

Murray double sinks Hearts

Simon Murray netted a glory double either side of half time as struggling Ross Country ended a lengthy losing streak against Hearts.

Murray struck near the end of the first half in Dingwall, punishing slack defending, and again early in the second period to boost The Staggies hopes of survival.

Livingston's 3-0 defeat by Hibs at Easter Road has opened up a gap between County and the West Lothian combine to ten points as the season reaches the business end.

Murray's opener came on 42 minutes. Kenneth Vargas crashed a fierce shot against The Staggies crossbar after being fed by Alan Forrest but bustling Murray, a menace throughout, wrestled the ball from Toby Sibbick near the by line and beat Zander Clark low.

And Murray grabbed a second four minutes into the second from 12 yards coming in from the right and sweeping the ball high into the net with Yan Danda involved.

Jordon White should have opened the scoring for Country early on but then Hearts had their chances, Sibbick forced a great save from County goalkeeper George Wickens, Lawrence Shankland fired over, Alan Forrest was denied again by Wickens and Steven Kingsley netted from a free kick from 25 yards out late.

That was taken to VAR and referee Grant Irvine felt Shankland

had been interfering with play and it was ruled off.

Substitute Yutaro Oda gave Hearts hope when he scored with a neat finish from inside the box a minute into injury time to make it a nervy period for the home side but Derek Adams' men held on for three valuable points which takes them to 27 points in the cinch Premiership and only one behind tenth-placed St Johnstone.

Hearts have 55 points from 30 matches and dominated possession with 65 per cent against 35 per cent for the home side. Hearts also had 528 passes against 297.

Fourth-placed Kilmarnock, who were 2-0 down to St Mirren at half-time, fired five unanswered in the second for a 5-2 win and they move on to 44 points from 30 games.

PICTURE: Yutaro Oda shoots for Hearts against Motherwell and he was on the scoresheet at Dingwall. Picture **David Mollison**