

End of a Berra at Hearts as Stendel shapes his team

Hearts

captain Christophe Berra has been told by the club he can leave during the January transfer window and that he is not part of manager Daniel Stendel's plans.

It's 18 months since the 34-year-old centre half returned to the club he had played for a decade before, but the Scotland defender has been told he can leave either on loan or fix up a permanent move. Berra has been angered not so much by the decision but the way it was done. He told BBC Sport Scotland:

"It came out the blue. I just got married on Friday and then on Sunday I'm getting told I'm not involved any more.

"Sometimes there's ways to go about it and sometimes with a bit of respect and a bit of morals, but it wasn't done like that."

"It did hurt, I'm not going to lie," he said. "I've done a lot for this club. I know it's football, I know how it works, but I don't think anyone represents the club better than me.

“It’s one man’s opinion. There are other ways to go about it, but I’m not going to throw the toys out the pram.”

It’s fair to say Berra has not been the player he was before he sustained a serious injury against Celtic at the beginning of season 2018/19 and one has to wonder if the big man returned to action sooner than he should have. His performances in maroon this season have been less than impressive, and this has resulted in uncertainty in the Hearts defence.

Having also shown Irish internationalist Glenn Whelan the exit door this week, Hearts manager Daniel Stendel is clearly intent on reshaping the struggling team. He has also recalled on-loan Hearts youngsters Anthony McDonald and Harry Cochrane from Dunfermline Athletic, Connor Smith from Cowdenbeath and Alex Petkov from Clyde while youngsters such as Andy Irving and Euan Henderson have already been given their opportunity in the first team.

Meanwhile, Stendel has appointed his Assistant Manager. Jorg Sievers has arrived from German Bundesliga 2 side Hannover 96, where he previously worked with Stendel.

Sievers told the official Hearts website:

“I have

worked with Daniel previously at Hannover. When Daniel was the manager I was his assistant, so I know him well.”

“He got in touch with me and asked me to join him here at Hearts. I travelled over to Edinburgh for a few days last month and was able to watch the games against Hibs and Aberdeen at Tynecastle.

“During that time, I was able to visit the training centre as well and everything felt very good, so I said yes!

“I know the club is not in a good position in the league table at the moment but if I didn't think we could improve then I wouldn't have come here. We have a little bit of time now before the next game and we have work to do.”

Photo: Ian Jacobs