

Pace-setting Celtic favourites for Gorgie clash

Brendan Rodgers brings his Celtic side to Tynecastle under the floodlights and the glare of the Sky Sports cameras on Saturday (kick-off 19.45) riding high in the William Hill Premiership, going well in the Champions League, and with an enviable record against the Men in Maroon.

They have won three of the last five games, losing two, and that includes the 2-0 win over the Jambos at Celtic Park on September 14 when an Arne Engles penalty after 52 minutes and a strike from Luke McCowan in the final minute of regulation time did the damage.

Both players scored their first goals for Celtic on the day and the home side had 18 shots to seven from Hearts.

Six were on target with three in reply from the visitors and The Bhoys enjoyed 71 per cent of possession against 29 per cent in the opposite direction.

It's the first time the pair have met at Tynecastle this season and Rodgers (pictured by *Ian Jacobs*) looks like having a full quota of players available for the trip along the M8.

The squad could include influential, Cameron Carter-Vickers

who missed Celtic's win over Kilmarnock, but Rodgers may opt to reshuffle as The Bhoys play Club Brugge in the Champions League in midweek and that could mean in-form Nicolas-Gerrit Kuhn is rested. He has scored in his last three games.

Adam Idah, who started at Rugby Park, could lead the line with Alex Valle and Paulo Bernardo, who were used substitutes at Kilmarnock, coming in against Hearts.

The Northern Irishman admitted that it is always tough going to Gorgie but added: "It's a great game to get started (after the international break) and we'll be prepared."

Celtic are unbeaten in the league and have 31 points from 11 starts – ten wins and a draw – while Hearts have earned nine points from their first 13 fixtures, two wins, three draws and eight defeats, and are currently second bottom of the table.

It is not where new head coach, Neil Critchley, wants to be and he is desperate to put points on the board after their 1-0 defeat at Ibrox in their last outing before the international break.

That desperation is heightened as the next visitors to Tynecastle are high-flying Aberdeen (Sunday, December 1, 15.00) who are second in the table on goal difference from Celtic and the manager has stated that he does not want his men to be classed as "a nearly team".

His message at the break in their last domestic outing, which was at Ibrox, was to show more believe and more aggression, particularly without the ball, and those qualities will certainly be required against Celtic.

Calem Nieuwenhof, Gerald Taylor and Yutaro Oda are sidelined through injury but Kye Rowles, who was in Australia's squad but did not play in their World Cup qualifiers, and could be in contention.