

Critchley wants to go all the way in the Cup

Neil Critchley is acutely aware of what winning the Scottish Cup means to Heart of Midlothian FC. He's watched videos, spoken to staff, some of whom were around to savour the most recent success, a 5-1 win over Hibs at Hampden in 2012.

And he has heard stories of 200,000 people lining the streets to cheer the players on the open top bus in central Edinburgh.

The new head coach stressed to the media that he wants to go all the way in this year's competition, and it looks as if he will have a strong squad to travel to Paisley on Monday for the televised fifth round of the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup (19.45).

Of course, Hearts are up for the fight, and go into the game with confidence on the back of a 6-0 win at Dundee on Tayside. The head coach has also been awarded the Glen's Manager of the Month, his first, incidentally, in his career, another boost for the club.

But Critchley warned against complacency. He also said that St Mirren have had some fine results in recent games. For example, they won 3-0 at Aberdeen, and beat Rangers 2-1 on December 26, but dipped to slip to a 1-0 defeat at home to St Johnstone, the bottom-markers in the William Hill Premiership, last Saturday.

The 46-year-old Jambos boss gave no indication on a possible starting line-up for the cup clash, but indicated that Austrian defender, Michael Steinwender, and Norwegian midfielder, Sander Kartum, were continuing to blend into the squad.

And Calem Nieuwenhof continues to work on his game after being sidelined for 11 months. He was on the bench at Dens Park last weekend.

For the record, Hearts have won the Scottish Cup on eight occasions, and have since been beaten finalists in 2019, 2020 and 2022, and Critchley said: "St Mirren won at Aberdeen and beat Rangers and Stephen Robinson is an vastly experienced manager who has been very successful.

"It is a TV game and we had near misses in the last few seasons, losing close games on penalties. Hearts are a club that that wants to win trophies and wants to be successful and to create memories.

"I've heard about 200,000 people lining the streets (to celebrate the cup win), I've spoken to staff who have memories. We want to go all the way if we can."

PRESS BRIEFING: Neil Critchley meets the media at The Orian ahead of the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup fixture. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***