

Hearts travel to Motherwell seeking league treble

Hearts have beaten Motherwell twice already this season, 3-0 at Fir Park in mid-September, and 3-2 at Tynecastle in early November, and the record books indicate that the last time the Jambos won three straight against The Steelmen was in 2017 when Mark McGhee was the manager at Fir Park.

However, Motherwell come into the game after a confidence-boosting but narrow win over St Mirren in midweek, van Veen and Max Johnston slotting home, and the result pushes the Lanarkshire men into ninth spot in the cinch Premiership table, three points clear of bottom-markers Dundee United.

Caretaker Stuart Kettlewell awaits clarity on his position ahead of Sunday match and he claimed fundamentals helped secure the welcome 2-1 win over the men from Paisley.

Previous to that, Well had lost three and drawn one of their league games.

He made four changes to the side, and switched the formation, after four straight defeats in all competitions, including a shock exit from the Scottish Cup at Raith Rovers, a run which led to the sacking of manager Steven Hammell.

And The Steelmen edged St Mirren despite only having 43 per cent of possession against 57 per cent from the opposition. Motherwell had 309 passes against 416 from St Mirren but they did enough.

Robbie Neilson, Hearts' manager, (pictured in training by **Nigel Duncan**) was in the stand to watch the game and third-placed Hearts go into the game having recorded three wins and a draw in their last five league games, and the Jambos have only lost one of their last 11 fixtures in the league (recording six wins and four draws) which was a 3-0 defeat to Rangers.

The Edinburgh side have won five of their last ten against Motherwell who have won four and Hearts have scored 16 goals against their rivals 12.

Of course, the Capital combine have Lawrence Shankland upfront and the Glasgow-born player has scored 17 league goals so far this term, the most by a Scottish league player since Kris Boyd in 2017-18 season when he netted on 18 occasions.

Neilson said when a manager leaves there will be different ideas and he noted a change of formation which lead to a more direct approach to their play.

They were more aggressive and got a result and Neilson expects the Fir Park side to stick with that for their visit. He added: "When you play teams in an interim basis you don't know what you are going to get. It is always a difficult place to go, no matter who is in charge.

"They got a great result in midweek there and it is always hard for us at Motherwell."

Josh Ginnelly misses out because of suspension from the recent Premiership clash with Dundee United at Tynecastle and Neilson added: "The rest of the squad are good."

The Jambos have sold out their allocation of tickets and more have been applied for. More ticket news is that the league game against St Johnston is sold out already and the Scottish Cup clash with league pace-setters Celtic is on Saturday, March 11 at Tynecastle.