

# Naismith seeks league lift for Hearts at in-form Celtic

Hearts travel to William Hill Premiership pace-setters, Celtic, on Saturday (kick-off 15.00) with the statistics stacked against them, but Congolese midfielder, Beni Banningime could be in contention for a place after recovering from a calf problem.

Aussie midfielder Calum Nieuwenhof (pictured), out of the squad since March, remains on the sidelines after suffering a set-back after his hamstring operation during the summer break.

Celtic also have problems and manager Brendan Rodgers awaits word on 23-year-old German-born centre back Malik Nawrocki and Alister Johnston. The 25-year-old Canadian from Vancouver was injured during Canada's narrow win over USA in the international window.

Recent results do not make good reading for Jambos fans. Celtic have won their four league games, including a 3-0 victory over Rangers, just before the international break and have collected a maximum 12 points.

Hearts are on a dismal run with one point from their four matches and that came on opening day in a 0-0 scoreline with Rangers.

Drilling down into the numbers makes even worse reading as the Jambos have been beaten pre-season by Leyton Orient, Tottenham and Fleetwood Town before drawing with Rangers in the league, but they have then lost to Dundee, Falkirk in the League Cup, then Viktoria Plzen twice in Europe, Motherwell and also by Dundee United by 1-0 on their last outing.

Celtic have won all games since their 1-1 draw at Ayr United on July 5 and their successful run has included wins over Premiership sides Chelsea (4-1) and Manchester City (4-3).

Of course, Hearts won 2-0 at Celtic Park last December, their first success on the road at Parkhead since 2007, and they won 2-0 at Tynecastle on March, but the Men in Maroon lost 3-0 at the same venue in May.

Overall, the pair have clashed on 85 occasions and Celtic have won 60 scoring 192 goals while Hearts have won 15 scoring 74 goals. Ten matches have been drawn. Celtic have won 31 of 43 games at Celtic Park and Hearts six.

Steven Naismith is desperately looking for a result to kick-start the club's season and the head coach has enjoyed nearly two weeks to work with his non-international players in the build-up to the game.