

Rangers next stop for Critchley's Bravehearts

Hearts head coach, Neil Critchley, conceded there is not much time to prepare for the visit to Ibrox on Sunday (kick-off 17.00), but he declared: "We go again."

Govan has not proved a happy hunting ground for the Jambos in recent times, and the Glasgow combine have won three of the last five games between the sides, with two draws.

The last one came on the opening day of the current William Hill Premiership at Tynecastle when the Jambos, then under Steven Naismith, pushed Philippe Clement's men hard. Previously, the sides shared a 3-3 draw at Tynecastle, Rangers won 2-0 and 5-0 at Ibrox and the Jambos lost 1-0 at home to The Light Blues.

Critchley said is looking for an action replay of the performance shown in the first half of Thursday's 2-0 home defeat by German side, FC Heidenheim, in the UEFA Europa Conference League when they visit Glasgow to face a side under scrutiny.

The Ibrox squad has been under heavy criticism in recent weeks, but they produced a creditable display at Olympiacos in Greece, coming from behind to claim a 1-1 draw thanks to a fine finish from Cyriel Dessers.

Manager Clement praised the spirit of his side post-game in Greece and the Belgian told Rangers TV: "The performance

deserved more than the point. It was a good performance, the team stuck to the plan for the 90 minutes. The players worked really hard without the ball, we played a really good defensive game.”

Critchley felt his men also produced a good performance in midweek in the same competition, and he was understandably disappointed with the result and not the performance.

The former Blackpool boss complemented Rangers on their result in Europe, but, addressing the form of his squad on Thursday, the coach added: “We went toe-to-toe in a real competitive game, good atmosphere.

“Unfortunately, we have come out on the wrong side, but, if we keep producing that level of performance, then we will win games of football.

“The task for us is to continue showing the same attitude. The ability we showed on the ball, we produced some really good moves, the only thing missing was the final bit (scoring goals).”

Sometimes, he said, a defeat is harder to take when you know you have played well, and Hearts did, particularly in the first half.

There were moments, Critchley said, his men can improve on, as there are in every game, and he added: “We move on. I do not want the players to be downhearted after that, for long periods of the game (against the Germans) we were the better team.”

And now to Glasgow, and the head coach said: “We know going to Ibrox will be a difficult game, but what a great challenge to look forward to again. Rangers, I watched a lot of their game (against Olympiacos) and they have good players.

“Go to Olympiacos and draw, that is a good result, and they

have done well in Europe so far. You know you are going to have to do certain things to win a game of football, but we go there looking to produce a similar type of performance.

“We don’t have long between the games. They (Rangers) have had to travel, so lets recover and prepare in the short space of time we have.”

Changes could be made in the starting line-up as Critchley conceded: “We will think about it and we will see. There were lots of good performances from the players, who played well (against the Germans), and there will be some tough decisions to make.”

PICTURE: Neil Critchley faces the media at Tynecastle from ***Nigel Duncan***