

Hearts boss demands response at Falkirk

Falkirk have started their William Hill Scottish Championship campaign with back-to-back wins and must fancy their chances of causing a Premier Sports Cup upset in the round of 16 at the expense of a Hearts side still reeling from a 3-1 road defeat at Dens Park against fired-up Dundee.

That disappointing defeat has sent shock waves through fans who were hugely optimistic going into the new campaign after a summer of new signings.

Dundee may also have delivered a wake-up call to all at Gorgie and defeat to in-form Falkirk (kick-off 15.00) would be a massive blow to Hearts' head coach Steven Naismith (pictured) and his back-room staff and to thousands of the Jambos faithful.

The Central Scotland combine go into the game following a confidence-boosting 2-0 road win at Dunfermline last Saturday and they edged Queen's Park 2-1 on Friday, August 2.

That boost followed a 4-0 home victory over Stenhousemir in the group stage of the league cup and The Bairns scored five with one in reply at Buckie Thistle in the same competition.

Yes, they lost 1-0 at Ayr in mid-July after a 2-0 home win over Premiership newcomers, Dundee United, on July 13, but Falkirk are flying under 62-year-old John McGlynn who was part of the Jambos backroom staff under Jim Jefferies and Billy Brown.

Musselburgh-born McGlynn pulled the strings as Hearts' youth team which won the Scottish Cup in 2000 thanks to a 5-3 win over Rangers, and will relish this opportunity against his former employers.

Naismith is under pressure to erase the Dundee defeat and will demand a much-improved performance from his men after their poor performance on Tayside.

There was no disguising his frustration post-match at Dens, pin-pointing the lack of application and quality on the day in his ranks. The former Scotland international also criticised his men for giving the ball away cheaply and he has threatened to make wholesale changes for the short trip along the M9.

Heads could roll and Naismith has gone on record as saying: "As a footballer, if you are not willing to go onto a pitch and say: 'I am going to empty my tank today, I am going to make sure I give all the energy I have' then you are kidding yourself on.

"If you are at a club like Hearts and you want to be successful you need to do it week-in, week-out, not when you choose."

The message is loud and clear and the last thing Naismith and his coaching team want is a defeat to Falkirk, boosted by Ross MacIver's decision to sign a contract extension which will see the striker remain there until 2027 – ahead of their European campaign.

MacIver is in the groove and could be a real danger man having netted after six minutes against Dunfermline and the goal

helped secure the points which took them into second spot behind early pace-setters, Ayr United, in the Championship.