

Pressure is on Hearts to kick-start league campaign

Hearts entertain Dundee United on Sunday (15.00) and are unbeaten against the Tayside outfit in their last five meetings.

The Jambos have won three and drawn two and their last meeting produced a 3-1 win for the Gorgie men.

United are, of course, newly-promoted but have won one and drawn two of their three games so far this term. They are fifth in the table ahead of this weekend's games having scored five and conceded three.

Hearts are tenth with only one point from their three starts following a no-score draw against Rangers at Tynecastle and defeats on the road at Dundee and Motherwell.

They have also lost at Falkirk in the Premier Sports Cup and come into the game after having been edged out of the Europa League by Viktoria Plzen in midweek.

The 1-0 defeat coupled by a 1-0 reverse in the Czech Republic was a blow to Steven Naismith, Hearts' head coach, and the squad and he conceded that this was an important game for the club.

Scoring goals has been a real issue having scored only two and shipped six in their three games so far and there is no word yet on whether star striker Lawrence Shankland will be fit to play after sitting out Thursday's European game with a knee injury.

Naismith said it was painful for the 29-year-old if he kicked a ball or tackled an opponent.

Veteran goalkeeper Craig Gordon told a media briefing ahead of the Plzen clash that the squad needed a lift. The lift did not arrive and Hearts certainly need something to kick-start their campaign.

The fans were not happy at Motherwell and again at Tynecastle on Thursday. The pressure is on for the players to produce.