

# Neilson challenges his men to claim third before World Cup

**Andy Halliday netted his second goal in two games as Hearts came from behind to edge struggling Ross County 2-1 in the cinch Scottish Premiership at Dingwall.**

Jordan White fired the Dingwall club ahead after 11 minutes, prodding the ball home with his knee from close range, only for Lawrence Shankland to level four minutes later from a rebound.

And Halliday (pictured by *Nigel Duncan*) claimed the game-winner after 20 minutes with a header from the edge of the box after a fine delivery from a corner on the right from Robert Snodgrass which looped into the top left hand corner of County's net.

Robbie Neilson, Hearts manager, told Hearts TV post-game that his men had once again dug deep to produce and he challenged them to claim third spot in the 12-strong table before the World Cup break.

He said: "It was a massive three points for us as we are down to bar bones at the moment. Everybody who played and contributed today was outstanding. This is a tough place to come at the best of times but you have to dig it out.

"I thought the fan base were outstanding and it was good to see the three points. There are people out there doubting us, but we are sixth in the league and if we win our game in hand

we can go third.

“That’s with European group stage football and that’s with injuries and we must make sure we come through this stage and kick-on after it.”

He added: “It is not often we score from set plays and there was great delivery from (Robert) Snodgrass and it was good to see Andy (Halliday) being aggressive and getting his head on it.

“I thought Lawrence’s goal was outstanding as well and that shows the quality he has got.”

The manager said the club can’t rely on players like Snodgrass and Barry McKay and others to produce all the time and confirmed that number of guys were carrying knocks.

The manager added: “We asked them to go again and dig it out and they did that for us and now we have Istanbul away which will be another tough game. We need to be ready for that.”

He praised the fans for making the trip and said: “The fans have come up here and were in The Railway Tavern before the game and I am sure they will go back to the Railway Tavern and have a right good night before they head back down the road.

“It was outstanding from them and I thought the players gave everything. We’re asking guys to keep giving game after game after game and they have to put their bodies on the line. They did that today and the three points were huge.”

Bth sides had ‘goals’ chalked off but overall the home side who had seven shots on target to Hearts’ three but Neilson’s men enjoyed 54 per cent of possession against County’s 46 per cent. They also had 512 passes against 426.

It was never going to be easy against the Dingwall side, but Hearts previously held the edge in head-to-head battles with County in the last five games, winning two and drawing three,

and that run has now been extended.

And the welcome win was Hearts first in the league in five outings, moving them to 17 points from 12 games with Capitals rivals Hibs in third spot with 20 points from 13 fixtures.

St Mirren are fifth with 19 points from 12 games and Aberdeen fourth also with 19 points from the same number of games. County are bottom with nine points from 13 starts, the same points as fellow-strugglers Dundee United.