

Hearts Admit Fielding Ineligible Player in Betfred Cup



Hearts have tonight admitted they fielded an ineligible player during last night's Betfred Cup tie victory at Cove Rangers. Andy Irving came on as a second half substitute but it transpired that while Hearts had completed the paperwork extending his contract in January this year it had not been uploaded to the SFA registration system at that time. Consequently, Irving's registered contract expired on 9th June.

Hearts Chief Executive Ann Budge released the following statement on the club's official website just before 6.00pm tonight:

"It is with much embarrassment that we have to advise that during last night's Betfred Cup group stage match away to Cove Rangers, Hearts inadvertently fielded an ineligible player.

Due to an administrative error on the club's part at the end of the January transfer window, Andrew Irving entered the field of play in the 65th minute as an unregistered player. Andrew was given an extension contract in January, 2018 and his extension paperwork was all properly completed and in order. However, it was not loaded onto the online SFA registration system at the time. His official registration, therefore, ran out on 9th June, 2018. Unfortunately, this was not picked up in advance of last night's game.

While stringent processes are already in place to try to prevent something of this nature occurring, clearly mistakes can happen. An additional step in our internal procedures will

be implemented immediately to try to ensure this cannot happen again.

The club would like to apologise to its supporters, to Cove Rangers Football Club and to the footballing authorities for this inadvertent breach of the rules.

A hearing with an SPFL panel has been scheduled for Monday, July 23rd and will be attended by representatives of the club, where sanctions against Hearts will be determined. Until then, no further comment will be made."

As Mrs Budge says this is another huge embarrassment for Hearts. Sanctions may include being kicked out of the Betfred Cup although the most likely scenario is Cove Rangers will be awarded the three points from last night's game – which Hearts won 2-1 – meaning Hearts will have to win their remaining three games in Section C to have hopes of progressing to the knock-out stages.