

Critchley: 'they were more clinical than us'

Neil Critchley, Hearts' head coach, neatly summed up the defeat to Rangers at Tynecastle: "I am scratching my head a little bit. It is not often that you play Rangers and you have more of the ball, better chances, more shots, yet we've lost."

Missed chances, particularly in the first half, were the undoing of the home side but you must add the form of Rangers' goalkeeper, Jack Butland, into the equation. Yes, he was fortunate with at least one of the saves, but he made himself big and was alive to most of what Hearts threw at him.

Critchley added: "We weren't clinical in moments and a little bit of misfortune for one or two of the goals, that is what has decided the game, but I thought we were excellent, took the game to them and went toe-to-toe with them and I do not think 3-1 is a fair reflection of the game."

There is a risk in the way Hearts set up and wanted to play, but they took that risk and it could have paid off had the Men in Maroon taken their chances even against a side with quality players.

New recruit Elton Kabangu had an off day, and he was, according to Critchley, a disappointed man post-game. So were

the home fans.

However, on another day, his shots may have gone in. Substitute Mussa Drammeh also missed a snip late on, sending the ball wide of the post from the edge of the six-yard box when he was almost dead centre of the goal.

However, Hearts defended well for most of the televised encounter and central defender Jamie McCart, another of the recent recruits, was desperately unlucky to be credited with two own goals, the first after 20 minutes and the second after 73.

He had no chance with the cross from the by line by Ianis Hagi for the first and he tussled with second-half substitute Cyriel Dessers in the penalty box for the second.

Vaclav Cerny netted the other after 61 minutes, guiding the ball into the net from close range after a slick three-man move.

There were positives. New Austrian defender, Michael Steinwender, showed glimpses of his potential before scoring his first goal of the club on his home debut, rising above the Rangers' rearguard to steer home a header. Butland had no chance. A terrific header, was how Critchley described it. Time 49 minutes.

Hearts were back in the contest and the goal woke up the Gorgie fans in the crowd of 18,356 before they were silenced again after Cerny's goal.

Critchley said: "We played some really good football, created some really good chances, had lots of opportunities, James (Wilson), Elton (Kabangu) and Shanks (Lawrence Shankland) we just did not take them. Tactically, what we tried to do worked and you rely on those moments going your way and, unfortunately, they didn't today (Sunday).

“The first goal just hits him (McCart) as he is recovering to the goal, for the third goal he doesn’t quite get enough on it to take it away from Dessers, even at 3-1 we had some big changes to go 3-2 and there was more than enough time left, so I am disappointed with the result but not our performance. We probably deserved more from the game.”

So, Hearts unbeaten eight-game run has been snapped, but Philippe Clement, Rangers’ manager, said: “Everybody was devastated after last weekend (when they were knockout out of the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup, by second-tier side, Queen’s Park). There was only one way and that is getting a better result.”

He said the home side played attacking football but Butland helped keep them at bay. Clement said: “We know his qualities. He was, for a reason, a player of the year last season. Today, he had a really strong performance.”

He added: “Winning at Hearts was important.”

PICTURE: Lawrence Shankland saw a stinging shot skim the bar against Rangers. Picture **Thomas Brown**