

Post-match reaction from Tynecastle

Goalkeeper Craig Gordon kept his ninth consecutive clean sheet in a Hearts jersey on Tuesday night, breaking the club's record of eight, previously held by Jon McLaughlin.

Manager Robbie Neilson said: "I'm delighted for Craig to break the record, it is some achievement. We have had some unbelievable keepers here in the past but it is fully deserved, he has been fantastic last season and you can see the quality he brings to the team."

Goals from Andy Halliday, Liam Boyce and Gary Mackay-Steven allowed the Jambos to cruise to a 3-0 victory in front of their returning supporters, who were back inside Tynecastle for the first time in well over a year.

Neilson added: "I was pleased and overall, the game was good. In the first 15 minutes we were a bit slack, but we settled down and we were comfortable. Cove played well and caused us a few problems, but I'm delighted."

Finlay Pollock impressed in midfield alongside Andy Halliday, and Neilson believes the 17-year-old is shaping up to be one of the brightest young talents to emerge from the Hearts Youth Academy in recent years.

Neilson said: "Finlay has been great through pre-season and he was about the squad at the end of the season."

“He came in during the summer and it’s a credit to him and the staff who came in over the close season to get him ready. We are seeing the benefits of that now.”

When Finlay broke into the Hearts squad at the end of the last season, Robbie Neilson said then that the likely plan would be for him to spend this season out on loan, however after impressing during pre-season, the boss is having second thoughts.

Neilson said: “Some young boys will go out on loan, as they need to go and play games, but we are still to make a decision on Finlay, but he will probably stay.”

Hearts now look forward to welcoming Sunderland to Tynecastle on Saturday, with 2,000 fans once again in attendance. Neilson revealed that he will make changes for the Black Cats arrival.

He said: “We’ll make changes on Saturday, we’ve got some guys who have played 180 minutes in these two games and we’ve got some who have played none, so it’s about getting everyone game time and getting them ready for the Celtic game.”

Andy Halliday had one of his best games in a Hearts jersey, before going down injured and being replaced after 75 minutes. Hearts fans could be forgiven for being concerned over the midfielder’s exit, however Neilson said that it’s a minor issue.

He said: “Yeah, he’s fine. He’s just had a wee bit of a tight back since the start of pre-season, but he’s okay”.

Cove manager Paul Hartley didn’t have an enjoyable return to Gorgie and afterwards reflected on what was a difficult evening for his side.

Hartley said: “We started well. We had a good opportunity with McIntosh early on, but it was a hard game. We haven’t played

any pre-season games and that was just our second competitive game, but the players got some good minutes in there.

“Our lads will learn that, if you give good players time and space, they will punish you. Hearts movement caused us a lot of problems, our communication could have been better, they had a lot of speed and energy in their team, plus a good bench to choose from.

“It’s a good learning curve for our lads. They won’t play against that level of team again this season. We just have to keep working away. That’s the big thing for us to make sure we are ready for the league starting at the end of the month.

“Again, we only had three outfield players on the bench, but we’ll get some more players back this week. We were trying to patch some folk up, some are injured, some haven’t trained, so some players were out of position, but these games were always about getting minutes and as long as we’re fine for the 31st we’ll get through it.”