

How Hearts can build on a third-place finish and push the Old Firm clubs

Sport plays a major role in Scottish society and lies at the heart of the nation's identity. This is very true around Edinburgh, where sport is something that remains integral to daily life. Although rugby and athletics have their share of fans, football is still the number-one choice for many people in the city.

Hearts enjoy a passionate following across Edinburgh as a result, and their army of fans love to catch the latest club news online or watch games in person at Tynecastle. Betting on Hearts games is also possible, and gamblers can [find many options on Oddschecker](#) for sportsbooks with free bet offers for SPL matches involving the club.

The 2023/24 season was a promising one for the side and saw them finish in third place overall in the Scottish Premier League. They will be looking to continue this in the coming 2024/25 season and remain Celtic's and Rangers' closest rivals for the title. How can they rise to the top?



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Sign more attacking firepower

Signing more attacking firepower may sound a strange suggestion to make because Hearts were no slouches last season when it came to scoring. Lawrence Shankland won the league's golden boot, having finished the campaign with 24 goals in the SPL, and 31 across all competitions.

In some ways, however, this is the problem the side must solve to push Celtic and Rangers again next year. [Shankland was selected in Scotland's Euro 2024 squad](#) and will undoubtedly have suitors in this summer's transfer market. If you take him out of the equation, not many other players are regular scorers – certainly not compared to Shankland's numbers! Kenneth Vargas was the next top scorer in 23/24, for example, with 9 goals overall. To remain competitive at the highest level, the club need to get Shankland some help and spread the goals more evenly across the pitch.

Find more creativity in midfield

Anyone who follows sport in Edinburgh knows that goals win games, but sides need to set up the chances to score from first. Hearts did well in this area last season and showed they can carve teams open when on form. To really play at the level of Rangers and Celtic, they need to find extra creativity from midfield.

Shankland also led the assist charts for the Tynecastle side in 23/24, and this shows where the problem lies. Aside from Jorge Grant with four assists last year, no other midfield player chipped in enough when it came to creating chances. This might leave coach Steven Naismith dipping into the transfer market this summer to solve the issue.

Tighten up at back

Looking at the 2023/24 SPL stats, Hearts conceded 42 goals across the campaign. Although this might not actually be a bad figure, it is still a few more than the 30 Celtic conceded or the 32 Rangers let in.

To remain a real threat to these two sides in the coming season, Naismith's men must tighten up at the back and try to concede fewer goals. This may signal a change in tactics from the coach and see him move away from the 3-4-3 he tended to adopt last season. It may also see the side looking into picking up better-quality defenders to help in the summer 2024 transfer window.

2024/25: Can Hearts really stay as Rangers' and Celtic's closest title rivals?

With the new SPL season coming into view fast, now is a great time for fans across Edinburgh to focus on whether Hearts can vie again with Rangers and Celtic for the SPL title in 2024/25. To have a good chance of success, they not only have to think about the aforementioned points but also need to really believe it can happen.