

# **Baningimi predicts big future for teenager Tait**

**Beni Baningimi predicted a big future for rising Hearts star Macaulay Tait and admitted he blocks out the crowd during games and plays no part in social media.**

The 25-year-old, who says he is feeling great after a long injury lay-off, is reported to be out of contract at the end of this season but he slammed the door on any pre-contract talks.

Baningimi was speaking after the bruising 1-1 draw with Kilmarnock at Tynecastle and the man from Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo admitted it was a hard, physical game. He added: "They are one of the toughest teams to play in the league."

The Rugby Park men, he added, were aggressive and have two good players up-front but the cultured midfielder was quick to praise young Tait who made his first start for Hearts.

The former Wigan Athletic player said: "He (Tait) is a very good player. I thought he did well (against Kilmarnock) and there are going to be many more (starts) for him.

"His ability on the ball is very good. He is very small but he is aggressive and he will battle away. He is a great kid and we see it all the time in training. He is doing well and for me it is exciting to see him grow."

Beningimi said he has taken teenager Tait aside and told him

that he belongs in the Gorgie squad despite his young age. Baningimi added: "This season he (Tait) has taken his chances very, very well and good luck to him.

"He knows exactly what he needs to do. On Saturday, I spoke to him before the game and said: 'You are good enough, you deserve to be here and I just encourage him'.

"He is young but he can help me out so I am very happy for him."

Baningimi admitted that without fans football is nothing but he added: "Personally, for me, the fans are not there. When I play football I am on the pitch and you are professional, you need to do your job.

"You make mistakes but so what. I don't have social media, when I play well or don't play well I don't see all that. I just play football and try to enjoy myself.

"You have to block it (social media) out."

He advised Tait, who signed for the club in June 2021 and made his debut on December 16 last year, to block out social media and he added: "The day you learn to block it out is the day you will go to another level. It is a learning curve."

On his own fitness level, the popular player said he is happy to be back playing regularly and is grateful for everybody at the club who have helped him recover from a serious injury.

Competition for places, including in midfield, will increase after the summer with three new players – James Penrice, Blair Spittal and Yan Dhanda set to join – but Baningime said they were good players.

He added: "They are going to be a great addition and will help push us on to be even better than this season."

Baningimi opened up a little about his future and said: "I

will not be signing any contract with anyone before the season stops, we are doing everything at the end of the season.

“I’ve spoken to my family but there will not be any pre-contract talks. My focus is on Hearts and finishing third and hopefully go on and win the cup if we can.”

PICTURE: Beni Banningime on duty for Hearts in the recent Edinburgh derby.