

Hearts travel to face cinch Premiership leaders

Hearts travel to Celtic Park on Saturday (15.00) looking to snap a losing run against The Hoops who top the cinch Premiership with 42 points from 17 matches.

Hearts have slipped to sixth and have 23 points from 16 fixtures and the last time the sides met was at Tynecastle when Brendan Rodgers left with all three points from a convincing 4-1 win.

Both sides go into the clash after league defeats, Hearts being edged 2-1 at Aberdeen on Saturday and Celtic slipping to defeat at Kilmarnock by the same scoreline on Sunday.

Rangers beat Dundee 3-1 and are now only five points adrift of their Glasgow rivals with a game in hand. Celtic can't afford any slip-ups here but go into the game on a positive after ending their European campaign with a confidence-boosting 2-1 home victory over Feyenoord in the UEFA Champions League.

Rodgers said: "It has been a long time since there has been a home win in the Champions League. I'm clearly very happy with the win for the players who put so much into the game and obviously the supporters."

That was Celtic's last game in the competition but he added: "This is a process and every game counts for us in that process."

Meanwhile, off the pitch, Hearts would only consider an “exceptional” bid for them to consider selling Lawrence Shankland in the January transfer window.

That’s the view of the club’s chief executive officer, Andrew McKinlay, speaking after the annual general meeting at Tynecastle. Shankland has scored 40 goals in 69 games for the club since joining last year.

McKinlay also confirmed the club are looking for a right-back and the CEO said that head coach Steven Naismith retains his “full support”.

McKinlay told BBC Sport Scotland: “I understand that people want immediate success but I am confident that Steven can turn the corner. We know we have to get better going forward. We knew we have to be more dynamic. Steven and the guys are working hard to do that.”

PICTURE: Steven Naismith has the “full” support of CEO Andrew McKinlay. Picture by ***Ian Jacobs***