

Hearts being a Championship side is 'irrelevant' to semi-final outcome says Paul Hanlon

Hibs' on-form defender Paul Hanlon insists that the fact that Hearts are a Championship side is 'irrelevant' to the outcome of tomorrow's William Hill Scottish Cup semi-final at Hampden and he is anticipating a 'difficult' 90-minutes as they aim to reach a Christmas final.

The long-awaited derby match will take place with no fans present but Hanlon is still 'massively excited' about the prospect.



Hibs have started the season well and Hanlon in particular has been in excellent form which saw him make his international debut after impressing Steve Clarke.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference yesterday Hanlon said: "The fact that Hearts are in the Championship is irrelevant. It's an Edinburgh derby and they have a squad with good players in it and they have started their season well so it's going to be a difficult game, but on the plus side so have we. We have started this season great. We've got a number of games under our belt and performed well in so we just have to take that into the weekend.

"I'm massively excited about the game. It's one we've been

looking forward to for a long time. There have been a lot of league fixtures to take care of meantime but it's always been at the back of our mind that this big fixture was coming up and I am delighted that it's finally here now.

"The fact that it's an Edinburgh derby, that it itself makes it a massive game but on top of that being a semi-final of a national cup means it's a huge game.

"It's a disappointment that there will be no Hibernian fans in the stadium but at the same time it's a massive match for both clubs and the city and we want to come out on top.

"We want to get to the cup final and want to be there on cup final day but we are well aware that we need to do it for the fans who are sitting at home desperate to be there supporting us.

"There is no doubt that it's going to be a surreal experience being at Hampden and being involved in such a big game, being the semi-final of the Scottish Cup and being an Edinburgh derby on top of that but it's something that we have got used to in the last few weeks.

"We have adjusted well to it so far this season and we need to do it again. We have to start the game on the front foot, high energy and take it from there."