

Staggies test for Hearts' interim manager Fox

Liam Fox comes face-to-face with the Scottish media for the first time at a news briefing on Friday, 24 hours ahead of a crucial fixture for Heart of Midlothian FC in the William Hill Premiership.

The 40-year-old B Team head coach took over as interim manager from ex-head coach, Steven Naismith, on Sunday and has worked with the squad at Riccarton this week.

Eighth-placed Ross County are the visitors to Tynecastle on Saturday (kick-off 15.00) and The Staggies have six points from six games, five ahead of Hearts, and three points are a priority for the Gorgie men to kick-start a revival.

Hearts currently prop up the 12-strong table with one solitary point from six games in the William Hill Premiership, earned on opening day against Rangers at Tynecastle. They also have a depressing goal difference of minus eight. County's goal difference is minus five and their record reads one win, three draws and two defeats.

County have one win in their last five games against the Jambos who have recorded victories on three occasions with one draw recorded, and Dingwall boss Don Cowie is fully aware that keeping Hearts in check early on could heap pressure on the home side. He played 72 games for the Capital club, scoring three goals, between 2016 and 2018, so he understands the

pressure on the players from success-hungry fans.

The Victoria Park side travel south minus left-back George Harmon, a regular this term, who is out for what is said to be a "significant" spell with an ankle injury suffered in their 2-0 win over Dundee two weeks ago. The injury could require surgery.

Former midfielder Cowie is also waiting on medical reports on defender Josh Reid but fellow defenders, Ricki Lamie and Will Nightingale, are back on the pitch and in contention for places in the squad.

The Staggies manager believes Hearts are still a good football team, despite their dismal start to the season, and a victory is desperately required for the Tynecastle team to snap a depressing losing run.

It could also act as a tonic as the Men in Maroon move into Europe on Thursday next week with a trip to Azerbaijan to face Belarusian combine Dinamo Minsk followed by a league clash at Aberdeen on Sunday, October 6 (kick-off 15.00) before the international break.

Edinburgh-born Fox, a midfielder who began his playing career with Hearts and then went on to make 185 appearances for Livingston and 55 for Raith Rovers, and his assistants Angus Beith and Liam Wallace, who assist with the B team and under-18 side respectively, must lift confidence in the Gorgie dressing-room.

Andrew McKinlay, Hearts' chief executive officer, has called on the Tynecastle faithful to continue "their unrivalled" backing of the team as bosses strive to take positive steps forward.

Fox is fully aware that he club have launched an external search for a new management team for the longer term and McKinlay confirmed this week that he has a list of possibles.

He confirmed that he is working with an analytics company and key criteria in the search includes, are the possibilities available, do they fit into Hearts' culture and what style of football they will play.

The chief executive officer feels Fox is the right person to bring forward given the work he has done with the B team, and McKinlay confirmed that the interim manager has a European Pro Licence and has experience managing a team in the Premiership.

In a message to fans, McKinlay said: "Please get behind the team, please give them your full backing. I believe that they are a good football team and they showed that last year.

"If we can get together as one we can turn the corner and we will, hopefully, just look back on this period as a blip."