

All eyes on Edinburgh Derby number one says Hearts boss

A unique period lies ahead of these Hearts and Hibs players. With back-to-back Edinburgh Derbies on the horizon, it would be easy to look ahead to the Scottish Cup Semi-Final at Hampden in just over a week's time.

However, having played and managed in numerous games against Hibs, Robbie Neilson knows better than anyone the importance that any Edinburgh Derby carries.

If you offered Hearts fans the option to win one of the two upcoming derbies, almost all of them would surely rather taste victory at the national stadium and guarantee European football until at least December.

That doesn't mean the Hearts fans will accept a defeat at Tynecastle however and it came as no surprise to hear Robbie Neilson saying that Hearts want to go and win the game.

"When you go into a derby you can't say, 'they need to win it more than us.' Everybody needs to win a derby. It doesn't matter if you're bottom of the league or top of the league,"

said Neilson.

“We’ve got four derbies a season and you want to win all four of them. We haven’t won one yet, but we’ve got two back-to-back, For us, it doesn’t matter what they’re doing, we have to go and beat them.”

When asked if the first encounter could have an impact on the semi-final clash, Neilson responded:

“I don’t think so.

“The main thing for both coaching staffs is, firstly, trying to get a result but, secondly, make sure you get through it without any injuries.

“Both squads are pretty thin at the moment so, for us, it’s most important to get a result, and then see where we are on Sunday morning.”

Having had their recent injury woes, there were welcome returns to the training pitches for Gary Mackay-Steven, Cameron Devlin, Nathaniel Atkinson and Michael Smith and although the Tynecastle derby might come too soon for Devlin, Neilson is hopeful the Aussie could return for the Hampden clash.

“We’ve got Gary back and we’ve got Atkinson back in as well. We’ve got Michael Smith back running and Cammy Devlin back running and for both of them this will come too soon, but maybe Cammy for the semi-final.”

However, the news on John Souttar was less positive:

“John is okay, he had a wee tidy up and the hope is that we will get him back for the last few games of the season. That’s got to be his aim. Firstly, he wants to get back playing then there are big Scotland games coming up over the summer so he has to get himself into a position where he can get back in the squad again.”

Hearts have also expressed interest in fielding a colts team in the Scottish Lowland League. The decision follows the controversial vote which voted in favour of Rangers' and Celtic's colts sides remaining in the division, despite their original introduction planned to last a solitary season.

"I support a platform for the young players to go and play," Neilson explained.

"We have not had a reserve league for a number of years, and it has really hindered the development of these players.

"If we can get that I would be delighted. It would be great for that young group who can get challenged week in and week out in competitive games and we can keep an eye on their progressions. I'd be all for it."