

Rowles back to his best as in-form Buddies loom

Hearts head for Paisley and a clash with St Mirren on Saturday (15.00) on Matchday six of 33 in the cinch Premiership and head coach Steven Naismith has challenged his squad to produce high-level performances away from Tynecastle.

Last Saturday's clean sheet against Aberdeen pleased the boss and said that in previous league games the Jambos have given away what he called "cheap goals".

Aussie defender Kye Rowles (pictured) was singled out by Naismith for his contribution and he acknowledged that the 25-year-old defender has had some "tough moments" in the last four weeks.

Naismith said the former Central Coast Mariners player was exceptional against the Dons and revealed that he challenged the man from Down Under. Naismith told Hearts official website: "I asked the question of him (Rowles) and said he needs to get more physical and be up for that fight.

"He has lots of quality but he he gets a bump, or gives up a cheap goal, everybody remembers that.

"So, he needs to deal with that and understand that he has to be very physical and strong in those moments and I thought he was (against Aberdeen)." He added: "I thought he was

exceptional.”

Naismith acknowledged the difficulty of the fixture against Stephen Robinson’s men and he stressed that the challenge has to be to produce high-level performances on the road.

Recalling last season’s trip to Paisley in mid-May, which ended in a 2-2 draw, Naismith said: “The game there was really tough. We managed to grind out a point in a performance that wasn’t great.”

St Mirren won 2-0 at Tynecastle in early April and are currently second in the 12-strong table with 11 points, two points adrift of pace-setting Celtic, with teh Jambos in fifth spot. Robinson’s men have scored nine goals and let in six.

Hearts have scored four goals and conceded two and Naismith said The Buddies are a well-organised and coached team who have won their last two matches, drawing two others.

In fact, they have not lost in their last five games but are 2-1 behind in the head-to-head over the last five fixtures between the clubs, with two draws also in the mix.

He added: “We are under no illusions that it will be a very tough game, but we go into it believing in the things that we want to do, and we need to go there and cause them more problems than they do.”