

Hearts – Neilson loves early season derby showdown

Hibs owner Ron Gordon raised more than a few eyebrows last month when he bemoaned the fact that his side's first home game was against city rivals Hearts.

The American criticised the decision, explaining that it made 'zero business sense'. Across the city, there is no such negativity and Hearts boss Robbie Neilson, (who has been involved in the Scottish game for a lot longer than the American) is delighted with the outcome.

"I look forward to it," said Neilson, who is looking for his first derby win at Easter Road.

"I think when the fixtures come out, they are the first ones you look for. To get it early is great. We used it pre-season as in the Derby is the second game of the season away from home and you need to make sure you are ready for it. I think the players are."

"You want to get a Derby, to win this, to get some momentum. If we win this on Sunday, it sets us up well for the coming games as well, so the sooner the better I think."

"Obviously, we have less fans, but we still 3,500/4,000 which is brilliant. It's one of the few derbies where you get that real intensity from both teams, so it's one to look forward to."

"I think they are the best games to be involved in, the bigger

games, the build-up. Whether it's the Old Firm, or the Edinburgh Derby, these are the best games. You don't really need to motivate the players at all because they are ready for it.

"I think that's what you enjoy about it. The pressure of the build-up, the pressure of the game. Generally, in these games, there's not a lot of football played and not a lot of quality within it."

While Neilson has played and managed in numerous Edinburgh Derbies, across the dugout his opposite number, Lee Johnson will be having his first taste of the fixture as Hibs boss.

"I don't think it being Lee's first will have a massive impact on the game," Neilson added.

"I've managed in plenty of them, and you can get a feeling of how things are going during the actual game and change it. That helps."

"I know Lee from his time here and Jamie [McAllister] too. When you turn up at the game it is business as usual for us. It is about winning the game.

"It doesn't matter who is in the other dugout. I don't think I have won at Easter Road as a manager, so it would be nice to change that. I want to win at every ground, it doesn't matter where it is. Some venues are tougher than others, but we want to win."

Stephen Kingsley remains a doubt for the fixture, with Neilson adding: "Stephen took part in training today and he isn't far away."