

Clark centre stage after Gordon injury confirmation

Zander Clark has been understudy to Craig Gordon this season, but he is expected to be centre stage when Hearts travel to St Johnstone in the cinch Scottish Premiership on Wednesday (19.45).

The 30-year-old, Glasgow-born goalkeeper, came on as a substitute on Saturday when Gordon was stretchered off the Dundee United pitch after a collision in the 76th minute with former Scotland striker Steven Fletcher.

Hearts have confirmed that Gordon, who is 40 on Hogmanay, is out for the rest of the season with a double leg break which required surgery, and it is the third serious injury suffered by the Scotland international during his lengthy career.

Clark should slot into a side which has drawn two and won two of their last five games, helping them earn fourth place in the table with 25 points from 17 games. St Johnstone are fifth with 24 points from 18 starts and both clubs are chasing Aberdeen who are third on 25 points from 18 fixtures.

The Dons have a goal difference of plus two, Hearts have a goal difference of plus one and the Perth club have a goal difference of minus four. Saints have won two and drawn one of their last five games and manager Callum Davidson was pleased with the performance in a 4-1 defeat at Celtic Park by the league pace-setters on Saturday.

Before that, the Perth club had gone unbeaten in six games and that included wins over Rangers and Hibs and draws with Motherwell and St Mirren.

Hearts have won two of their last five and drawn two and Saturday's last-gasp leveller by Lawrence Shankland at Tannadice was a major boost, but the Tynecastle team have a disappointing record on the road this term, only winning twice in nine fixtures.

Robbie Neilson, Hearts' manager, is has backed Clark to make his mark but he is likely to travel to the Fair City minus defenders Craig Halkett and Stephen Kingsley who both went off injured at Tannadice on Saturday.

So, the stage is set for a tough, Festive battle and a win at Perth could push Hearts into third position and also set them up for the Edinburgh Derby against Hibs at Tynecastle on January 2 (15.00).