

Neilson provides Cameron Devlin transfer update

Following last weekend's hard-fought victory over St Mirren, Robbie Neilson's Hearts turn their attentions to the Premier Sports Cup.

A daunting task awaits the Jambos in a competition they already struggle in, having not lifted the trophy since 1962.

Their record at Parkhead isn't up too much either, with their last win in the East End of Glasgow coming in 2009.

A Michael Stewart penalty was the difference that night, as a Hearts side that included Christian Nade, David Obua and Ruben Palazuelos booked their spot in the semi-finals of the League Cup.

Robbie Neilson has a full squad to choose from, with Stephen Kingsley returning from illness and it's worth remembering that despite Celtic's improved performances, Hearts have already beaten them this season.



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: Queen of the South reserve team manager, Wullie Gibson, tackles Hearts' Stephen Kingsley.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

“Obviously you want to go win the cups and do well in the league,” Neilson said.

“It’s a great opportunity for us. We want to get into finals and win them and to do that you need to beat teams like Celtic.

“We had a good result against Celtic a couple of weeks ago. But it’s a different issue when you go to Parkhead. It’ll be tough, but we hope to go there and win.

“Kingsley’s fine, he’s trained the last couple of days, so he’ll be fine for the weekend. Boycey and Mackay-Steven are fine too, they’ve not missed a day’s training, so they’re all good.”

Celtic responded well to defeat at Tynecastle. The Hoops have scored thirteen goals in their last three fixtures and have plenty of momentum to take into this match, but Neilson disagreed with claims that Celtic will be better equipped this time around.

“Not a lot of change to the Celtic side. They’ve got the new striker Kyogo, who’s given them a different element. Other than that, I’d expect it to be pretty much the same team that played us, with maybe Tom Rogic replacing Soro.

“That’s football. 15 days ago, it’s a different story, then you win a couple of games, and momentum changes. It’s the same here it’s just the way it is and you’re only as good as your last game.

“I watched Celtic last night, and I thought they were very good against Jablonec, but it’ll probably be a different game against us. We’ve had a good start to the season, but our game on Sunday will be the biggest challenge yet.”

Hearts picked up a priceless victory last weekend in Paisley

to back up their opening day victory over Celtic and Neilson insists that it's their away record that his side must improve on.

"We knew St Mirren was an important game for us, as there's no point beating the old firm then not following it up next week.

"We've got a good record at home. It's the away games that we need to improve in and win if we're going to push ourselves up to the top end of the league."

Celtic Park like many other grounds in the country has been given the green light to open up to near enough a capacity crowd, despite this, no tickets have been allocated to Hearts supporters for the match.

Neilson explained that having spent last season in the Championship with no crowds, the aim was to get back to the top tier for their return and insists his players won't be fazed by the Parkhead atmosphere.

"It was one of the motivations when we were in the Championship, to get back to these big games at big full houses.

"We have a number of players who have played in these big environments so we're just looking forward to getting back to it."

Liam Boyce got off the mark in the league last weekend with the winner against St Mirren and Neilson once again praised his star strikers all round game.

"Boycey is just a good player. He knows the game and understands it which is important. We're asking him to do certain things, the defensive aspect, he does very well. He's a proven goal scorer and they're very hard to get nowadays, so it's just important to keep him fit and keep him playing.

On the signing front, Neilson remains confident that Cameron

Devlin will arrive in Gorgie in the not-too-distant future.

“He’s got his date for his visa application. Which I think is in a few days’ time. I think he’s just come out of isolation, because he had to do 10 days after the Olympics. Now he has his visa application, so we’ll wait for the outcome of that and then hopefully fly him over, so we’ll just see what the government is like over it.”

There was more positive news off the field at Tynecastle with the club announcing they had now sold over 12,000 season tickets and the Hearts boss was keen to keep their winning run going for the Jambos faithful.

“It’s brilliant for us. We’d held off for a wee bit to see what it was like with the return of fans. It’s about building momentum, fans want to see the team win and we’ve managed to do that so far, so we need to just keep doing that.”

John Souttar’s composed presence in the defence is key to Hearts’ early season form which has seen them win all six fixtures so far and Neilson now wants to tie down the defender to a long-term contract at Tynecastle.

“John’s just getting back to full fitness. He’s got another year on his contract, so we’ve opened up talks early to try and get it sorted. We’d love to get him on a longer-term contract, so we’ll just keep chatting away with him.

“It’s been a tough few years for John, injury wise. So now it’s about focussing on getting himself playing week in week out. He’s played six games this year and a few games at the end of last season, but we want to get him up to 50/100 games consistently.

If John can do that, he’ll get back to his best. Hopefully he can get in and around the national team, do well for us and then everyone’s happy.”



Scottish Cup Quarter Final – Heart of Midlothian v Rangers.
Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.
Credit: Ian Jacobs