

Critchley: 'we showed hunger and desire'

Neil Critchley felt his men showed hunger, desire and passion to come from behind, despite losing two key members of the squad through injury, to secure a 1-1 draw with much-changed Aberdeen in a bruising battle at a packed Tynecastle.

Stephen Kingsley (pictured by *Nigel Duncan*) is said to have hamstringing problems and was carried off while his defensive colleague, Frankie Kent, hobbled from the pitch. He had quad muscle issues.

Craig Halkett slotted into a reshuffled back four despite suffering from back problems pre-match and Critchley believes that the least the Jambos deserved was a point.

It still leaves the Men in Maroon propping up the rest in the 12-strong William Hill Premiership with ten points from 15 fixtures, two adrift of Capital rivals Hibs and three behind fellow-strugglers, Kilmarnock and St Johnstone.

Ross County are in eighth position with 15 points and they are one behind Dundee who visit Tynecastle next Saturday.

Critchley, however, remained up-beat when talking to the media post-game and said: "I've only come in the last seven weeks and I've been really encouraged by our performances."

The English-born head coach said his squad started the game well and were the better team, creating “good moments”, but the injuries to Kingsley and Kent, within minutes of each other in the first half, disrupted the squad.

Hearts ended up with a makeshift back four and, to compound the agony, Aberdeen, who had been second best, scored against the run of play and with their first shot, Leighton Clarkson ghosting between defenders, to glance the ball behind Craig Gordon from six yards after a cross from the right. Time: 37 minutes.

Hearts levelled through a Nicky Devlin own goal after 62 minutes, the ball being scrambled home. It was announced as a goal for summer recruit, Musa Drammeh, but the goal counted, whoever got the final touch.

The well-earned point followed a tough midweek encounter in Belgium in the UEFA Europa Conference League for the Jambos, but the draw means Aberdeen early-season title challenge has faltered, the Dons taking only two points from a possible nine after being edged at St Mirren and drawing 3-3 at Easter Road against Hibs in midweek.

Manager Jimmy Thelin made six changes from Easter Road, trying to keep the team fresh ahead of their home clash with pace-setting Celtic on Wednesday, and the Swedish-born coach was able to see how some of his fringe players performed at a tough venue.

The 46-year-old said: “We need to find the rhythm again. We have the quality.”