over the last three years, I've been able to build the club back up from where it was to the place where it is just now. I think Hearts are now in very good shape which now means it's possible for me to do two things at once.'*

Levein said his targets were simple. *'To win games. I know it's going to be tough as we're a little light in a couple of areas.'*

Hearts owner Ann Budge explained why, after four weeks had elapsed since the dismissal of Ian Cathro, the club had appointed Levein when the club had been 'inundated' with applicants.

*'We couldn't find anyone better at this point'* said Mrs Budge. *'Craig has the qualities we're looking for. I'll be asking slightly different questions of him now.'*

*'We interviewed a number of candidates as everybody knows. They were all absolutely first class. We did have a set of selection criteria and after we'd gone through the interview process and the directors were sitting discussing it, we said, 'actually, nobody quite fits all that criteria except Craig'.*

*'Maybe it is that we couldn't find anybody better at this point in time because Craig had all the qualities we're looking for.'*

*'We talked at length about whether our original plan including the role of director of football and the development of coaches, whether that needed to change. I really don't believe it does need to change.'*

*'We have agreed three years for Craig in his new role. One of the things I've been giving a lot of thought to is if for whatever reason this did not work out, would I be in the situation where I didn't only need a new manager, I also needed a new director of football?'*

*'It's a serious question and serious consideration – is this the right thing for both Craig and the club? I'm confident it is.'*

High Noon ends with Gary Cooper facing the villain on his own. Time will tell whether Craig Levein emerges a hero as he seeks to take Hearts back to a position where they are challenging for major honours.

For now, Levein will be asking the Hearts support not to forsake him in his quest.