

Critchley: 'United is another game where we want to keep moving forward'

Hearts travel to in-form Dundee United on Sunday (15.00), a team riding high in the William Hill Premiership, but Jambos head coach Neil Critchley believes his men can draw on the positives from their last two games.

Of course, the English-born coach would have preferred to be travelling to Tannadice having pocketed six points instead of four from the 2-2 draw at Ross County and the 1-0 win over Motherwell at Tynecastle.

United have 34 points from 20 games and edged Aberdeen out of third spot with a late winner at Dens Park over Tayside rivals Dundee in midweek.

Jim Goodwin's men have won their last three and drawn another and they are in buoyant mood after their Derby win following a goal two minutes from time from on-loan striker Sam Dalby which took their goals for tally to 30 for the season. The Tannadice team have conceded 21, the third lowest total in the division, behind pace-setting Celtic and second-placed Rangers.

Hearts have scored 24 goals and let in 31 in their 21 matches and have won two and drawn one of their last five.

One of United's nine wins so far in this campaign came at Tynecastle on September 1, a 1-0 success thanks to a goal from defender Ross Graham after 76 minutes.

Critchley is fully aware of the threat carried by United despite the fact that he only took over from former head coach, Steven Naismith, on October 15, and he said: "Dundee United will be a tough game. They are a hard team to play and are having an excellent season, but we can draw on the positives on our least two performances. Dundee United is another game in which we want to keep moving in the right direction."

The former Blackpool and Queens Park Rangers manager, who was also an assistant to Steven Gerrard at Aston Villa for a short spell, felt Hearts were excellent for 75 to 80 minutes against Motherwell.

Critchley told Hearts TV: "We dominated the game and played fantastic football, the only thing which was missing was more than the goal we got.

"We created enough chances to put the game to bed and we relied on two fantastic saves from Craigie (Craig Gordon) to win us the game, but we should not have been in that position. That could have been a Ross County situation, and it should not have been."

The victory was, however, an important win for the Tynecastle team after the loss of two injury time goals in Dingwall, and Critchley said: "We should have six points, not four.

"I told the players at the end (of the game against Motherwell) that they are going to give me a heart attack. I enjoyed watching the play, I thought we were fantastic, we dominated, pushed them back in their own half, and I do not think they had a shot in the first half.

"In the second half, we could have finished the game off and

we didn't. It is on all of us, we have a collective responsibility, not just on the strikers, and the game should be finished. We have to defend the penalty area.

"It is human nature, if you are 1-0 up, they (the opposition) gain confidence from the fact that the game is not over.

"Psychologically, it is a good three points for us (against Motherwell), and we had a clean sheet, but it should have been a clean sheet against Ross County so we have work to do. We need to improve. I know where we have to improve."