

Levein regrets taking on dual role at Tynecastle

Former Hearts manager and Director of Football Craig Levein has admitted he 'had bitten off more than he could chew' when he took on both roles at Tynecastle.

Levein was appointed manager in addition to his DoF role when Hearts sacked rookie manager Ian Cathro in August 2017.

Despite an encouraging start to season 2018/19, Levein was sacked as manager last October after a run of poor results and sub-standard performances. He finally left his Director of Football role on 31st May by which time Hearts were relegated to the Championship after the SPFL called the season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking to BBC Sport Scotland, Levein admitted the two roles had proved too much for him. "It proved to be extremely difficult for me," he said.

"Particularly when we had problems on the field. Now, looking back on it, it's easy to say that maybe I had bitten off more than I could chew trying to do both jobs at the same time.

"Going back, would I have taken the job again? I probably would, but I would have given up my director of football role. I found that when things were difficult, it was extremely difficult to do both jobs."

Hearts were joint bottom of the Premiership when Levein was

sacked a manager but his replacement, Daniel Stendel, couldn't revitalise Hearts fortunes.

Levein said Hearts had suffered an "unprecedented" number of injuries to key players with Steven Naismith, John Souttar and Uche Ikpeazu all spending lengthy spells out of action.

Levein added: "I can't put my hands up and say that I'm not responsible in any way."

"I do feel that if I had stayed in place then we wouldn't be in the league position we are in, because we had good players coming back from injury."

Levein responded to criticism about his recruitment by saying: "At the start of the season, everybody was saying it was the best squad Hearts had in a long time."

"With the injuries a lot of the time the pressure was falling on the shoulders of players who didn't have that experience or character to be able to deal with it."

The former Scotland manager apologised to frustrated Hearts supporters, but added he remains "extremely proud" of his work on the club's youth structure.

"I have no problem with people inside the stadium voicing their anger," he said. "I'm not going to complain about anything any Hearts supporter has said to me. I've had hundreds of goodwill messages from Hearts supporters as well."

"I'm extremely sorry for the position Hearts supporters find themselves in just now, but I can say I did my best. I will look back on my time fondly, with some fantastic memories."

"And I think the benefits of the performance school we put in place at Balerno will see great players emerge, which will help Hearts going forward. Maybe then some of the Hearts supporters might forgive me."