

# Naismith: 'I know I am ready for management'

Steven Naismith has been in interim charge of Hearts for seven games and has successfully guided the Gorgie side to fourth place in the cinch Premiership after the 1-1 draw with Hibs at Tynecastle. He summed up the bruising Derby thus: "It was not that enjoyable."

The Jambos interim boss added: "It was the longest game ever, obviously the double whammy of the red card and they score from the free-kick was the worse case scenario.

"For me, in the time I have been in charge here, it has been the worse case scenario in anything we have done, whether it has been injuries or players not available, to red cards, to VAR decisions, things have gone against us.

"I think the seven games have been more eventful than most managers have had in leading a team, but the fight the boys have got is unbelievable.

"Their understanding of the game when we go to ten men. It is a similar situation to the Celtic game and the next goal is pivotal, we managed to defend for our lives, and, as the game develops, we manage the moments to keep the ball and manage the game really well. It is really pleasing on the character side again."

And the former Scotland international praised the Tynecastle faithful for their backing and added: "I have said from day one, I have been at the club long enough, you give them something to back they will back you.

"The fans owning the club, there has got to be that bond there, and you have to understand what the fans want. That is the biggest thing I have taken from this. Before I took this

role I knew I had to get their backing.

"It (Tynecastle) is a tough place if you have not got it and I think we have done that pretty well over the past seven games."

Naismith said he was proud of the way Hearts toughed the game with Hibs out after Alex Cochrane was red carded in 28 minutes, and he said: "Hearts teams in the past have been labelled with being soft.

"St Mirren, we showed character to come back (to draw 2-2) and today (against Hibs) to see the game out. That's massive. To go to Rangers and go for 96 minutes to get a result. When I was a player here that would have been really hard.

"These things very rarely happened and that part is turning but, if you want to play here, you need that. It should not be that's the Hearts way to make it difficult, get rid of that, put it in the bin, get more control. We need to control games, understand in situations what we need to do."

And he sent a message to Hearts' board about his aspirations for the future. The Irvine-born boss said: "I would say I am ready for management. I would say that this period was definitely a big indicator.

"What this has done is given me a taste of it and I know I am ready. These are the five hardest fixtures you will get in the season at a time when the squad is really low and I am proud of what we have done.

"So, I am ready for it and the conversations will start to see if I am the man to take Hearts forward. I am looking forward to the conversations."

PICTURE: General view of Tynecastle before kick-off on Derby day