

# Hearts boss Critchley homes in on Kilmarnock

Neil Critchley is trying to plot the downfall of Kilmarnock in the William Hill Premiership as well as trying to find a place to live in the Edinburgh area.

The 46-year-old has also reached celebrity status as more and more locals recognise Hearts' new gaffer who has only been in post for two weeks. He feels as if he is in a "goldfish bowl".

All this and domestic and European just keep on coming for the Englishman who holds an unbeaten record so far after three games in charge.

Kilmarnock visit Tynecastle on Wednesday (kick-off 19.45) and Critchley is well aware of the pedigree of Rugby Park boss, Derek McInnes who, he says, knows how to prepare teams for games.

Critchley has done his homework on the Ayrshire combine who recently earned three points with a 1-0 home victory over Rangers. Since then, Killie have lost 2-1 at Ross County, and McInnes will be determined to bounce back at the expense of the Jambos.

He travels minus Stuart Findlay after tearing his groin in the Dingwall defeat and Liam Polwarth also misses out while Liam Donnelly serves a one-match suspension on Wednesday night.

Hearts have their own incentive and Critchley is keen to see them pick up valuable points against a team three points and

two places above the Jambos with a game in hand.

The Men in Maroon could have midfielder Beni Baningime back as he took part in the full training session at Riccarton on Tuesday after being sidelined by illness for the games against Cypriot side Omonoia and Hibs.

Yutaro Oda and Calem Nieuwenhof are still recovering from injury and Gerald Taylor is a long-term absentee, but Critchley believes, after looking at scores so far this season, that teams are evenly matched.

And he added: "Kilmarnock have picked up quite a few points recently and had a fantastic win against Rangers, you know the type of game we are going to face, but we have to concentrate on us and who we want to be and I do not want the feeling to be like after the Lord Mayor's Show. We have to go again as we have two really important games coming up."

Critchley has reviewed the tape of the Easter Road clash when Hearts salvaged a draw thanks to a late goal from teenager James Wilson and the coach declared: "I was pleased with how we approached the game, how we controlled the game, how we dominated possession, but we did not do enough with that possession.

"I was frustrated with the goal we conceded but proud of the way we reacted after the goal (by Wilson) and we finished strongly, we were in the ascendancy and James (Wilson) got the ball out of the back of the net and we wanted to score again to win the game. That's the attitude I want to instil in the players."

Games just keep on coming and the ex-Blackpool boss admitted that he would like more time on the training pitch to work with his players and on his game plans but the fixture congestion means his men are "learning on the job".

The squad has done extremely well and been receptive to the

information they have been given, said the head coach, and he has been encouraged by the group's willingness to work and their energy and he added: "Sometimes there is no better learning place than being outside your comfort zone and being on the pitch."

ON THE BAWL: Neil Critchley pictured by ***Ian Jacobs*** at Easter Road