

# **Naismith tells Hearts fans: 'We learned from Spurs game'**

**The scoreline read Hearts 1, Tottenham Hotspur 5. Four of the Spurs goals came in the second-half when Ange Postecoglou gave his bench some valuable pitch time.**

So did Steven Naismith, but Hearts head coach conceded that the London side's bench was far stronger than his and the gulf was too big.

Naismith, however, believes that this was a worthwhile exercise in preparing for the visit of Rangers on Saturday, August 3, the Tynecastle club's opening game in the William Hill Premier League.

And the 15, 646 fans, which included a sizable contingent from Spurs, saw Lawrence Shankland do what Lawrence Shankland does consistently, find the net.

New signing Yan Dahanda provided the feed and the Glasgow-born striker, who only returned to training on Monday after being in the Scotland squad during Euro 2024, swivelled and fired low into the bottom corner. He had been on the pitch less than a minute having come on as a half-time substitute.

Yes, it was a hard night for Hearts against a slick, powerful and talented visiting squad who moved the ball at real pace, finding their men in pockets with neat football. They never stopped running, a trait of Postecoglou teams.

Earlier, Spurs, who dominated possession, took the lead on 38

minutes when busy England international, James Maddison, who was left out of Gareth Southgate's squad for Euro 2024, squared the ball from the by line for Brennan Johnson to drive the ball home from close range.

Minutes earlier, Hearts' evergreen goalkeeper, Craig Gordon, kept the scoreline blank by producing a quality stop from point blank range to deny quicksilver Tottenham skipper, Heung-Min Son's left foot strike after some speedy build-up play involving several men.

It was not all one-way traffic, however, and the patient Jambos carved out several clear cut chances. Kyosuke Tagawa fed Yan Dhanda and his low cross found Cammy Devlin who side-footed the ball home from a central position just inside the penalty box.

Frankie Kent, who came up the pitch for a corner, then nodded the ball into the danger area and Yutaro Oda re-directed it towards goal, but Spurs' goalkeeper Brandon Austin dived to his left to produce a fine save and palm the ball over the bar.

And positive play from impressive new defender Gerald Taylor down the right wing ended with a cross into the box and Tagawa sent his volley just wide.

Shankland's goal put Hearts back in the game but only for ten minutes as the visitors powered forward, again dominating possession, and one of their half-time substitutes, William Lankshear, coolly slid the ball home past Zander Clark who had come on for Gordon at the break. Time 55 minutes.

Mikey Moore added No 3 after 65 minutes after a pass from lively Lucas Bergvall cut open the Hearts' rearguard, and it was not long before the forth arrived, German-born Timo Werner, once of Chelsea, raced down the left wing and crossed for Djed Spence to prod home at the post. Ashley Phillips added a fifth after 84 minutes, following up on a rebound

after a brilliant parry from Clark.

Naismith told the media that his squad will take a lot of information from the game and he also told Hearts TV: "Yes, the scoreline is disappointing when you look at it, but in the goals that we lost it is mabey one small detail that is wrong, but the level you are playing against you get punished at every opportunity.

"That was shown in the goals we conceded but I felt, especially in the first half, we carried a threat and we had as many chances as they did. A lot of what we have been working on in the structure of the team was really good.

"That is the pleasing part. We were patient at times but, if you go toe-to-toe with a team like Spurs, they will pick you off and that is probably what happened later in the game. Our younger players are just stating out in the game. They (Spurs) are bringing on younger players who have two or three years of experience.

"That is what the young players need to understand and take away from what is a great experience, but I was really pleased with a lot of aspects of the game."

PICTURE: Hearts stars of yesteryear including Gary Mackay, John Robertson and Donald Ford, on parade at Tynecastle before the pre-season challenge with Spurs. LNER were the game sponsors. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***