

# Kent ready for Kilmarnock challenge

**Frankie Kent returns to the Hearts squad ahead the visit of Kilmarnock after hobbling out of the Capital derby with arch rivals Hibs last month.**

Thankfully, there was no long-term damage and time has been a healer.

Steven Naismith, the club's Head coach, also confirmed that Calem Nieuwenhof is back but said that Craig Halkett and Peter Haring have had some surgery.

Liam Boyce is continuing his re-habilitation and is on the pitch doing some running and Finlay Pollock is back training with the group and everybody else is fit.

The coach also said that all his international players have returned and are feeling good despite the travel and they training at Riccarton on Friday.

He added: "Quite a few of them have gone away and enhanced their position in the squads. They are all at different stages. Kye (Rowles) scored his first goal (for Australia), Kenneth (Vargas) is just getting into the team and Shanks (Lawrence Shankland) starting for Scotland, Dexter (Lembikisa) scoring as well, so there are loads of positives for them individually. We are pleased they are back fit and ready to go."

Naismith said the players who stayed had home had a break but

returned for some tough days and a match against Dundee and he added: "Frankie and Calem have been two really consistent performers for us so the bigger picture is that it creates competition for places. The squad is looking quote healthy.

"It is good to have a break and to get the last international out of the way and then you focus on what is, inevitably, the most important part of the season.

"It is now we get into the period and we see what each result can do for us. We need to focus on that and we have a semi-final coming up in this block which is really important.

"Healthy squad, competition and it is an enjoyable time. The weather turns and all the rewards for a hard, successful season are there for you to enjoy if you do it properly."

That could be kick-started by a home victory over Kilmarnock who are fourth in the cinch Premiership with 44 points, 11 points behind the Jambos who are in third spot.

PICTURE: Frankie Kent pictured just before he was injured against Hibs. Picture **David Mollison**