

Hearts have quality on their side says Shankland

Hearts hat-trick hero Lawrence Shankland admitted that it was disappointing to score his first cinch Scottish Premiership treble, which he described as a special moment, but losing 4-3 to Celtic in a titanic struggle at rain-soaked Tynecastle.

Two of the Scottish internationalists goals came from the penalty spot and the former Aberdeen and Dundee United striker said: "You think you have a chance to get something out of the game when you score three goals, but you concede four so, overall, it is a disappointing day."

It is understood to be the first Hearts treble against Celtic for three decades and Shankland's eighth hat-trick was scored after coming off the bench in 38 minutes for crooked Stephen Humphrys.

Glasgow-born Shankland believes his first touch was to take the first of his two spot kicks and had to wait several minutes while VAR officials reviewed the tackle on Cameron Devlin.

The player said: "I knew it was a penalty right away and knew he (referee Nick Walsh) was going to give it. I just had to get myself ready for it. I had to wait about five minutes as

VAR took a wee while, but I had my mind made up and that was it.”

The second penalty after 65 minutes, again after Devlin was floored, was retaken and Shankland said: “I missed a sitter from the rebound, but (Josh) Ginnelly managed to get it in. I was worried that it was offside. I did not know what they were checking and they gave another penalty. My thought process was what happens happens.”

The 27-year-old admitted that there were a few bizarre moments during a season, but if the right decisions come from it then VAR is a good addition to the game.

Shankland, of course, has already experienced VAR in football when playing in his 25 games for Beerschot in Belgium, his previous club, and said: “It is much the same there.

“There will be times in the season and I will be sitting here raging if something is not given, but if a decision is right the decision is right.”

The striker thought at the very least Hearts should have got something out of the pulsating game on Saturday and added: “Three goals against Celtic and you loose the game. It is moments, it is not an overall bad performance, that has lost the game. That is something we need to work at if we are going to get better.”

The quality of the squad does not concern the Scotland player. He added: “They (the players) know the quality they have, but we have been a bit disjointed at times because of the injuries which you cannot really control.

“The boys are working hard to make performances better and Saturday showed that we can compete at that level. We can take confidence from it, but it is those moments we need to improve on if we are going to compete at that level.”

There were 18,081 in the ground on Saturday and Shankland stressed: "It is not through lack of effort, we are all doing our best we are all sure that we can achieve better results."

Reflecting on starting the Celtic game on the bench, the player said that the manager can only pick 11 players and revealed that Robbie Neilson spoke to him on Friday at training.

The player said: "He told me what he was going to do and I accepted that and turned up today. If was going to play, I was ready for it."