

Naismith: 'I do not expect to lose anybody'

Steven Naismith, Hearts' head coach, does not expect to lose any players before the transfer deadline, but the jungle drums continue to beat with Rangers, in particular, said to be seeking a striker.

Hearts' top goal scorer, Lawrence Shankland (pictured), has been the centre of speculation for some time and national newspaper reports indicate that Ibrox scouts were at Tynecastle as the Jambos edged Aberdeen 2-0 in the cinch Premiership.

The Glasgow-born striker netted his 19th goal of the season with the outside of his right foot after 77 minutes to complete the scoring on the day, a cool finish in a tight situation. It oozed class.

Naismith said: "I do not expect to lose anybody. In terms of ins we are trying to bring Scott Fraser in but we will see how that develops. A change of manager is holding that up.

"Then it will be reactive. We have a great squad of players and (some) guys have not played as much as they would have liked and if they are looking to go and they can be replaced then we might do it.

"Nobody desperately wants to leave but I can understand if

they want more football.”

Overall, he was pleased with the performance of his men in the victory over Aberdeen in the official game to mark the 150th anniversary of the Tynecastle club.

He said it was a good day and a good win. The first half, he conceded, was a battle and both teams had points when they moved the ball and both teams created chances.

Aberdeen were really aggressive, he added, and if they “could make contact with you they would”. He added: “We were probably second best on that front.”

Their wide players caused problems but Naismith added: “We tweaked things slightly (at the break) and we started much better, then penalty. Once you get the first goal that changes the dynamic of the game and then we control the game. Our decision making was good and it could have been more than two.”

There were two major VAR refererrals in the game. The first involved a disallowed goal after 24 minutes in which Aberdeen striker Bojan Miovski netted with a sweet strike but a Hearts player was clipped in the move.

Naismith said: “I don’t think he (the opposition player) means it. It is a 50-50 in the corner and then it is our job to defend the situation.”

However, the Hearts player being clipped, he argued, allowed a free run into the box for Miovski and Naismith added: “I thought it was a foul.”

The second involved a second-half penalty for Hearts. Aberdeen defender Nicholas Devlin was adjudged to have handled an Alan Forrest cross from the left. Naismith said: “In terms of what the handball rule is, I think he is unfortunate.”

The club’s normal penalty taker is Shankland and the 28-year-

old has missed his last three. Naismith said that the Scotland international was the man to make the decision on penalty taking. Shankland stepped aside.

Jorge Grant stepped forward and scored after 57 minutes to break the deadlock and the coach said: "It was a pressure penalty. There was a delay in taking it and he looked the coolest man on the pitch. That goal allowed us to play the way we want."

Grant also assisted on Shankland's goal so it proved a good day for the English-born midfielder and the victory extended Hearts' unbeaten run to eight matches since losing 2-1 to Aberdeen at Pittodrie on December 9.

PICTURE: Lawrence Shankland by ***David Mollison***