

# Hearts boss wants action replay of Rangers form

Hearts head for Fir Park on Sunday to face Motherwell looking to erase the agony of their last-gasp, injury-time defeat in the Europa League play-off against Czech Republic combine Viktoria Plzen in midweek.

Daniel Oyegoke's own goal was a massive blow to the ambitious club's hopes of making the Europa League and also increased pressure after a disappointing start to the season which has produced no wins, even in challenge games against Leyton Orient, Tottenham Hotspur and Fleetwood.

Steven Naismith, Hearts head coach (pictured by *Nigel Duncan* arriving at training at Riccarton this week), rotated his squad against Plzen and has the players to do so again against Stuart Kettlewell's men who have won four against the Jambos in their last ten meetings.

Hearts have won six and scored 15 goals against ten from the opposition.

Well have lost two of their last three against Hearts in recent games and the Men in Maroon have won both of their last two league games between them, but BBC Sport Scotland indicate that if Hearts fail to win in Lanarkshire then they would be winless across their opening three games in the Scottish Premiership and that would be the first time they have done

that since they were relegated in season 2019-20.

A real worry for the coaching staff is the lack of goals so far this term. None against Rangers in the 0-0 draw at Tynecastle, one at Dundee in a 3-1 defeat at none at Falkirk last Saturday in the Premier Sports Cup in a 2-0 defeat.

It's early in the season, but concern is growing among the fan base who enjoyed last season when Hearts were third by a margin and contested two cup semi-finals. Last Saturday's defeat at Falkirk means that they can't better that record this time around despite a summer of recruitment.

Naismith takes positives from the Plzen defeat and he said that his men put a lot of "energy" into the European tie. He would not be drawn about more rotation in a post-match interview with BBC Sport Scotland.

He said: "We will need to wait and see. There are a few wee niggles but that is just normal with the schedule we have got. We need to expect that and accept it and embrace it."

On the well fixture he added: "It will be a tough game, Motherwell is always a tough game, but the performance (in Plzen) is more of the Rangers performance rather than the Falkirk one and the Dundee one so we need that on Sunday."

Well have seven players already ruled out with Filip Stuparevic a doubt but they booked their place in the quarter-final of the Premier Sports Cup with a 1-0 win over Kilmarnock last Sunday at Fir Park thanks to a Moses Ebiye goal, his fourth for the club.

They have recorded a draw (0-0 against Ross County) and a defeat (2-1 to Rangers at Hampden) in their Premiership campaign so far, the same as Hearts, but observers say that their performances have been impressive so far.

For the record, Hearts are tenth in the 12-strong league table

and Motherwell ninth.