

Neilson 'delighted' to extend Hearts stay

Hearts manager Robbie Neilson yesterday gave Jambos everywhere a pre-season boost by signing a new contract which will keep him in the Tynecastle hotseat until 2025.

Neilson, who spent 13 years as a player at Hearts, has had his fair share of critics amongst the Hearts supporters in this his second stint in charge at Tynecastle.

But, after winning the Championship in 2021, Hearts enjoyed a memorable return to the top-flight finishing third, 13 points clear of their nearest rivals Dundee United and following a Scottish Cup semi-final victory over Hibs, Hearts guaranteed European group-stage football and the millions of pounds that come with it. Something the club has not experienced since the 2004/05 campaign.

After such a successful period, the efforts of Neilson and his coaching staff, Lee McCulloch and Gordon Forrest have been rewarded in the shape of a new contract.

Neilson explained it was an easy decision. He said: "The club came to me about a month or two ago and we started talking about it. Right away, I was more than happy to do it.

"I'm delighted to stay for hopefully another three years and keep building the club. It's been a good first two years and it's a chance to go take it to the next level again."

A football manager's term of employment appears to be getting

shorter nowadays and Neilson himself last season described it as simply being the 'nature of the beast' following a quick period of sackings in Scottish football.

At Hearts it has been no different, and Neilson will become the first Hearts manager since Jim Jeffries to manage the club for at least five years (1995-2000).

"That's just football nowadays. I've always believed that stability and continuity is a key factor in building a club and building a team, whether that be the coaching staff or the players.

"It doesn't normally happen in football, though. Things change and people move in, others move out. But I'm really happy here, I'm enjoying it and I think there's further levels for this club to go up.

"Thankfully, the club are happy with me too."

No supporter in the stand is qualified enough in football management to provide a solid argument that says Robbie Neilson now has an easier task ahead of him, if anything it gets harder, because the supporters now have an expectation that third place finishes and trips to Hampden is the bare minimum required.

However, the Tynecastle club are in a great place right now, and that's before you rewind almost a decade to the days of administration and frequent wage delays.

This summer, the club have sold a record number of season tickets and Saturday's match against Ross County is officially a sold out. Neilson explains the stability currently at the club is one of the main reasons he returned to Gorgie.

"We're in a good place right now with the change in ownership," Neilson said.

"The foundation has come in and given us that stability. We've

got the benefactors with Ann and the board is really strong too.

“The club is progressing and as we do that, we want to keep that stability. Hopefully touch wood it continues like that, and we can keep building.”

Hearts kick off their league campaign at Tynecastle on Saturday against Ross County and they will be without Josh Ginnelly, who remains out injured.

“I’m delighted to get the competitive stuff started; I don’t like pre-season. I like the real games that matter and the next thing you knew it will be the World Cup break.

“We have watched Ross County against Dunfermline and Alloa and they are similar to last season. They have lost the two wide players and Blair Spittal, but it looks like they have recruited similar players, so I expect the same sort of game.”