

Josh Ginnelly is loving life at Hearts

After spending long periods of Hearts' Championship winning season on the sidelines, Josh Ginnelly can't wait for a sustained run of games in the Hearts first team.

He became a fans favourite in Gorgie, due to his direct pace and skilful ability when in possession, fans were excited by what they saw in him.

Ginnelly returned early in the summer to get himself in shape and ready for pre-season and is now relishing the opportunity in-front of him.

He said: "It's massively important for me to be fit this season, but I'd say that about every season. I don't feel any pressure to go and do anything outrageous, I just want to be happy, and I am here.

"Last season was frustrating, but injuries happen to every player. I don't have worries about getting injured again. I've done every test that I've been set here, and I trust the process and the staff that work on that side of the game."

Hearts are already back in competitive action and have recorded victories over Premier Sports Group A opponents Peterhead and Cove Rangers, but it does feel like one eye is already on July 31 when Hearts host Celtic in their opening Premiership fixture.

Ginnelly continued: "The opening game is going to be a great

way for us to start, we're all really looking forward to it, the boys are relishing that task and hopefully we can get the right result."

Ginnelly signed for Hearts on a two-year deal last month, having spent the previous season on loan at the Edinburgh club, he liked what he saw and put pen to paper on a permanent deal following his release from Preston North End.

It appears the winger has no regrets about his decision, and despite being impressed with the 2,000 Hearts fans rendition of their own song against Cove Rangers, he can't wait for more Jambos to return to Tynecastle.

He said: "The fans and the manager have been a massive factor in me staying here, but I've tried to put that to the back of my head and trying to get ready for Stirling and eventually Celtic.

"I just love being here. Every-time I come in here I'm happy. To come in and work with people I fully respect and who respect me is great. It's not strict all the time. We like to have a laugh and that's why the balance is very good here, so hopefully it sets us up for a good season.

"I've spoken to about 10 or 15 lads outside of Hearts and every single one of them has said wow, because they haven't really played in a stadium like Tynecastle. When I came back, I got a good reception on social media, but when they started singing the Hearts song against Cove Rangers, I thought wow. This is only 2,000 people, so I can't even begin to imagine what it's going to be like when we've got 16,000 in here."

While many Hearts fans welcomed the signing of Ginnelly, others have expressed their concerns about his ability or luck if you like, to stay fit, he explains there is a lot more to the topic than meets the eye.

He said: "It's always nice to get positive feedback on social

media, but I'm not against negative feedback either. Sometimes people writing me off can motivate me and you'll always have that in football, you'll get the small minority, who either don't think you're good enough or think you're injury prone.



Scottish Championship – Heart of Midlothian v Queen of the South.

Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.

12/12/2020.

Hearts play host to Queen of the South in the Scottish Championship at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Pic shows: Hearts' midfielder, Josh Ginnelly, brings the ball upfield.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

"It's easy for someone who doesn't play football to comment on football.

"The stress we put our bodies through every day, I don't think others could cope with, so it's easy to comment on something you have no clue about.

"People weren't looking at the fact I hadn't played for two years. Obviously if you don't do something for two years then go back to it, you're clearly going to break down and that's nobody's fault. I'm fit now and that's all that matters."

Having returned early in the summer to get himself up to match fitness, Ginnelly is grateful for the staff, who gave up their own time off to help him and believes it sums up the bond shared with everyone in the Hearts bubble.

Ginnelly said: "I've got a lot to thank them for.

"They've come in in the summer, when they could've stayed at home with their families. I think that sums up the feeling we've got here and the respect everyone has for each other. That's down to the manager, he selects the staff that work here, so that's a big shoutout for them, because nobody has a clue what they do, but I can tell you, it's a lot harder than

our job.

“I was in Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the summer with a few of the young guys, but it was down to the staff sacrificing their time with their families to come in and get the boys flying with pre-season and that’s what they’ve done.”

During an injury troubled season in Gorgie, Ginnelly stayed north of the border to go through his rehab, instead of returning to his parent club Preston.

The winger explains it was no picnic, and that the public don’t understand the mental battle that follows a long-term injury.

He concluded: “Rehab was very intense. When you wake up from the surgery I had, you immediately wonder when you get to work. It starts off trying little things, like straightening your leg. Jamie Brandon couldn’t straighten his leg for a long time, people think it’s just straightening your leg, but it’s not. Your muscles are completely gone, so you need to work from day one to build up strength, so eventually you can run and bend your knees again.

“People don’t take into consideration the mental battle that comes with injury. It’s arguably more of a mental battle than physical. It’s easy for people to comment, but the reality is, they don’t have a clue.”