

Cup final is a free hit for Hearts

Hearts will face Rangers in the 2022 Scottish Cup Final on 21 May after seeing off their Edinburgh rivals 2-1 at Hampden Park.

It cannot and will not be underestimated just how important that victory over Hibernian was for Hearts.

After securing third place the week before the semi-final, all that stood in the way of Hearts and group stage European football, was Hibernian.

The men from Leith put up a good fight, but ultimately came up short again against their rivals at the national stadium.

Hearts manager Robbie Neilson has regularly spoken about making this season a “special” one, but whatever happens in the final this has already been an extraordinary season for the Jambos.

There was a lot of pressure on the team in the lead up to the semi-final, as they went into it as favourites, coming out on top in the first of two back-to-back derbies.

Against Rangers however, they will be the underdogs, just as they were in 1998, and that might just suit them.

Hearts have nothing to lose in the final. If they win it then great, but the real final was actually the semi-final.

That victory will net millions of pounds for Hearts when their European matches come around next season.



Scottish Cup Semi-Final – Heart of Midlothian FC v Hibernian FC

16/04/2022

Pic shows: 2 first half goals by Ellis Simms and Stephen Kingsley were enough to get Hearts to the final as Hearts beat Hibs 2-1 Hibs in the Scottish Cup semi final at Hampden Park, Glasgow

Credit: Ian Jacobs

It is the first time in 18 years that Hearts have reached the group stages of a European competition, and 15 years since a Scottish side out with the Old Firm achieved that feat, with Aberdeen being the last.

Hearts have done well in recent months to tie down their top players on long-term contracts, and the next person that should be putting pen to paper has to be manager, Robbie Neilson.

The transformation at Hearts in the last year is nothing short of remarkable and with his contract up next summer, he is surely deserving of a new deal as his reward.

This time last year, Hearts' fans were protesting outside Tynecastle for his removal, but now he will go down in history as one of the club's most successful managers, regardless of whether he delivers a Scottish Cup victory or not.

It was a gamble to stick with Neilson last summer, but that victory over Hibs, has surely now banished the minority of those who were against Neilson remaining, and who struggled to forgive him for surrendering a 2-0 lead to Hibs as the Hibeese went on to lift the Scottish Cup in 2016.

The manager has passed every test he has been set this season. and with the financial pull of European football to come, Hearts have the opportunity to try and pull away from their rivals and establish themselves as the third biggest team in the country.



Robbie Neilson at the Scottish Cup Semi-Final – Heart of Midlothian FC v Hibernian FC 16/04/2022 PHOTO: Ian Jacobs