

Ben Woodburn open to permanent Hearts transfer

It had been a tough couple of years for Ben Woodburn before he pitched up at Tynecastle to sign for Hearts on loan from his parent club Liverpool in the summer.

The 22-year-old burst on to the scene when scoring on his debut for Wales against Austria in September 2017, however subsequent loan spells at Sheffield United, Oxford United and Blackpool did not work out as well as they might have done.

At Tynecastle, Woodburn has managed to feature regularly in a strong Hearts side, but now in the final months of his Liverpool contract, he will have to carefully consider his next move.

Hearts boss Robbie Neilson recently admitted his desires to try and keep Woodburn, Ellis Simms, and Alex Cochrane who's loan deals all expire this summer but accepted that the parent clubs will make the final call.

Woodburn himself is just trying to focus on his football and has no regrets about moving north of the border, despite the bad press the Scottish game often receives from those further afield.

"I can start talking about it whenever, but I am focused on this season," said Woodburn when asked about his contract situation.

"We've got some big games coming up. The manager is focused on

this season, so it is going to be after the season finishes when we start talking about it and settling down. We can have a big think about it and hopefully we can get something sorted.

“The last few years haven’t been great for me. I wanted to go and show what I could do. But I believe it was definitely the right decision.”

The prospect of European group-stage football might just be enough to lure Woodburn back to Tynecastle after the summer.

“Europe’s massive, isn’t it,” he smiled.

“That’s another big experience, playing abroad and playing in different countries and different atmospheres. It’s going to be amazing. I’d be looking forward to it a lot.”

The midfielder who was enjoying his pre-season training with the likes of Mo Salah before moving to Edinburgh, was full of praise for the Hearts captain, Craig Gordon and accepts that learning from more experienced players is vital for his development.

“I don’t think there is ever a point where you can stop learning from players. You do have to take things into your own hands at times, but I always like to ask other players for their opinion.

“We’ve got Craig Gordon here, who is probably one of the best professionals I’ve ever seen. It’s been great to learn from him and I’m sure I’ll try carry on trying to do that.”