

Hearts: Key injuries continue to heal ahead of cup final

Hearts manager Robbie Neilson has received a massive shot in the arm as he continues to welcome players back from injury ahead of the Scottish Cup Final on 21 May.

Defenders John Souttar and Michael Smith both returned to the matchday squad on Saturday alongside Cammy Devlin as Hearts were beaten 4-1 at Celtic Park.

The Jambos face a hectic ten-day period ahead of their trip to Hampden, beginning with Motherwell in Lanarkshire on Wednesday before a dress rehearsal of the final against Rangers at Tynecastle on Saturday.

The Hearts boss is hopeful that his returning players will be able to get some minutes under their belts in the final two league matches of the season.

“Tomorrow we will have [Aaron] McEneff, [Michael] Smith, [Cammy] Devlin and [Andy] Halliday back and [John] Souttar will be on the bench, he will not play, but he will be available for Saturday. The hope for [Craig] Halkett is Saturday too. All of them will be available for some sort of a game on Saturday.

“They do not need to prove themselves because they have been working hard. It is more mentally for them to be able to say, ‘I’m ready’,” Neilson added.

“I would be more comfortable if they had played the last six

games on the bounce, but it is just the nature of where we are at the moment. We just need to assess them all and see where we are.”

When Hearts arrive at Fir Park on Wednesday night they will be greeted by a Motherwell side buoyed by a 1-0 victory in Dingwall at the weekend and a win for the Steelmen will push them one step closer to European football.

However, Neilson insists that it is just as big a match for Hearts.

“To be honest I think it is big for us as well,” he said.

“Firstly, we’ve got a number of guys who are desperate to get into the cup final team, so they’re desperate to play. We have not won down there for a while now, we got beat there earlier in the season, so we know when we turn up there it is always tough. But we are confident of going down there, we will take a decent crowd, so we need to turn up.”