

Neilson back and Kabangu in for Hearts

Hearts have reacted to the disappointing draw at Ross County by recalling a young player from loan and signing a Belgian striker.

Defender Lewis Neilson joined Perth-based St Johnstone when Craig Levein was manager and has subsequently made 18 appearances in what was originally a season-long loan. He did, however, fail to establish himself as a regular starter.

Injuries to key defenders Frankie Kent and Stephen Kingsley, who are out long-term, and the club's recent form which has seen them slip to second bottom of the William Hill Premiership, have prompted the recall.

The Scotland under-21 international (pictured by *Nigel Duncan*) can fill in at a number of positions across the defence and in midfield.

Of course, both clubs are locked in a relegation battle in the William Hill Premiership and Hearts' head coach, Neil Critchley, said: "Lewis has gained valuable experience in the Premiership at St Johnstone.

"His return allows us to strengthen an area of our squad which has suffered from injuries recently."

Meanwhile, Elton Kabangu has joined the Jambos on a loan from Royal Union St-Gilloise on an initial deal until the end of the season and the player is determined to make his mark.

The move is subject to the 26-year-old being granted a work permit and Scottish Football Association approval.

Critchley told Hearts website: "It is a boost to be able to bring a player of Elton's pedigree in so soon after the transfer window opening. It's an area of the pitch that we thought we needed to strengthen."

The Englishman believes Kabangu will bring a different dimension to the front line and Critchley added: "From speaking to him I know how hungry he is to come and be a success at Tynecastle."

A note to fans. Tickets for the Jambos trip to Dundee United on Sunday, January 5 (15.00) are being sold directly by the Tannadice club.