

Kingsley looking forward to first Easter Road derby experience

Hearts defender Stephen Kingsley has already played in two Edinburgh derbies but is yet to experience the fixture at Easter Road.

The 27-year-old has been outstanding since joining the Tynecastle side in 2020 and has recently signed a new Hearts' contract until the summer of 2025.

The Edinburgh derby has been dominated by the away side in recent years and looking at recent form and the current cinch Premiership table, you wouldn't bet against another away win being the outcome on Tuesday.

Hearts come into the match off the back of a relatively comfortable victory over Motherwell, which strengthened their grip on 3rd spot, whereas their rivals were booed off after a home defeat to Livingston.

Kingsley admitted that the win against Motherwell sets Hearts up perfectly for their trip to Leith.

"We've put in some great performances recently," he said.

"It was a disappointing result against Celtic, but we bounced back against Motherwell which was massive for us especially with the week coming up.

"It's a massive game against Hibs wherever it is, whether it's

at Hampden, Tynecastle or Easter Road. The game always brings a bit of pressure and it's a huge game to look forward to in the calendar.

"We're focusing on what we know to get a result. We're ten points clear of Motherwell so we're sitting in a healthy position but there's still a long way to go. This game would be another great step forward for this club and where we are."



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Pic shows: Hearts' left-back, Stephen Kingsley, lobbs the ball over the head of St Johnstone forward, Michael O'Halloran, as Hearts play host to St Johnstone in the cinch Premiership at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

A number of Hearts' players will, like Kingsley, be having their first taste of a derby at Easter Road, but the Scot is under no illusions that the entire dressing room is fully aware of how important the derby matches are to supporters.

"We all know it's a massive game. The pressure is always on Hearts to go and get a result there. If you're not Scottish and you're coming up the road you certainly know before the game kicks off how important it is to the clubs and the fans.

"We always want to push ourselves. We know what we can do. We've proven that time and time again this season. It's a huge game and we will all be up for it. But we have expectations on ourselves, and we will be working to maintain those high standards. If we do that we have a chance against anyone."

While Hibs are going through a period of transition under new boss Shaun Maloney, the Hearts dressing room has a feel of continuity just now, a settled squad, something that manager Robbie Neilson has strived to deliver over the summer and January transfer windows.

"The recruitment has been great," Kingsley added. "All the boys that have come in are young and hungry and have good quality about them. Every single one of them has been great business by the club in the summer and in this window as well.

"It's a really confident and happy changing room and hopefully we can keep ticking the games off and maintaining our standards and going in the right direction. These new boys will be massively a part of that.

"We know how these derby games are and the pressure we put on ourselves and the pressure that's there from the club and the fans. There's no chance the boys won't be fully aware and ready for kick off on Tuesday night.

"We just focus on ourselves and play the game that we know and that has brought us a bit of success this season so far. In

any derby, getting an early goal is massive and hopefully it goes our way on Tuesday night and settles us right down and we can kick on from there.”