

# The sky's the limit for Hearts

**Imagine winning 5-0 against Aberdeen and beating Hibs 3-0 home and away, despite not playing to the best of your ability.**

That is what this Hearts squad have managed to do this year. Many predicted that on the resumption of domestic football following the World Cup break that Hearts would kick on following their early season problems with European football and a ridiculously unlucky injury list.

But surely, they did not expect them to kick on and ultimately kick away in third place so quickly.

The Jambos sit seven points clear in third place and although tough matches against Livingston and Rangers lie just around the corner, third place does look to be Hearts' to throw away.

The recent results against Hibs and Aberdeen showed how far ahead Hearts are of their so called 'main challengers' for third spot, however despite not playing their best, they scored 11 goals and conceded none.

Having knocked their rivals out of The Scottish Cup and being drawn against Championship strugglers Hamilton, Hearts will fancy their chances of another trip to Hampden and having lost three of the last four Scottish Cup finals, who is to say Hearts won't go one better this year seeing as their squad has surely improved again in the last 12 months.

Hearts' recent successes really hammered home Hibs' recent problems and much of it is down to recruitment. Ryan Porteous' future remains uncertain across the city and although Hearts lost John Souttar on a free transfer to Rangers, Hearts chose to keep the defender until the end of the season and he helped Hearts consolidate third place before turning in a man of the match performance against Rangers in the Scottish Cup Final.



Hearts go through to the last 16 of the Scottish Cup after beating Hibs 3-0.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

Now, Hearts have learned their lesson and have tied down Australian defender Kye Rowles on a new long-term contract, which basically means, Hearts can choose what they sell him for and when. Blackpool had a recent six-figured bid laughed out of Tynecastle for Toby Sibbick, who still has two-and-a-half-year's remaining on his Tynecastle contract and with the finances so strong, Hearts don't need to sell players on the

cheap, whereas in Leith, Hibs will be tempted to cash in on Porteous for just about anything they can get.

At Easter Road, Hearts were able to bring on Stephen Kingsley, Stephen Humphrys, Jorge Grant, Nathaniel Atkinson and Alan Forrest, meanwhile new signings Orestis Kiomourtzoglou, Garang Kuol and Yutaro Oda were unused substitutes.

For a non Old Firm side, that is a seriously strong bench. Throw in the injured Liam Boyce, Beni Baniyime, Peter Haring, Craig Gordon and Craig Halkett and that highlights just how strong this Hearts squad is.

In the dugout, Hearts have a manager who absolutely adores the football club. Robbie Neilson has had to endure a hell of amount of stick from supporters and after being on the wrong end of the embarrassing Scottish Cup defeat to Brora Rangers, he has managed to put the club right back where it belongs. In Europe.

For the Hearts fans, those trips to Zurich, Riga, Florence and Istanbul will have created memories they will remember forever and it would take a brave man to bet against them not enjoying four more European trips to kick-off the 2023/24 campaign. They will also have a far stronger squad this time round considering their injuries at the beginning of the season.

With the money generated from competing in Europe, it gave Hearts the opportunity to invest and try to kick away from the likes of Hibernian and Aberdeen. With another Scottish Cup run looking likely and a third placed finish even more plausible, these really are fantastic times to be a Jambo.



Hearts go through to the last 16 of the Scottish Cup after beating Hibs 3-0.  
Credit: Ian Jacobs



Hearts go through to the last 16 of the Scottish Cup after beating Hibs 3-0.

Credit: Ian Jacobs