

Naismith: 'break gives us time to reflect'

The international break could have arrived at the right time for stumbling Hearts who have lost their last four games in all competitions.

Steven Naismith, the club's technical director, said they will use the time to reflect and re-focus after the disappointing run which culminated in Sunday's 1-0 home defeat to Motherwell.

The three points lifted the in-form Fir Park level on points with Celtic at the top of the cinch Premiership but a quick look at the statistics from the game shows that Hearts dominated possession.

However, goals win matches and Callum Slattery's fine strike after a flowing move separated the sides and Naismith told Hearts official website that the fixture against The Steelmen saw his men start slowly.

That has been a worrying trend after midweek European games and the former Scotland international said: "If you give up opportunities to the opposition they take it, get something to hold onto and we don't have enough to go and win the game.

"It is disappointing as we've highlighted the demands of playing Thursday-Sunday, but to not have the cutting edge in the final third after the red card (69 minutes to Motherwell's Paul McGinn) is a real frustration. We should be putting teams

under more pressure than we did.”

In fact, a shot from Lawrence Shankland (pictured) straight at Motherwell’s goalkeeper in the final minutes was one of only a handful of efforts from Hearts during the game.

Naismith said: “We have played a lot of football in a short period but this (the break) gives us time to reflect. One, do we want to be successful and play attacking, exciting football, or are we going to be safe and hope someone else comes up with a bit of magic to win games.

“That is not going to be successful so everybody needs to look at it and get back to where we were against Rosenborg at home and St Johnstone away.

“Then, we were playing with a bravery and a focus, causing other team’s problems rather than us making a mistake.”