

Fox interim manager as Hearts bosses seek new management team

Robbie Neilson was sacked as manager of Hearts in April 2023 after a 2-0 home defeat by St Mirren after almost three years in charge and following five straight defeats.

His replacement, Steven Naismith, parted company with the Tynecastle team less than 24-hours after their 2-1 reverse to The Buddies at the SMiSA Stadium on Saturday.

Naismith, Gordon Forrest and Frankie McAvoy (pictured in the Tynecastle dugout) were recently handed contract extensions to 2026 but Liam Fox takes over as interim manager assisted by Angus Beith and Lee Wallace. Beith is involved with the B Team and Wallace the under-18 side.

A statement on the club's website said Liam, the B Team head coach, will temporarily oversee first team affairs while the board undergoes the process of appointing a new management team.

Andrew McKinlay, the club's chief executive officer, confirmed that the board met on Sunday to agree a way forward and the process of identifying and hiring a new management team has started.

He stressed that updated would be provided in due course and

urged fans to continue to back the team.

Earlier, McKinlay confirmed the departure of head coach Naismith and his assistants Forrest and McAvoy in a statement which said: "Steven, Gordon and Frankie leave Hearts following a 17-month spell in the Tynecastle dugout as the club's management team."

McKinlay added: "I'd like to firstly thank Steven, Gordon and Frankie for all their efforts over the past year and a half. They worked tirelessly in their roles and without them we would not have enjoyed the successes of last season.

"However, things can change quickly, particularly in football, and it has been clear for all to see that things are not working this season. Results and performances have fallen below the standards expected at this football club and, unfortunately, there is little evidence of any potential upturn in fortunes.

"With our UEFA Conference League campaign about to commence, and the spotlight on our league position, we cannot afford to stand still.

"That is why we, as a Board of Directors, have made the difficult decision to part ways with the management team who go with our thanks and best wishes.

"We will update supporters shortly about next steps in both the short and long term but, for now, the club shall be making no further comment."

Hearts, of course, entertain eighth-placed Ross County at Tynecastle on Saturday, September 28 (15.00) then travel to face Dinamo Minsk on Thursday, October 3 in the Mehdi Huseynzade Stadium (kick off 17.45) in Azerbaijan in the UEFA Conference League.

Then they jet direct to Aberdeen where they face the second-

placed Dons at Pittodrie Stadium on Sunday, October 6 (15.00). Aberdeen under new manager Jimmy Thelin are on 15 points, the same as leaders Celtic.

Looking back, Naismith, a former Scotland international who played for Everton (103 appearances) and Norwich City (44) in England as well as Kilmarnock (102 appearances), Rangers (98), ended his playing career at Hearts and took over the club's B team.

The 38-year-old, Irvine-born, ex-player was promoted when Neilson was sacked and was handed the head coach job on an interim basis in June last year. The club finished a clear third in the 12-strong table and ended the season on a high with a 3-3 draw against Rangers at Tynecastle.

Pressure has, however, been building after a disastrous run of eight straight defeats and fans were deeply unhappy with the performance of their favourites who started the current league campaign with an encouraging 0-0 draw at home to Rangers.

Naismith remained bullish after the defeat in Paisley which leaves the club propping up the 12-strong table with only one point after six games.

He said he was "up for the fight" and felt he could rediscover the form which took them into third last term. The board thought otherwise.