

Euro problems for Hearts after Falkirk defeat

Hearts made the final four in the Premier Sports Cup last season, but this season they will be spectators in the competition after a shock 2-0 defeat at in-form, Championship side Falkirk.

Second-half goals by Ethan Ross and Dylan Tait did the damage in a pulsating second round tie and the scoreline continued Hearts' depressing, and winless, start to the new campaign.

Failure to convert chances, particularly before the break, proved costly for Steven Naismith's side, but praise should be heaped on Falkirk's goalkeeper Nicky Hogarth who saved from a number of Hearts' players including Blair Spittal and Kenneth Vargas.

Yutaro Oda also had an opportunity and this is a result the Tynecastle team did not want ahead of their Europa League play-off with Czech side Viktoria Pizen on Thursday in Czechia.

The head coach (pictured) admitted to BBC Sport Scotland: "The tale of the game is you've got to take your chances. We create four really good chances in the first half but you've got to take them."

The former Scotland international, who has just signed a contract extension after a fine first season in charge, must rally his troops, but many of the Jambos faithful in the 6,653

crowd at the Falkirk Stadium were far from happy.

The facts are that Ross netted on a breakaway after 53 minutes after intercepting a Keelan Adams low ball and Tait made sure with nine minutes of regular time remaining with Calvin Miller playing a key role in the move, stealing possession before squaring.

Substitute Ryan Shanley was sent off five minutes into injury time, but the damage had been done by then and Naismith conceded: "The second goal absolutely kills us. There's no excuse.

"We ultimately need to put 11 players on the park that are going to win us the game. If that's keeping the same team or keeping the majority, even with our tight schedule, then we'll need to do that."

He added: "We maybe can't rotate as much as we would have liked."

Falkirk manager, John McGlynn, a former coach and manager at Tynecastle, was proud of his squad who are second in the Championship table. He added: "I thought they were enormous, different class."

McGlynn admitted that Falkirk rode their luck early on as Hearts hit the bar and Hogarth excelled but added: "We grew into the game and caused Hearts problems."

They certainly did and now Naismith has a problem. Who to pick for Europe as he made changes for the tie and it backfired, despite Hearts enjoying 58 per cent of possession.

Falkirk, however, had ten shots at goal against eight from Hearts and Craig Gordon had to make five saves against three by Hogarth.

The other Saturday shock in the same competition came at Ainslie Park Stadium when a headed goal from a Jamie

Dishington cross seconds into the second half from Blair Henderson saw part-time Spartans, who play in the fourth tier of Scottish football, send Premiership side Ross County packing. It was Spartans first victory against a top flight club.