

October could make or break Hearts

Hearts got two much-needed victories prior to the international break to keep them on track on both domestic and European fronts.

The Jambos headed to the Latvian capital, Riga, having lost six of their last seven matches. Manager, Robbie Neilson, also would have known deep down that it was imperative that Hearts took at least a point from the match at the Skonto Stadium.

In the end, Hearts gained all three points thanks to goals from Lawrence Shankland and Alan Forrest. Istanbul Basaksehir defeated Fiorentina in Turkey, which meant Hearts moved up to second in the group after two matches.

Less than 72 hours later and Hearts took to the field again, looking for their first away league win of the season and again goals from Shankland and Forrest allowed them to pick up all three points.

Prior to that match in Latvia, Hearts had struggled to keep clean sheets, despite having Scotland's number one, Craig Gordon, between the sticks. However, much like Edinburgh buses, Hearts waited so long for a clean sheet and then two came along in quick succession.

Victory in Lanarkshire meant that Hearts moved up to third in the cinch Premiership table, despite their hectic schedule and unfortunate injury problems.

Those two results were important for a number of reasons, most notably because they brought an end to a bad run of results and reinstilled confidence in the squad.

But perhaps a quick glance at Hearts' fixture list for October, highlights just how important that win at Fir Park was.

Due to the farcical decision to hold a World Cup in November, clubs have been forced to agree to severe fixture congestion in October and early November, prior to the tournament commencing.

This means that Hearts will have to play 12 matches between 1 October and 12 November. Neilson has spoken on numerous occasions about preparing his squad to perform on a weekend matchday as well as during the week.

The reality is that if Hearts are still third in the league at 4:45 on 12 November then it will be a minor miracle with the schedule and injuries they currently have to key players.

However, if the Tyencastle team can stay in touch with teams around them over the next five weeks, then they will fancy their chances to come on strong in the second half of the season once their new signings have bedded in and they have more time in-between fixtures to recover.

I hope the Hearts players who were not on international duty at the end of September enjoyed their well-earned break, because things are going to get a lot tougher for them between now and the start of the World Cup.



Scottish Championship – Heart of Midlothian v Dundee.

Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.

06/3/2021

Hearts play host to Dundee in the Scottish Championship at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh.

Pic shows: Hearts' manager, Robbie Neilson, not happy as Hearts' Irish International, Liam Boyce, writhes in agony.

Credit: Ian Jacobs