

Killie will be a tough test for Hearts, says Neilson

Robbie Neilson expects a tough, physical battle at Kilmarnock on Saturday (kick-off 15.00) and has asked his squad to put the recent 3-0 defeat at Aberdeen behind them and concentrate on the next game.

The Hearts manager added: "That's all you can do in football."

The squad have trained well and Lawrence Shankland and Zander Clark have returned from Scotland international duty and the Aussie boys, who played bit parts in their international double-header against Ecuador, are also set to return in time for the weekend. Cammy Devlin (pictured) was delayed in his flight home and will miss out with concussion after being hurt on international duty.

Neilson said: "That gets us all back together and we go down to Killie to win the game. We were disappointed (after the Aberdeen game) but we also have to have a perspective of where we are in the league.

"We are sitting four points clear and in third position. Yes, we would like to be more but if you asked any team outside Rangers and Celtic if they wanted to be in our position with nine games to go to try and secure that they would say yes. It starts again on Saturday."

There was, he added, an expectation on Hearts as there is expectation on Hibs and on Aberdeen with competition hotting

up for that third place and the manager said: "We are trying to fight to be higher than that and that is the objective. Yes, there is expectation, but it is the same at every club.

"The way the league is, every game is competitive and you have the group fighting for survival and you have the group fighting to get into the top six, a group fighting to stay in the top six, a group fighting for Europe.

"Every game at this moment, especially when you are down to the single figure games we are now, is all-important.

"I expect it to be a hard, physical and demanding game (at Kilmarnock) and they use set plays. Over 50 per cent of their goals have come from set plays, and we will have to be organised in these situations."

Asked about Hearts' away form said: "You want to pick up points everywhere. If we want to get closer to the Old Firm that is an area we need to get better at."