

# Denholm family 'living a dream' after son signs for Hearts

To say that Aidan Denholm was buzzing would be an understatement. You could feel the energy when he walked into the room. Add his mother and father and his 78-year-old grandfather to the equation. Simply, this has been a red letter day for the Denholm household.

Why? Because 19-year-old Denholm has signed a new contract at their – yes, they are all ardent fans – favourites, Heart of Midlothian FC, which keeps the talented teenager at the Gorgie club until 2026.

The midfielder, who has had loan spells at lower league clubs including East Fife and Berwick Rangers, extended his contract at Tynecastle by a year in May, but club bosses have been so impressed with his attitude and application, plus his willingness to learn, that they offered him a long-term deal.

They knew what they were getting as Denholm worked with current head coach, Steven Naismith, when Naisey was involved with the club's B team, but the young player described putting pen to paper as "a dream come true."

The actuality of it all has not really kick-in yet he

said, but, looking back, the former Craigmount High School pupil, confirmed he has been with the club since he was eight and has emerged from the Academy, signing his first full-time deal as a 16-year-old.

It is no surprise that he ended up as Tynecastle as he is a Jambo and the family home is in Edinburgh's Corstorphine area, a rich breeding ground for fans of the Gorgie club.

The rising star revealed that he was focusing on his football this season, and trying to impress, and Hearts phoned his agent. Naismith also spoke to the emerging talent and asked if I would be keen to extend his stay at Hearts.

It was an instant 'yes' and the player declared: "I would not want it any other way. I love it here."

As soon as he heard that Hearts were offering a long-term deal he wanted the formalities completed straight away.

Now his job is to keep his head down and concentrate on football and developing his game further.

Seven appearances have been logged already for the cinch Premiership side but Denholm has had to pinch himself as he admitted he could not have imagined things going so well this term.

He said: "I had a good pre-season and I got a chance against Rosenborg away (in the Europa Conference League qualifiers in Norway) and then against Killie (in the cinch Premiership)."

Denholm believes that previous loan spells at East Fife and Berwick Rangers have contributed to him signing the deal at Tynecastle and he said: "I was playing men's football at a young age and that was good for me as well.

"Then I was back in the B team playing under Naisey, but the loan spells I looked on as a challenge. I learned a lot. There was a different side to it like training at night and things

like that. I enjoyed it.”

He acknowledged that there were different levels of football to consider at East Fife and Berwick, in Europe and in the cinch Premiership but he said: “I like a challenge and I would not want it any other way.

“East Fife was good and I learned different things. Right now, I am just enjoying being here.

“It is an amazing feeling having signed. I now have security. The deal was pretty straight-forward and it is up there as being one of the best things in my life. This is the first time I have had some security (in football). My job now is to get back in the team, but the boys have been different class.”

He speaks highly of Naismith and added: “With the B team he was different class.”

He lost his place in the side earlier this season but Naismith told the ambitious youngster that his time would come again and that he had to be patient.

Denholm believes he brings energy to the table and he said: “I am only 19 and if my time comes sooner or somebody gets injured I am ready to go. The deal has just been announced but I am buzzing. I am delighted.

“Overall, the feeling around the building is great and we are off to Hampden after what happened on Tuesday (Hearts beat Kilmarnock 2-1 to move into the semi-final of the Viaplay Cup).

“I am 100 per cent hungry to succeed at the highest level and, if that means I have to go on loan to get more experience, or it means I have to patient, then I will be. Naisey knows what he wants from me and, no matter what, I will give my all for this club.”

The youngster feels comfortable at Permiership level and he

said: "It has only been seven games, but I think I have learned so much, and in those seven games it has been a roller coaster, but when the time comes I know I will be ready."

And he also feels at home physically with the big boys and revealed: "I have been in the gym to keep my body ticking over to make sure that when the time does come I am ready. I know it will not be easy as there are men, big grown men, facing me."

His family are key and he said: "My mum and dad and my grandad are always there. They were with my at East Fife, they were with me at Berwick and they travel around every week, and it is something for them.

"It is not just me that is happy with the deal, they were delighted. I've got to mention my grandad. He is 78 and he still comes to every game. Even if mum and dad can't make it he will still want to be there, home or away." Basically, the whole family are currently living a dream.

PICTURE: Aidan Denholm in action for Hearts in the cinch Premiership. Picture *courtesy of Heart of Midlothian FC*