

Critchley: 'we didn't score when we had chances'

Hearts converted two first-half chances in their previous UEFA Europa Conference League clash with Cypriot side Omonoia but they failed to find the net against slick German side FC Heidenheim on Thursday and paid the price.

Two clinical second-half strikes before 17,692 fans, 730 from Germany, saw the visitors secure a 2-0 victory at Tynecastle and leave Hearts rueing what might have been.

The Jambos still have two wins to their name in the competition, but the home defeat comes only three days before their date with Rangers at Ibrox in the William Hill Premiership and that game is against a side boosted by a 1-1 draw with Olympiacos in Piraeus, Greece, in the same competition.

Neil Critchley, Hearts' head coach, said that the major thing Hearts must take away from the game against the Bundesliga side was that you must score when you are on top.

His opposite number, Frank Schmidt, conceded that the home side made it difficult for them in the first 45 minutes and he acknowledged: "They put us under pressure but, in the second half, we managed to be more clinical."

They certainly did. The opening goal came from nowhere after

57 minutes, half-time substitute Mathias Honsak picking up the ball on the left and he sent it into the danger area where Sirlord Conteh glanced it home at the near post.

The strike was lightning fast and beautifully executed. The second was fashioned by another substitute, Omar Haktab Traore. He crossed into the penalty box and another substitute, Jan Schoppner, rose above the home defence to power the ball home. Time: 88 minutes.

Earlier, Lawrence Shankland had an early chance after being fed on the edge of the box by James Penrice, but the skipper sent the ball wide of goalkeeper Kevin Muller's left hand upright.

Shankland had another effort blocked close in by Muller before Hearts' defender Frankie Kent had a sight of goal at the back post from a corner but the Englishman sent his headed effort wide. Penrice was next to fail, firing wide and Blair Spittal then cut across the front of the penalty box to send the ball towards goal, but Siersleben blocked.

Yan Dhanda was also denied and a pacey, four-man move saw Alan Forrest make a run towards the penalty box on the right only to fire inched wide of the top corner.

However, it was not all one-way traffic, despite Hearts controlling much of the possession and pressing their rivals back into their own area. Two minutes from the break, Malachi Boateng was called upon to clear the ball acrobatically from near the goal line after a punched clearance from Hearts' goalkeeper, Craig Gordon, was sent back into the danger area.

Critchley said: "We had to take those chances, we were not clinical enough in front of goal and their goals were quality, the first goal in particular, and I am disappointed with the result and not the performance.

"I thought we played as well as we did against Omonoia but we

didn't score when we had chances. If we had, then the game was for us to win."

He was pleased with the mentality of his players who worked for the entire 90-plus minutes and he added: "I don't think we got what we deserved."

PICTURE: German fans salute their team inside Tynecastle.
Picture ***Nigel Duncan***