

Michael Smith believes there will be three points to bring home from Ibrox

Michael Smith has now been at Tynecastle for over four years, so the reliable defender knows just how difficult it is for teams to go to Ibrox and get a result.

Smith was sent off the last time he played at Ibrox, just over three years ago. Hearts arrived top of the table that day but found themselves 2-0 down after just 13 minutes and three behind on the half hour mark.

The Jambos went on to lose 3-1 that day, but Smith admits the current squad is better and they'll go to Ibrox confident of picking up a result.

"The squad is at a better level now. We started really well that year 2018 but this year the quality we have, the togetherness we have is second to none.

"It was a bad day at the office that day. Especially at Ibrox it's hard, they make the pitch big, and the crowd are on top of you so if you go down to 10 you basically have no chance. My fault a few years ago. But 90 per cent of things have to go right on the day to get a result at Ibrox.

"I don't think we can't be confident, we've started really well this year, they're top of the league, but we're just behind them, so it makes for a good game.

“People say they’re not Rangers of last season, but they’re top of the league for a reason, they’ve got a great squad, they’re dangerous and we’ll go there under no illusions that it’s going to be a hard game.

After Hibs fell to defeat at Ibrox prior to the international break, Hearts are now the only team with an unbeaten record in the top-flight.

Smith said: “For us personally, that’s important.

“As a group of players, we want to maintain that. We know going through to Ibrox it’s going to be difficult, but we’re a close group, with great quality, so let’s go and have a go at them.

“It probably is our toughest test so far.

“Everyone on the outside will be thinking we’ll see where Hearts are after this. We’ve been doing our homework this week on them and hopefully we can get the better of them on Saturday.

“We want to be where we are at the minute, come the end of the season. It’s great to be involved in at the minute, we’ve brought in great quality, the squad probably has 20 or 21 players who could start a game and play well. When you do start, you need to do well to keep your place.”

The 33-year-old is right to highlight the fact that for many people, this game will be a marker of where this current Hearts team is at on their Premiership return.

The right-back admits that if this team wants to achieve something special this season, these are games they have to perform in and highlights the current group would never go into a game settling for a draw.

“I think you’ve got to aim as high as you possibly can. Rangers won the league at a canter last season. If we want to

do something special this season, we need to go to places like Ibrox and beat them. It'll be tough, it always is going through to Glasgow, but who knows what can happen.

"We would never go into a game, thinking we'll go for a draw. I don't think that's in the gaffer's thoughts or the mentality of the squad we have just now. We'll go there and try get three points.

"We've no injury worries just now, so we'll go there as strong as we possibly can. Hibs gave them a tough game last week. We'll go there confident because we've started the season so well and hopefully we can turn them over."

Away fans haven't been permitted to league games at Ibrox or Parkhead this season due to the Covid-19 red zones, but now they have been removed, Hearts will have over 900 fans in attendance and Smith is looking forward to hearing the Hearts fans at a packed Ibrox on Saturday.

"I'm delighted everything is sorted and we can get back to a bit of normality with supporters in the stadium. It will be good. They will go there and make a lot of noise. I'm sure they are enjoying the way we are playing at the minute so hopefully we can go there and keep it going.

"I'm looking forward to the game and I'm sure the rest of the boys are."



Premier Sports Cup – Heart of Midlothian v Inverness Caledonian Thistle 25/7/2021. Hearts play host to Inverness Caledonian Thistle in the Premier Sports Cup at tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian. Pic shows: Hearts' Right Back, Michael Smith, on the ball. Credit: Ian Jacobs