

# Smith opts to stay at Tynecastle until 2021

Hearts have received a major boost ahead of Sunday's William Hill Scottish Cup tie with Livingston with the news that defender Michael Smith has signed an extension to his contract which will keep him at Tynecastle until May 2021.

The Northern Ireland international right back would have been a free agent at the end of this season but the 30-year-old had no hesitation in extending his stay in Gorgie.

Smith has impressed many this season and has shown his adaptability by playing in the middle of defence on occasion. He told the official Hearts website:

"It was an easy decision to make. As a player, I'm very happy here. I've been playing most weeks and playing well, and I feel comfortable here.

"As a family we feel very settled in Edinburgh.

"The first time I ever came up here it took me by surprise

how big the club was. Ever since then I've really enjoyed playing in front of these fans week in, week out. You also have the stadium and the training facilities, it's second to none really. "

Smith said he and his team mates can't wait for Sunday's tie at Tynecastle against a team that hammered them 5-0 in the league last month. "We shouldn't need a team talk. The defeat to Livingston last month was by far the most disappointing this year and we should be all fired up to go out and win on Sunday."

Hearts manager Craig Levein was thrilled at Smith's decision. He told the official Hearts website:

"I believe Michael has improved as a player since joining the club, which is reflected by the fact he has earned several international caps for Northern Ireland during his time here.

"Michael's performances this season speak for themselves. He's been playing to a very high-level week in, week out and I am delighted that he has committed his future to Hearts until 2021."

Hearts Scottish Cup tie against Livingston at Tynecastle on Sunday has a 2.30pm kick-off.