

# Liam Boyce sets target for this season

Liam Boyce joined Hearts in January 2020, and although he couldn't prevent their demotion to the Championship, his 14 league goals in the second tier allowed the Jambos to come straight back up.

Boyce is a proven goalscorer in the top-flight of Scottish football having previously impressed at Ross County.

After netting the winner against St Mirren with his first league goal of the new campaign, Boyce is hungry for more goals.

He said: "I think it's like any striker, you want to get to 20 goals each season. It's the sign of a good season, unless you're Ronaldo or Messi or whoever!

"Years ago, you used to want to be a 20-goal striker, that was the target," said the Hearts forward.

"I've done it before at Ross County. I had good seasons there where I ended up top goalscorer," he added.

"When I came to Hearts we weren't in the best position, and obviously we got relegated. So, it's good to come back, we've had a great start and the quality of our squad is good. So, I'll be hoping to get chances and then it's just down to me to take them."



Scottish Championship – Heart of Midlothian v Dundee.

Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.

06/3/2021

Hearts play host to Dundee in the Scottish Championship at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Pic shows: Hearts' Irish International, Liam Boyce, comes close from the edge of the box.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

Boyce played in various different positions during last weekend's victory, highlighting not only his versatility, but his desire to help the team.

The new 3-4-3 formation Hearts have adopted under Robbie Neilson has resulted in a terrific run of form and Boyce is enjoying playing in the new system.

He continued: "It's good, especially defensively. I would say it was probably my fault for the goal last Saturday when the guy cut inside me and put the cross in, and they scored.

"But other than that, we have been quite comfortable, even in the game against Celtic, they didn't have any clear-cut chances until they started throwing people forward at the end.

"And then you have big Craig behind you which gives us even more confidence.

"So defensively it helps us a lot and for me it's good to have Gary Mackay-Steven and Josh Ginnelly close to me, so it makes things simple for me. I don't need to hold onto the ball too long, I can just pop it off to someone and get back in the box and wait for a chance."

The sides have already met this season and Hearts came out on top by a 2-1 scoreline, Boyce insists every game against Celtic is going to be a challenge, but believes every formation has weaknesses.

Boyce said: "It's always the same when you come up against

Celtic, they have top quality players, and you know it is going to be a difficult game.

“Even in that first game they had most of the possession and you know you are going to have to work hard and when chances come try to take them.

“That’s how we beat them, we took our two chances, and when they got theirs Craig was there to dig us out of a hole and win the game for us.

“They are such a good team, but every formation has its weaknesses, and you have to play on that. They try to play out of the back, and they are open, and that’s when you need to try and keep your shape.

“But the first pass is the most important thing when you win it back to try and set up your own counterattack and take advantage of the spaces they leave.

“You need to earn your chance to play against them, which we did in the first game and when you do that and the game settles down a bit that’s when you can get on the ball and start passing.

“When we first played them everyone thought they were in a crisis because of what happened to them in Europe but that’s just not the way it is. When you’re playing against them it’s 11v 11 and you know you are going to have work hard for your win.”

Fans are returning to grounds across Scotland and although the 5,500 Hearts fans inside Tynecastle helped Hearts to victory over Celtic last weekend, Boyce is hoping Hearts can turn the Celtic Park crowd to their advantage.

“It’s brilliant having fans back. You sort of miss that, if you’re 1-0 down in a game and someone puts in a good strong tackle, and it gives you that boost.

“We all know when teams aren’t doing well – and not that Celtic aren’t – that if you go to their ground and you’re doing well and creating chances then the fans begin to groan. Hopefully we can do that and cause them problems and put pressure on them. Hopefully that works to our advantage.”

John Robertson was the last Hearts striker to score 20 goals in a season back in 1992, Boyce achieved this feat with Ross County and believes it’s all down to momentum.

He said: “I just think it’s all about momentum. Even in my first year, when I got 20, I got to Christmas with something like 16 but I broke my hand and that threw me off and I didn’t get to 20 until the last couple of games

“When you get a goal as a striker and you get a couple of games when you’re scoring, it hits off you and goes in and you don’t even think about it. You just have to try to get that. If you’re in those slumps, you just have to get into those areas.

“People in our team will create chances with their quality and I know they’re going to come, so you just have to keep getting into the right areas, whether you’re on a run of form or not. Eventually it’s going to go in some way, so the more times you get yourself into those positions the more chance you have of getting 20 goals.”

Hearts record in the League Cup isn’t good reading for Hearts fans and fans remember the embarrassing exits they suffered to part time outfits Brora Rangers and Alloa Athletic in both cups last season. Boyce admitted the defeats still hurt to this day.

“We still think about the Brora game when we got put out. It hurts because we should have won that game. It was such a disappointment.

“Even when we got to the final against Celtic, I thought we

did really well in the final and then obviously lost on penalties.

“Everyone’s in football to win trophies and we know this is a good chance. You don’t get that chance often and you have to take it when you do. So, we know how important it is.”

Although Hearts don’t have fond memories of the League Cup in recent years, their star striker does, having won it in 2016 when Ross County defeated Hibs 2-1.

Boyce said: “We won it at Ross County, and it was a great day. It was probably the worst I’ve played, in the final, but the rest of the squad played well, and we won it.

“I know how important it was for Ross County, being a smaller club, and how important it was for the town. Winning any trophy and getting any medal to look back on when you stop playing football is massive.”



Scottish Championship – Heart of Midlothian v Dundee.

Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.

06/3/2021

Hearts play host to Dundee in the Scottish Championship at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Pic shows: Hearts’ Irish International, Liam Boyce, shoots for goal

Credit: Ian Jacobs