

Naismith respect for Ross County boss

Steven Naismith likens Saturdays' opposite number, Don Cowie, a former Hearts player and currently Ross County's interim manager, to himself, a young manager making his way in the game.

The respect of 37-year-old Naismith for 41-year-old Cowie is clear and that is why he believes that Ross County will provide a stiff challenge for the Jambos in Dingwall on Saturday (15.00).

Hearts' head coach watched the telecast of County's last-gasp equaliser over Hibs in midweek – scored by Yan Dhanda, who has signed a pre-contract with the Gorgie club, in the last play of the game, when the club's shared the points in a 2-2 draw.

Naismith said: "It was an entertaining finish to the game and a valuable point for them (Ross County). The team are working for the manager and they went to the 90th minute.

"It will be a very tough game up there. They were 2-0 up against us at Tynecastle this season, but we have progressed and and we want to control the game."

The Jambos go into the cinch Premiership clash after edging Morton 1-0 in Greenock on Monday in the quarter-final of the Scottish Cup sponsored by Scottish Gas.

Naismith felt his men controlled the game and added: "We were

comfortable throughout.”

Just before the briefing news broke that Hearts will receive a 50-50 split of the tickets against Rangers in the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup semi-final at Hampden on Sunday, April 21 (15.00).

Both clubs will receive an initial 21,000 tickets each. Aberdeen have been allocated 19,000 tickets for their clash with Celtic after a request from the Pittodrie club for a 50-50 split was rejected. The game will be televised by BBC Scotland with a 12.30 kick-off on Saturday, April 20.

The equal split with Rangers was welcomed by Naismith who said: “These are two of the biggest football club in the country and it should be a good atmosphere.”

He also acknowledged that it was good to see two Hearts’ goalkeepers, Zander Clark and Craig Gordon, along with striker Lawrence Shankland, in the Scotland squad for up-coming friendly matches and he added: “This is an opportunity for anybody involved in the squad.”

PICTURE: Alan Forrest in a controversial penalty incident with the Ross County goalkeeper at Tynecastle. Picture **David Mollison**