

# McKay relishing the pressure of playing for Hearts

Hearts lost their unbeaten start to the league campaign at Pittodrie last weekend and all of a sudden, the Jambos are without a win in four matches.

The reaction from the away end last weekend was one of frustration, after a dismal display that the 900 travelling fans in attendance rightly deemed unacceptable.

Having previously played in front of the demanding Rangers support at Ibrox as a teenager, it's hardly a surprise to hear that Barrie McKay enjoys playing at clubs where the pressure is high, something that he says doesn't faze him.

He said: "I have been places where maybe the fan base isn't as high and if you lose a game you can just get on with your life. Here, you play under that pressure and that's where you want to be as a footballer. You want to be playing under the pressure at the bigger clubs, where every time you walk over the white line you need to perform.

"Whether it's positive or negative, the fans are behind you and always make themselves heard. But on the pitch it's important we get back to what we were doing good at, and the fans really reacted to that.

"Since I've come in, I've seen it first-hand how they really get behind the team."

On the defeat itself, Hearts' boss Robbie Neilson put it down

to a poor 45 minutes, however McKay described it as an 'off day', but insists he has full belief that Hearts will bounce back with three points against Dundee United.

"It was probably going to come at some point," McKay admitted. "It was probably an off day for us. It happens and it was just one of those days. I've got no problems with the boys bouncing back. They've been brilliant all season and one defeat isn't going to define us.

"When you're at a bigger club, one defeat feels like the end of the world. That's the pressure we have to deliver for the fans. They pay their money, and they can have their opinions but it's about bouncing back and showing them we'll get back to winning ways."

There is much debate about Hearts' 3-4-3 system, especially after Aberdeen completely dominated the second half last week after moving Scott Brown into a midfield three, however the style of play that Robbie Neilson's Hearts have adopted has a big focus on wide players, something McKay believes suits his game.

"It suits me as a player," he said. "I'm not going to be as effective if I'm in a team that plays long or high balls. I'm not exactly 6ft 6in!

"It's important that you play football in the right way and have an idea of how to play and we've done that. You can see with the way we move and pass the ball that every player is buying into it. That's important. All the players trust each other as well."

Considering the lack of game-time McKay had before arriving at Hearts, the winger didn't have much of a right to hit the ground running as well as he has done, however he admits the next step is to add more goals and assists to his game.

When asked if he was at his best, McKay replied: "It's hard to

tell. Everyone has their own opinion, but I think I've been playing well. I've been more disappointed that I've not been able to score or assist as much as I'd have liked to. It'll come. I'm not exactly old and I've got a lot to learn, but I'll just keep playing my own game.

"Since I've come in, I've created chances but there are days when the ball just doesn't go in. I've had a few chances to score myself, but just not been able to put it away. Hopefully that clicks soon."

McKay, who has one Scotland cap to his name, would love to grab his first Hearts goal against Dundee United on Saturday and on the Tangerines, he added that the players are clearly buying into manager Tam Courts' style of play.

"I go into every game hoping it can be that game that he opens his Hearts account. I had chances against Livingston and Rangers, going one on one and the keepers have made good saves. I'd be more concerned if I wasn't creating chances or getting these chances to score. I'll just keep working on the training ground on my finishing, my passing and my crossing.

"United have been doing really well, and they seem to be buying into what their manager wants to do. That's half the battle. If the manager gives you all the ideas during the week, then on the weekend it's up to the players to go out and perform."



cinch Premiership – Heart of Midlothian v Aberdeen  
22/8/2021.

Hearts play host to Aberdeen in the cinch Premiership at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian.

Pic shows: Honours even in a close fought encounter as the match finishes 1-1.

Credit: Ian Jacobs