

Critchley warns fans not to be 'fooled' by Omonoia defeat

Neil Critchley stressed the importance of how Hearts play, not the opposition, when Cypriot combine, Omonoia, visit Tynecastle in the UEFA Europa Conference League on Thursday night (kick-off 5.45pm).

The Gorgie club's new head coach is mindful that Manchester United only beat them 1-0 at Old Trafford on Matchday Four of Six in the Europa League group stage on October 13, 2022, after United won 3-2 in Cyprus on October 6.

Critchley has watched a tape of Omonoia's 1-0 home defeat by lowly Paralimni last weekend and he warned Hearts success-hungry fans not to be fooled by that result.

The Men in Maroon have some bumps and bruises but nothing serious and Critchley argued that the Cypriots are a very good team and, nine times out of ten, they would have won the game against Paralimni on Saturday.

However, they lost it 1-0 leaving them sixth in the Cypriot First Division with 12 points from seven starts. Paralimni are in 11th position with six points from seven games.

The 46-year-old newcomer, who guided the Jambos to a 4-0 home victory over St Mirren in the William Hill Premiership on Saturday, told a pre-match briefing at Tynecastle that he does

not get too carried away with a win and does not to get too down if he loses.

The Crewe-born coach admitted: "It was a nice feeling for the players, a home victory, which is really important, scoring a few goals, keeping a clean sheet, and it was a brilliant day for the supporters, but we were in on Sunday, got absolutely soaked, and we have had a couple of days preparing for a really exciting game (on Thursday)."

Hearts, he added, have to try to keep improving even from Saturday, but Critchley stressed: "This is a real test. They (the Cypriot team) lost on Saturday, they are a strong team, and we know the task we have in front of us, but we are off the back of a good win, a good win away in Europe as well, and we are at home.

"I know, from watching them (Omonoia), that they have got some good players. I know they have some really exciting, attacking players, and, if you look at the background of some of the players, and what they have achieved, then we give full respect to who they are.

"We concentrate on us, how do we improve, how do we get better, how do we respect the opponent, and, on Thursday, it will be down to us and how we play."

TOP TABLE: Neil Critchley (right) speaks to the media with Phil Turnbull, head of media and marketing at Tynecastle, in the chair. Picture **Nigel Duncan**