

Naismith: 'keep following and backing the players'

Steven Naismith has admitted his disappointment at being relieved of his duties at Hearts, but said: "My biggest hope is that from my time at the football club, I have helped make people better, whether that was on the pitch or off it."

The axe fell after a disastrous start to the new season, but the former head coach reminded fans that during his first year he was able to bring a level of success including European football, the most league wins in nearly 20 years, the most away wins in 32 years and some good individual performances and results.

The former Scotland international forward (pictured by **David Mollison**) parted company with the Tynecastle club after eight years and said in a statement: "From my first day, I formed a strong connection with the club and all who work there.

"I knew, understood and appreciated the standards and demands of HMFC and this was something I constantly tried to uphold as a player and manager.

"The board put faith in me and gave me the opportunity to become a leader of the club and I am truly grateful for that.

"I fully believe that the board are the right people to guide the club. I also believe the club is very near to taking the

next step and progressing to the next level, continuing on the trajectory it has been on.

“In my opinion, the squad of players has lots of potential, even though this season, at times, we have struggled to get going. I have confidence that they will fulfil their potential.

“The challenge to play at a big club and deal with the pressure associated is tough at times but, once you understand it, and learn to deal with it, it is a great attribute to have.”

He added: “The fans are a huge part of the football club and their work to secure control of the club is special. Hearts have many great people who follow the club every week, the desire for success is clear to see.

“I really do hope you get some special moments in the near future. Keep following and backing the players.”