

# Kent blow on eve of Celtic visit

**Frankie Kent, a solid fixture at the back for Hearts this term, misses Sunday's cinch Premiership clash with Celtic because of a knee injury sustained in the midweek Derby with Hibs.**

Steven Naismith revealed that 28-year-old Kent, a former Arsenal Academy player, has had a scan and will be sidelined for "a week or two" and the head coach said: "It is disappointing, but it is better than it could have been."

Stephen Kingsley could slot in to replace the former Peterborough United defender and Naismith, argued that he has done well there in the past.

Kye Rowles is back from the Asia Cup and Toby Sibbick could step-in and he said: "We have options, but Frankie has come in and had a really good season."

"It is disappointing to lose him (Kent), but it creates an opportunity for somebody else to show why they are part of the squad."

Yutaro Oda is still out and Barri McKay is back in some training but it is very early and he is still "a wee bit away" according to the coach who reminded Hearts' success-hungry fans that his men face one of the best teams in the cinch Premiership when Celtic visit (kick-off noon).

The Parkhead side have, he said, players with quality and experience and they are in the title race with Old Firm rivals, Rangers. Celtic are also on a high coming off a 7-1 victory over Dundee in midweek.

And the former Scottish international, who once played for Rangers, warned: "You need to be 100 per cent focused on the game (against Celtic) and one mistake could be costly."

The title race adds a different dynamic, he said, as Rangers host Motherwell (15.00) and Celtic will know what they have to do when they arrive in Gorgie.

Eying his fixture, Naismith said: "It will be a tough game and they are a good team, the most successful team recently. We have to use the fact that we are at home and have better fundamentals."

He added: "They are on the back of a good result. The last time we played Celtic at Tyne we did not have the basic levels we needed and that must be different come Sunday.

"What has not been great for us in the last couple of games is in possession, we have not kept the ball well enough. I did not feel we kept the ball well on Wednesday night, we did in the second-half. The first half we were a bit quick to clear it up and quick to panic and that needs to be better when you play the best teams in the league."

Hearts, he said, go in with confidence having only lost once in 14 games, 5-0 at Rangers last Saturday, and they drew 1-1 with Hibs in the Capital Derby on Wednesday.

The Gorgie club are in a "nice" position in the league and that has been achieved, according to Naismith, because of the hard work the players have put in during the season so far.

Hearts, who beat Celtic 2-0 at Parkhead earlier in the campaign, certainly come into the game on the back of two

physically demanding and pressure fixtures, but Naismith argued that if you want to be a successful team then the players have to cope with the challenge, mentally and physically.

Picture: Steven Naismith meets the written press at The Oriam to discuss Sunday's fixture. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***