

Neilson: we'll give Hill time to develop his game

Robbie Neilson is delighted to have captured England under-21 defender James Hill on loan and Hearts manager hopes to provide the talented young player with what he wants, regular game time.

Neilson told a press briefing ahead of Friday's home test in the cinch Scottish Premiership with St Mirren (kick-off 19.45) tthat Hill is a player who did really well as a teenager and earned a big move to Premiership side Bournemouth, nicknamed The Cherries.

The manager added: "He as not played as much as he wanted so there was an opportunity to bring him up here and we'll give him game time and, hopefully, develop him as a player."

Hill, the son of former professional footballer, Matt Hill who appeared for clubs including Bristol Rovers then Preston North End and Sheffield United, and is now manager of Stafford Rangers in the Northern Premier League, has trained with the Bournemouth first team for the past six or seven months, revealed Neilson.

The defender, who played against Newcastle United in the last 16 of the EFL Cup in December – Bournemouth lost 1-0 on Tyneside – trained on Thursday with the squad after spending his 21st birthday on Tuesday in the gym and at his hotel.

Neilson said the player, who made his debut as a 16-year-old

for Fleetwood Town, the club's youngest ever player, before being recruited by former Cherries boss, Scott Parker, for a reported fee of £1m, claimed to be Fleetwood's record export, is an option for Friday.

He confirmed Hill is at Tynecastle on loan "at the moment" to give him game time and he added: "Hopefully, we can improve him and he can improve us."

Hearts' other newcomer this week, 21-year-old Yutaro Oda, needs to prove his fitness, but he has quality, according to the manager, as he has played in the top league and with the Japanese under-21 side.

Neilson said: "He is very quick, he has good feet and is a good finisher and he has a lot of attributes, but he has not played since the end of November so, fitness wise, we need to develop that so it will be a gradual process to get him into the first team."

As regards, Garang Kuol, an Australian World Cup player who visited the Gorgie club last week and is with Newcastle, Neilson said both clubs had agreed and the paperwork was being processed.

Other transfer speculation has surrounded former Hearts star Callum Paterson, and Neilson confirmed he sporting directors of Sheffield Wednesday and Hearts have spoken to each other about a possible move for 28-year-old, former Hearts man, a former Scotland international. Hearts await a response.

Potentially, the relationship that Neilson has with the player and the player with the club could help here but Neilson he added; "He is a Sheffield Wednesday player."

Overall, Neilson said it has been difficult for Hearts this season. The club have lost a number of key players through injury but he said: "We are in third position and it is important to kick on through this transfer window."

He indicated that not to many more new faces would be making an appearance at Tynecastle before the transfer deadline shuts again, but the drive was all about bringing in real quality to add to the squad.

Touching on the Japanese market, Neilson said people are more aware of it now, but Hearts have previously been successful in the Australian market.

The manager said: "First, they are affordable, which is important for us, and second they are hungry to come to Europe and want to do well. He added: "If Oda does well, the Japanese market will be one we will continue to look at."

It will, he said, take newcomer Oda time to settle and that is why Hearts have to be patient with him. Neilson said: He will take to the pitch when he is ready to take to the pitch. We have an interpreter at the moment, he came on on Tuesday, and he has a flat to stay in and most of the players are in that area as well. We are just trying to help him adapt to a new culture on the other side of the world.

"It will take a bit of time, but he is a football player and what he does on the pitch is the most important thing. We just have to make sure we help him out with that."

Oda does not, he said, have a chance of being involved on Friday, but Neilson confirmed the player trained with the squad on Wednesday and he looked sharp. He was very hungry and very energetic.

As to other injured players, Neilson said experienced Andy Halliday is fine after his concussion protocol last week.

Overall, Neilson said he was delighted with the squad before the transfer window and it was a case of trying to strengthen it again, but losing some key players in key positions meant they had no option but to recruit fresh blood.

He added: "The players we have got so far I am pleased with. The targets we have I am pleased with. It is about trying to improve the team. The players we have brought in already have improved the group and, hopefully, the players we have brought in now will improve the group."

Being at a big football club will potentially mean there is competition for places, said the manager, and it was key that every day at training the players are at it and ready to go.

Looking at Friday's fixture following the 1-1 draw at Paisley on Saturday, Neilson said: "Friday will be very difficult. It is at Tynecastle and we expect a different game."