

Which players will be on the team against Celtic on Wednesday?

Hearts could only list five outfield substitutes on their bench at Beechwood Park on Saturday, however manager Robbie Neilson expects to have more players available for the much tougher assignment of welcoming Ange Postecoglou's Celtic to Tynecastle on Wednesday.

Ben Woodburn, who has missed the previous two games because of Covid-19 is expected to return along with John Souttar and long-term absentee Beni Baningime.

The latter has not featured since the end of November but was amongst the substitutes on Saturday. Neilson has explained previously that the plan was to make sure the Congolese midfielder could return against Celtic and now that looks a distinct possibility.

Hearts will need all the help they can get in the build-up to kick off and although Celtic are missing a few stars through injury and international commitments, the Hoops haven't lost a domestic fixture since September.

That being said, the Tynecastle side should have no fears

going into the game. This will already be the fourth time the sides have met this season, the Jambos were victorious on the first day of the season, meanwhile Celtic came out on top in the following two matches at Parkhead.

All the fixtures have been won by a solitary goal however, and Hearts have shown this season that they have the quality to go toe-to-toe with the Glasgow side both at Tynecastle and Parkhead.

“We have everyone back training apart from Taylor Moore who has a small thigh problem, but we’ll hopefully have him back for Motherwell at the weekend,” said the Hearts boss.

“We almost have a full squad to pick from, including John, who still has a slight issue with his ankle, but I still expect him to be ready for Wednesday.

“We had a brilliant result against Celtic at the start of the season and ran them close at Parkhead. The aim for us is to try and go through to Glasgow and win games.

“At Tynecastle we feel we have a great chance of taking three points. This is another opportunity for us though Celtic are a good team even with a few players on international duty. We will have to bring our best if we are to take anything out of the game.”

“They have a huge squad and resources where they can buy players for four and five million. We have to try and find gems in the market and then try to keep them together.

“We are trying to keep continuity within the group, and we have managed to get the majority of out of contract players signed up. We have one or two more who we want to keep as well. We are getting closer but there is still a long way to go.

“They probably have 30 top players. We run with a squad of

about 16. If we have a number of injuries it makes it difficult, but Celtic can bring in a number of good players.”

An ankle injury was the reason given for John Souttar’s absence at the weekend, as speculation over a move to Rangers continues. If the defender had featured in Auchinleck, he would’ve been cup-tied and therefore unable to play in the competition for the Gers, should he cross the M8 in January.

Neilson confirmed there are no new developments in relation to Souttar departing Tynecastle and admitted Hearts are still trying hard to bring in some signings of their own before next week’s transfer deadline.

“We decided at the start of the season to go with quality over quantity. A lot of teams will run with 20 players and maybe only 12 or 14 are up to standard. We decided to go with 16 that are really good. There will be times when with injuries and suspensions we are down to the bare bones, but we decided to do that.

“There’s been nothing else [bids for Souttar]. I don’t think it will be a distraction. We have got a massive game on Wednesday, and we have another one on Saturday. So, from our perspective there is no distraction. John is a Hearts player, and he will continue to be a Hearts player until things change.”



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