

Neilson explains what players need to impress Hearts fans

Just a minute under half an hour of torture for the travelling Hearts fans at the Tony Macaroni Stadium last Sunday was brought to an end with the introduction of Peter Haring.

Hearts were under the cosh in the opening period of the game and had it not been for Scotland's number 1 in the sticks, could easily have found themselves two or three goals down.

The introduction of Haring provided solidity and calmness in possession as Hearts took control of a match they went on to win by a single goal, thanks to Liam Boyce's seventh league goal of the season.

The Austrian midfielder has had to bide his time this season with summer signings Cameron Devlin and Beni Banningime impressing in Neilson's 3-4-3 system, however with the latter expected to remain side-lined for the next few games, Haring's opportunity has arrived.

After impressing in Hearts' 1-0 defeat at Celtic Park last Thursday, Haring was surprisingly dropped to the bench for the trip to Livingston, however the turnaround in Hearts' performance after his introduction on the half hour mark shows he is still an important player in Robbie Neilson's side.

After a busy summer window, Hearts' squad depth is the best it's been for a long time and Neilson is delighted to have a

player of Haring's quality to call upon when required.

"He did [change the game] and he's starting to get a wee bit fitter as well, he hadn't played for a bit and then he got thrown on at Parkhead and his fitness levels need to go up a bit.

"Having had a wee bit of rest he's ready to come back into this one and he's a great one to bring into these positions because he is a very good player."

Michael Smith and Liam Boyce didn't complete the 90 minutes last Sunday, but Neilson is hopeful both can return for the visit of Rangers.

"Both trained today, so they should be fine. Boycey is 100% he did a full session today, Michael just did half a session, so he'll do it all tomorrow and then we'll decide on him.

"As for Beni, he's still recovering, so he won't make the game at the weekend. We're going to try and get him back for the game before the derby if we can. He's opened his knee up a wee bit, it's nothing major that needs anything done to it, but he just needs a wee bit of rest before he can build it up again."

Despite this being a matchup between two of the top three sides in the table, much of the talk has been surrounding Hearts' decision to cut the Gers' allocation to roughly 1,000 briefs (normally around 3,500).

Nevertheless, the match still looks likely to be a sell-out, (or certainly very close to one) and Neilson was full of praise for the Hearts supporters' backing, who not all that long ago, were calling for his head.

"I'm looking forward to it," said the Hearts boss.

"I think it's a brilliant game to be involved in. It's looking like a full house, the biggest crowd since we got the new main

stand. When we cut the allocation of Rangers, people were saying 'would we sell out?' but we've sold out and we probably could've sold more.

"That just shows the strength of the club and fanbase. They're all desperate to come and I think Sunday's going to be a brilliant atmosphere.

"The team is doing well just now. The key for me is that we have a group of players that are working hard, they want to do well. The club want to do well for them, and they want to do well for the club and the fans can see that. We've got guys just now that will run, tackle, give energy and if you give that as a Hearts player, the fans will love you.

"It's what we tried to recruit. I played here for thirteen years and managed here for a few years, so I know what the fans want. They want energy. You might not have the best ability, but if you run about and give everything for the Hearts strip then they will back you to the hilt.

"You could have all the ability in the world, but don't run about and they're not having you and that's just the way it is.

"So that's why when we recruited in the Summer we were looking for good characters who will run through brick walls for the club."

Hearts are yet to lose a home game this season and have already taken points off both Celtic and Rangers this season but are now coming up against a Rangers side who are yet to lose under new manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

Rangers haven't got the best of records at Tynecastle in recent years, and they certainly won't be relishing a trip to Gorgie just now considering the Jambos home form.

Neilson believes teams should be scared of playing at

Tynecastle but is under no illusions that his team are in for a tough match on Sunday.

“Our home form has been great. Our away form started well and then dipped, so it’s been about trying to get that back going again. For me, when teams come to Tynecastle, it should be a hard place to come, and we need to continue that.

“I think we just look at trying to win the game in front of us. We know it is going to be a tough test. Rangers went to Lyon and played really well and got a draw. They have got good players, they have a big squad, they can rotate, they have a new manager coming in as well, but we feel if we can play to the level we can get to then we have a good chance of winning it.”



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