

One training session was all Beni needed before choosing Hearts

After impressing on his debut against Celtic at the end of July, the Congolese born midfielder has kept up his performance levels, quickly turning into a fans favourite in the process.

His ball winning skills, energy levels and close control are all key assets to Hearts' 3-4-3 system, and they look certain to reap the rewards of the talented midfielder who is grateful for the opportunity Hearts and Robbie Neilson have presented him.

Hearts had been tracking Bangingime for some time before finally getting the deal over the line, but the midfielder revealed that he had made his mind up on Hearts after just one training session.

"I came in on the Thursday and had my first training session and I thought: 'I'm coming here'. I knew straight away this was where I wanted to be," said Bangingime.

"You don't really watch the Scottish league other than a few games, so you don't really know what to expect. I came in and saw the likes of John Souttar, Josh Ginnelly, all of the boys and realised this is a very good standard.

"I knew we weren't going to be one of the worst teams in the

league and with the additions of Cammy Devlin and Barrie McKay and all of the other boys it's really helped us, it has been really good. We're a tight group and everyone tries to help everyone out."

"It's been a long time since I have played football, nearly three years. But even when I was training I felt like I could compete, and I just wanted a chance from someone. I'm just thankful the gaffer and the staff here have given me that opportunity."

A lot of Hearts fans have adopted the approach to enjoy seeing the midfielder perform in a maroon jersey while they can, however despite being aware of the transfer 'noise' off the pitch, Beni says he wants to achieve 'something special' at Hearts.

"For me it's about concentrating on the game even though you know there is a lot of noise out there. I'll just let my agent worry about that. I try to concentrate on my football and concentrate on achieving something here.

"I think a lot of people think I am going to be gone very quickly, but I want to establish something here, do something special here. And then whatever happens next, happens. That's my mindset."

Hearts can go top of the table with three points against Motherwell on Saturday and whilst manager Robbie Neilson isn't targeting top spot just yet, Beni believes Hearts shouldn't limit their ambitions.

"That's on ourselves, that's something we need to ask ourselves. Are we putting in the work, are we in the gym, are we bringing the intensity to training?" he said.

"Europe definitely has to be the goal. All the boys know that. We are doing well and beating teams and I think we should push for Europe and see exactly how far we can take ourselves. It's

easy to say we want to finish sixth or seventh. You can do that easily. But with the players we have and the ability of the players who are not playing we should try and push ourselves.

“Should we limit our ambition? Not really. Leicester did it. I feel like sometimes that fear in your mind makes you want to settle for third. If we really believe in ourselves and we carry on working then we don’t know what the future holds. It’s exciting. There’s a buzz around the place.”

23-year-old Baningime has been at Everton since 2007, arriving when he was just nine years old and revealed a particular influence on him at The Toffee’s, was Wayne Rooney.

‘He was a big influence on me when I was younger,’ Beni explained.

“I used to be a Man United fan and just looking at him I would think ‘wow’ – he has such humility. He would come across and speak to me and give me advice and then he brought me in at Derby County, and I was grateful for that opportunity because it felt like nobody was going to give me a chance.

“It didn’t really work out which is fine, but even when it wasn’t working out he was still great with me, helping me with different things. He’s been really key for me.

‘It was a difficult time at Derby, but it makes me appreciate what I have here at Hearts. It’s just football. You get brought into a club and the intention was to play but that changes depending on how the gaffer wants to play.

“They were playing good football. I was just maybe not the person for the job. But that’s why I am so thankful to be at Hearts. I’m not thinking about the next escape route. I appreciate it here; I’m enjoying it here.”