

Naismith praises newcomers despite Leeds reverse

Steven Naismith felt the 1-0 defeat by Leeds United in the club's final pre-season friendly was a good work out for his men who open their cinch Premiership season with a visit to St Johnstone on Saturday (15.00).

Each game, he added, had been different and the emphasis from Leeds was an aggressive press and how Hearts defended their box as that was a big issue for the Tynecastle club last season.

The club's technical director, pictured at the post-match press conference by *Nigel Duncan*, added: "We are disappointed with the in possession stuff as they were very aggressive. Getting away from that pressure and getting a foothold is what we are working on but out of possession I felt we were good."

Naismith fielded debutants Frankie Kent, a 6ft-plus defender secured from Peterborough United, and Aussie-born midfielder Calem Nieuwemhof, and he said: "It was good to see them.

"They have been training for a few days and did quite well. They are at different stages of their careers. You could tell that Calem is coming into a new country at times, he is still trying to get to grips with British football.

"Frankie has come in and showed what we are trying to bring

people to the club for, he is a leader, he has a presence and both came in and did the minutes they did brilliantly.”

Naismith also reflected on Kent as a leader and said: “We knew we needed to get people who were good leaders and people who organise and I value that a lot. As a former player I understand that it is so valuable to your teammates rather than focusing on yourself.”

He revealed that the squad have worked on a lot of issues and the coaching staff have gone into detail about what they want the players to do and he added: “Probably a month into the season is when you feel they are ready.

“The pre-season has been good and we have a really good group of players and competitive games start next week and it is busy for the next two or three weeks so it will be an intense period for us.”

Naismith hopes to have one of his other new recruits at Tynecastle during the start of the week but the work permit process, he said, “is what is is” and the timescale is outwith the club’s hands.

But he added: “We will hopefully have one ready to go for next week and we need these two people in and then we will be in a comfortable position.”