

Hearts doing their homework on Rangers

Steven Naismith said Rangers move to change their manager means that Hearts are having to change their approach to Sunday's trip to Ibrox (15.00) in the cinch Premiership.

Part of that process will be watching the Glasgow club in Europe on Thursday night when they visit Sparta Prague in the Europa League (17.45).

Head coach Naismith admitted that Hearts' record away to the Old Firm has not been good enough but said: "We need to change that at some point and we need to manage the game properly to give ourselves the best chance."

The Irvine-born former international acknowledged that there is pressure on him and the manner of defeat by Celtic in the 4-1 reverse last Sunday at Tynecastle was a concern.

Hearts, he admitted, have slipped from defensively being very solid and being at the top end of the league matrix for a lot of stats.

If you are not winning games and the play is not as picture perfect as it can be then he understands fans frustration but added: "The way to relieve that is to start winning games and we need to try and do that."

Naismith said that when Hearts have the ball they have to make Rangers work hard and the defense needs to be more secure than they were last Sunday against Brendan Rodgers' men. He said:

“As much as some of the finishes were good, the goals were avoidable from our point of view.”

This, he acknowledged, is a key period for the Tynecastle club with a lot on offer. After Ibrox, the Jambos are at home to Livingston on Wednesday (19.45) before facing Rangers again in the Scottish League Cup, semi-final, at Hampden on Sunday, November 5 (15.00).

The Gorgie boss has looked at Rangers' win over Hibs last weekend, the first game in charge for new manager, 49-year-old Philippe Clement, who is a proven winner with Genk and Club Brugge and was also capped on 39 occasions by Belgium.

The Jambos boss said: “They want to put you under pressure, they want to play on the front foot, they want to be aggressive, but it is not as if they are going from one extreme to the other, there are loads of things they do which are the same or similar to what they have been in the past.”

Naismith stressed: “They are a good team, they have good players and if you let them play and let them dominate the ball they will cause you problems.”

PICTURE: Steven Naismith along with his thoughts ahead of Sunday's trip to Ibrox. Picture **Nigel Duncan**