

Ex-Jambo Preston defends Hearts chief scout as he departs

Normally after 25 years of service at a football club you leave with some sort of legacy, a “something to remember you by” type of thing.

But John Murray appears to have left and, considering Hearts haven't even reported Murray's retirement, this does not appear to be the happiest of endings.

When the news broke of Murray's retirement, Hearts fans swarmed social media celebrating the news, classing it as a massive step in the right direction, as far as off the field matters are concerned and something that was long overdue.

Hearts have had issues with recruitment for several years, often signing quantity over quality and bringing in way more than the average number of players in a summer transfer window.

As chief scout, John Murray took the majority of the flack over this. BBC Sportsound pundit Allan Preston, who played for the Edinburgh club during the 92/93 campaign has offered a different viewpoint on the Northern Irishman, explaining:

“John Murray didn’t sign the players at Hearts, he worked for over 25 years doing his best for the club, not all signings good and bad were John’s. Managers do their own thing and since administration it became more apparent that John had nothing to do with most of the signings.”

Hearts had financial difficulty following the departure of former owner Vladimir Romanov and with the club in administration, Preston revealed that Murray was willing to use money from his own pocket in order to fund a new Hearts signing.

He said: “John Murray offered a player that Hearts were desperate to sign during administration money out of his own pocket, from his own bank account, to try get the player to sign, as he knew how much the club wanted the player, but they had no money.”

Fans would disagree, but Preston insists Murray loves the club just as much as the next person.

“He loves the club, he pays his direct debit every month to the Foundation of Hearts and has done since its inception. I was at a fundraiser and he spent £1,400 buying stuff in the auctions that he could have got for nothing.”

Preston is passionate about Hearts having been brought up as a Hearts fan and is never afraid to say things how he sees them. Following defeats to Brora Rangers and Queen of the South in March Preston branded some of the Hearts players “gutless”.

The BBC pundit says that the retiring Murray deserves better treatment from the fans and insists that despite his role, he is not to blame for Hearts long lasting recruitment issues.

He said: “It’s unfair for people looking at the poor signings over the last number of years and blaming John. A few players didn’t work out, but that’s the same at all clubs, don’t blame him for Hearts’ recruitment in the last four or five years.

“The man tried his best for the club and should be able to leave with dignity and not some of the comments aimed at him.”