

Craig Gordon keen to carry on playing into his forties

Hearts skipper, Craig Gordon, admitted that he was certainly looking forward to having a few days off after a hectic schedule across Europe, which ended with a third consecutive clean sheet against Hibernian.

At 38-years-old, balancing international duty and club commitments can be a tiring task for any professional footballer.

He said: "It's been a big few weeks.

"I have a few days off now and that's needed, especially at my age.

"These were four very intense games in a row, but I've shown I can still stand up to that. So, it's good for me personally to know I can still play to that intensity, game after game, and still perform. I feel good about myself from that point of view, so I'll keep going, but right now it's about resting up.

"The guys in front of me have been good in all the games, it's not just me. It's always a team effort when you get a clean sheet. Here at Hearts, we have been doing that regularly, we have been very solid, very difficult to beat and that always gives you a chance to pick up points. If we can get goals at the other end we're going to do alright."

Gordon was at his brilliant best when denying Martin Boyle a goal in the first half, and Kyle Magennis in the second, but expressed his disappointment at not being able to take all three points in a home derby.

“A lot of effort by everybody! We just didn’t quite have the quality to get the goal which could have won us the game. We’re a little bit disappointed not to go on and win, especially at home, but everybody gave everything, and it could, at different times, have gone either way. We’re still undefeated, we’ll move on to next week and try and pick up the three points there.”

Scotland’s number one has thwarted Hibs on numerous occasions down through the years, but his opposite number, Matt Macey, was making his Edinburgh derby debut, and Gordon admitted that the goalkeepers were on top.

He said: “It’s always pleasing to do that in a derby game. The base is to try and keep a clean sheet and then try and score at the other end. It’s what I am there for, it’s what I am paid to do and thankfully in the big games it has gone well. I made some good saves today but down the other end there were a few good saves as well. So, goalkeepers were on top.

“They were good saves. A couple in particular – the tip over that could have been the own goal, and the shot from Gary Mackay-Steven as well. He’s really quick to get down to his right-hand side. He’s probably anticipated and gone a little bit early to make a really good block with solid hands. I said that to him at the end, that it was a good show of goalkeeping at both ends that kept the score down so from our point of view, it was a good game.”

When asked about where this Edinburgh derby performance ranks on his long list of impressive displays in the fixture Gordon said: “It would have been better if we’d won. You always remember it better if it leads to a win. It carries that

little bit more significance, but we'll have to take a draw. We wanted more from the game, so it won't rank as high as the ones that we went on to win.

Despite the hectic schedule, Gordon is performing better than ever and showing he still has the agility and reflexes that make him a top keeper.

He said: "I always want to do well in every game.

"I love captaining Hearts, being back here and giving my all for this team. If I can keep doing that then I give myself the opportunity at international level. It's been a good last couple of results with a few clean sheets so hopefully we can keep that going on both fronts. It's pleasing but it's all about working hard and making sure it stays that way. I know what football's like; it can turn very quickly so it's back to work."

Gordon has had his fair share of injuries to seek in his career and acknowledged that the time spent on the side-lines may aid his cause for playing into his forties.



Craig Gordon Photo courtesy of www.heartsfc.co.uk

He said: "I feel okay at the moment, I just have to see how long I can last that out. I feel good as long as I get my training regime right. I've hardly missed a training session since I've been back at Hearts over a year and a half now. If I can stay injury free then why not?"

Brad Friedel retired at 44 and Gianluigi Buffon is still playing at 43, and although Gordon takes inspiration from them, he also mentions the Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady, who is still playing at the highest level in NFL, aged 44.

"It shows it can be done. I saw him sprinting the length of the pitch to join in a goal celebration the other day. I don't

know if I've quite got that in the legs but it's definitely a motivation to see these guys still playing. In other sports as well. The likes of Tom Brady in American football playing into their forties. Quarterbacks can do that so there is inspiration out there for people to do it into their forties, so why not give it a go?"