Vargas claims first goal as Hearts edge Livingston

Substitute Kenneth Vargas was the toast of Tynecastle thanks to a goal 11 minutes from time which proved the difference between dominant Hearts and stubborn Livingston in the cinch Premiership.

The Costa Rican forward latched onto a pass from Jorge Grant which split the Livingston defence and smashed the ball into the roof of the net from close range.

Hearts dominated possession and had ten shots on target against none by the visitors and the Jambos sent wave upon wave of attacks on the Lions rearguard but a draw looked on the cards before quicksilver Vargas intervened.

The win eased the pressure on Hearts' head coach Steven Naismith and it was the club's first in four games. The head coach said the performance was one of real control.

He told BBC Scotland Sport: "We created good chances but it was about control and patience. It was a confident performance which I am happy with."

Hearts move up to fourth with 14 points from 11 games while David Martindale's men slip to second bottom with ten points from their 11 fixtures.

Naismith demanded a fast start from his men and they delivered. Skipper Lawrence Shankland hit the bar and forced former Hearts goalkeeper, Jack Hamilton, into a save and the visitors were rate visitors to Hearts half before the break.

The Lions had 11 men behind the ball during the match and had little threat in attack but Shankland and Stephen Kingsley both threatened.

The one-way traffic continued and 21-year-old Vargas eased nerves with his first for the club since his arrival and Hearts now look forward to a trip to Hampden on Sunday (15.00) to meet Rangers in the Viaplay Scottish League Cup semi-final.

The Ibrox side accounted for Dundee on Tayside thanks to goals from Ryan Jack after five minutes and Danilo Pereira da Silva after 51 minutes plus strikes from Sam Lammers, Cyriel Dessers and James Tavernier from the penalty spot.

PICTURE: Kenneth Vargas (foreground) in training at Riccarton with Hearts. Picture *Nigel Duncan*