

Hearts KO'd by late Rangers double

Steven Naismith claimed Rangers' equaliser at Ibrox was "not a penalty" but the outcome of the game, which ended 2-1 to Rangers, was defined by that penalty.

Hearts head coach told BBC Scotland Sport that the Ibrox side pressed and the Jambos players knew they would have to be solid defensively as the clock ticked down.

The home side actually trailed for 85 minutes but struck twice in injury time to snatch victory over battling Hearts and the three points keeps the Ibrox club five points behind pace-setting Celtic.

It was Rangers seventh win in their ten league games so far this season despite not playing at their best and the result was huge in terms of the league title race.

Their fans celebrated wildly at the final whistle and it sets up the Glasgow giants for their cinch Premiership clash at Dundee in midweek (19.45) followed by another joust with the Tynecastle team at Hampden in the Viaplay Scottish League Cup semi-final next Sunday (15.00).

Lawrence Shankland (pictured), Hearts' skipper, put the visitors ahead after five minutes with a looping header over goalkeeper Jack Buckland and the Gorgie side held that slender advantage until seconds from half-time when Todd Cantwell was fouled in the Hearts' penalty box. Skipper James Tavernier hit the post from the spot.

Rangers battered Hearts for most of the second-half and Tavernier took responsibility when a VAR-awarded penalty was given after 90 minutes when Peter Haring tugged Connor

Goldstone's jersey. He fired the ball straight down the middle and into the net.

And Brazilian forward Danilo Pereira da Silva counted three minutes later to break Hearts and send home fans wild.

Naismith added: "The penalty was the defining moment in the game. It was not a penalty. VAR is here to stop things happening. Throughout the whole game we highlighted that there was clear blocking going on where the players are not interested in the ball, they are looking at our men.

"The penalty that they get, the initial contact is made by a player blocking our player which VAR should go back and review. I spoke to the referee afterwards and he said he was not shown any images where there was a block."

Naismith said the process failed Hearts in a game in which Rangers enjoyed 69 per cent possession against 31 per cent for Jambos and the home side had five shots on target against one in reply.

Philippe Clement retained his unbeaten record as Rangers manager but his men were not at their best. He told BBS Scotland Sport: "It's a deserved win. Because of the mentality of the players, we changed the situation."

Steven Naismith, Hearts' head coach, must lift his men who host Livingston at Tynecastle on Wednesday (19.45).