

Atkinson ready to become next Jambo from down under

As one Australian is set to leave Edinburgh, with Martin Boyle quitting Hibs for Saudi Arabian team, Al-Faisaly, Hearts have signed Nathaniel Atkinson who is primed for his debut on Saturday against Auchinleck Talbot.

The 22-year-old signed on a three-and-a-half-year deal from Melbourne City after a successful time at the Olympics in the summer.

After a few issues with his visa were settled, Atkinson joined up with his new teammates for training early in the New Year and is now ready to feature at Beechwood Park, if called upon by Hearts' boss Robbie Neilson.

This is Atkinson's first time in Europe, fortunately, his teammate and compatriot, Cammy Devlin was on hand to help him settle in and show him around Edinburgh.

"I've settled in pretty good," Atkinson smiled.

"It's a bit cold but I've put an extra layer on to cope with that. I just got my apartment yesterday so it's starting to feel like home now.

"Cammy Devlin has been taking me around Edinburgh. I don't have a car yet, so he's been driving me around.

“It’s very important to have someone like Cammy to help me settle in. I’ve known him for about three years now through the junior national teams. We’ve grown quite close.

“He’s a really good lad. He’s helped me a lot just by introducing me to the boys and making me feel like home. It’s been vital, to be fair. I hope to make the same impact as him. Cammy throws his body around and dies for the badge every day. I’m the same.

“I hate to lose. I will try and win at all costs and if that means putting my body on the line I’ll be sure to do that.”

Atkinson joins a growing list of Australians to play for Hearts, and even had a word with former Jambos, Patrick Kisnorbo and Ben Garucico on what to expect, with the long-term ambition of nailing down a regular spot in Graham Arnold’s Socceroos squads.

“That’s the ambition. I thought it was time for me to go to Europe and test myself. When Hearts were interested and offered the chance to come to a big club in Scotland where lots of Australians have done well then it was a good choice for me. I’ve come close in the past to getting into the Socceroos and hopefully I can continue my form, get fit and start playing.

“He [Kisnorbo] said it’s a big club and an aspiring club that wants to get back into Europe. He told me about the expectations and the fact they want to compete at the top of the league.

“Benny I’m quite close to as well. He had nothing but great words to say. He really enjoyed his time here.”

The defender has already had his first taste of Tynecastle, as he was named amongst the substitutes as Hearts defeated St Johnstone on Tuesday night and although he was only on the bench, he was still blown away by the atmosphere.

“It was an amazing experience. I’m used to playing in front of four to eight thousand people. So, when you see a full stadium like Tynecastle with close to 20,000 supporters so close to the pitch – fans that would die for the badge and want to see the club do well.

“It was an eye opener into what Scottish football and culture is all about.”

Atkinson is likely to receive some more ‘eye opening’ experiences in Auchinleck on Saturday, especially if he starts the match, however he’s determined to win trophies at Hearts and dealing with Saturday’s potential banana skin of a tie could be the first steppingstone to achieving just that.

“Every footballer wants to win games and I’m a player who likes to attack and take players on.

“Fans will see a player who will die for the badge. I’ve got a taste for trophies now, so I want to bring trophies here as well.”