

Naismith looking for six in a row against Saints

Hearts head for St Johnstone on Wednesday looking to extend their unbeaten run against a much-improved Perth side.

Former Jambos boss, Craig Levein, has made a significant impact since taking over struggling Saints in November last year and St Johnstone go into the game boosted by their 1-0 win at Ross County on Saturday, courtesy of a goal from Swedish-born Benjamin Kimpioka in the cinch Premiership.

That strike helped lift the McDiarmid Park squad into ninth position in the 12-strong table. Earlier in the season they were propping up the rest, but they now have 23 points from 24 games, having scored 16 goals. They have, however, let in 29.

Hearts are third with 45 points from 24 games and their confidence is on a high having won their last five including a come-from-behind success at Dens Park against Dundee on Saturday.

The Gorgie-based combine also have a vastly superior goal difference, 32 for and only 22 against.

The statistics say that the Men in Maroon have also won the last five meetings between the clubs. So far this term, Hearts have won 2-0 at Perth, Yutaro Oda and Lawrence Shankland netting, and also 1-0 at Tynecastle, Shankland on the mark albeit via a slight deflection from a Liam Boyce shot which followed a cross from the left from lively Alex Cochrane.

Hearts proudly displayed their recent numbers on the X – formerly Twitter – site last weekend. Nine games unbeaten in all competitions, eight wins from nine, four away wins in a row, the first time since season 2010/11, the most top flight away wins, to date, in 13 seasons – the number is eight – and 12 points clear in third.

Undoubtedly, Heartys' head coach Steven Naismith (pictured) will want to extend that run when the whistle sounds at the 10,696-capacity stadium in Perth (kick-off 19.45).

He was buoyed by the character of the men on the park at Dundee and believed they controlled the game, however, Naismith was disappointed at the goals lost and post-game emphasised the importance of correct decision making by his men in the final third.

The head coach told BBC Scotland Sport: "We don't panic and we continue to play and we continue to do the right things to give us the opportunity to win the game." He will obviously look for the same again under the McDiarmid Park floodlights.