

# Two late fitness decisions for Neilson in Europe

Robbie Neilson, Hearts' manager, confirmed that it was "touch and go" with two players ahead of their UEFA Europa Conference League tie with Latvian side RFS at Tynecastle (kick-off 20.00) on Thursday.

Neilson said: "We will have a few back in and a few out and we'll see on Thursday when we will make a decision."

Striker Stephen Humphrys, who came off injured after 38 minutes against Celtic on Saturday, is one of the players involved in the discussions but Hearts go into the clash with optimism having won the first meeting between the sides.

Lawrence Shankland and Alan Forrest were on target in Riga and the manager added: "We're playing at Tynecastle and it does not matter if it is a Europa Conference League game, a cup game or league game, we are looking at trying to win the game."

Neilson's men have three points from their four starts with RFS propping up the table with two points, and the Hearts manager expects Istanbul Basaksehir to go through from Group A.

They have ten points from four games, having won four and drawn one, scoring ten goals and conceding none, but much depends, he said, on what sort of team they put out and if they wish to confirm qualification early or wait until the last game.

Fiorentina are in second spot with seven points from four games (won two, drawn one, lost one) and added: "There are a lot of ifs and buts about it, but that is outwith our control. No point in wasting any energy on it. To be honest, I'm not

really looking at the chances of progression at the moment.

“We got a great result over there and we hope to do the same tomorrow. We have to win to give ourselves a chance and then we’ll have to wait and see.”

He said it was difficult to tell how the other game in the group, Fiorentina v Istanbul (kick-off 17.45), will go, but he said they were two very good teams.

The media at the pre-match press conference asked what Neilson (pictured at training today at The Orium by **Nigel Duncan**) expects from RFS who earned a 4-0 road win at Super Nova in the Latvian Higher League on Sunday.

He said: “In their way games recently against Fiorentina and Istanbul they sat in defensively, tomorrow night they need to get a result if they are to have any chance of qualifying.

“We shall wait and see about their formation. In the league campaign they play a 4-2-3-1 but they have changed shape in Europe where they have been playing 3-4-3 so the question is whether they go back to a European formation, which is a lot more of a defensive, or the way they play in their league which has brought them success. We shall see.

“If teams sit in it is difficult to break them down. If teams play more open then it is a little bit easier, but we have to look at how we are going to play. We know which formation we are going to play and we are still waiting for a couple for the line-up and we will take it from there.”

The team, he said, played well at the weekend in the 4-3 home reverse to cinch Scottish Premiership pace-setters Celtic, but did not pick any points and that was the disappointing aspect.

He added: “In recent games we have played well in periods, but we’ve lost goals at key moments, it was the same at the weekend there. They all know we need to be doing better but there is

still a good group of players there.”