

Nieuwenhof blow to silverware chasing Hearts

Aussie midfielder Calem Nieuwnhof has been ruled out of Monday's televised Scottish Gas Scottish Cup tie at Greenock Morton with a hamstring issue.

The 23-year-old picked up the injury in last Sunday's 2-0 win over Celtic at Tynecastle and manager Steven Naismith believes that the game at Cappielow will come too soon for the talented player.

Nieuwenhof has made an impression since arriving from New South Wales and it is a frustration for the player as he bids to secure his first slot in the Australian squad.

The injury is, however, receiving treatment, but forwards Yutaro Oda and Kenneth Vargas have a chance of making the squad for the trip to the West of Scotland for the tie against Dougie Imrie's side.

They knocked out Motherwell 2-1 in the previous round and Imrie has been named the cinch Championship's Manager of the Month. The 40-year-old has urged his players to make it "horrible" for Hearts in the quarter-final tie.

Imrie added: "Hearts have got top players and if we try to go toe-to-toe with them we'll get cut open."

Naismith (pictured at the media briefing by **Nigel Duncan**) is aware of what lies ahead and, of course, Hearts have seen off the challenges of two lower league teams in this season's cup,

Spartans and Airdrie.

The dynamic of the game changes, according to the Jambos' head coach, and the pressure is on Hearts, and Naismith told a press briefing at The Oriam that he is fully aware that the facilities will be different from Tynecastle and so will the pitch.

Hearts, he said, have to take that in their stride and said that some of his squad have played in lower league grounds north and south of the border.

Here, there is the massive carrot of a trip to Hampden Park for a Scottish Cup semi-final at stage and the former Scottish international added: "I have a big respect for the manager (of Morton) who is doing a really good job.

"The Morton players are fighting for their manager but we will be prepared for the tie and we have to start well. Then, we will have to manage the game."