

Now it is Rangers for fired-up Jambos

Neil Critchley put the nerve-tingling qualification, after a 4-2 shootout success, for the quarter-final of the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup behind him, and is now concentrated on his next William Hill Premiership match, a clash with Rangers at Tynecastle on Sunday (noon).

The English-born boss (pictured by *Thomas Brown*) admitted that the cup tie at St Mirren on Monday in front of the BBC TV cameras was “a bit of a war of attrition” and added: “First ball, second ball, long play, lots of set pieces to defend, and long throw ins.”

Critchley did not think Hearts played brilliantly in the first half and added: “We were not competitive enough without the ball, but you have to compete with the ball as well and we did not do either, really.”

The changes made helped give Hearts a foothold in the game, he argued, more momentum, and Critchley added: “We grew into the game.”

He was particularly pleased for Aussie midfielder, Calem Nieuwenhof, who scored the vital equaliser six minutes from the end of normal time, and the head coach said: “He’s been

really patient, he's worked hard, and he's has been out for a long time.

"Terrific kid. I thought he played really well when he came on, showed lots of composure on the ball and the reason we put him on because he has the ability to arrive in the penalty area and score.

"He got a little bit of luck, but he is in there and it has fallen for him and he has kept it down. He has finished this off brilliantly."

Critchley felt Hearts threatened without creating clear opportunities, but praised the substitutes who game on. They all contributed, he said, and the former Blackpool boss was delighted for Michael Steinwender who come on and played well, and also for Sander Kartum who also played a part in the win.

Critchley said: "It is about getting in the hat. We were off it and we needed more from everybody, we did not rise to the challenge, and that was the message before the game. Prepare to win but be prepared to do what you need to win.

"Everybody needs to be up for the challenge, and we weren't first half, that is not like us.

"We improved in the second half and became more competitive, made it more of a cup tie and, in the end, in penalties, anything can happen. Thankfully for us, Craigie has pulled off a couple of saves and we took some really good penalties."

Critchley said that Hearts players do practice penalties and added: "Craig (Gordon) anticipates really well and is so quick along the line. I fully expected him to make a few saves. That is a big compliment to him and I thought we took some good penalties.

"You could say it (penalties) is a bit of a lottery, but there is also a lot of skill involved and, thankfully for us, we

have done the job.”

Now it is Dundee on March 8 (15.00), a team Hearts turned over 6-0 at Dens Park recently, and Critchley said: “It is nice to get a home tie and that is in a few weeks. We have a big game coming up on Sunday (against Rangers) and we can concentrate on the league and look forward to a cup game at home in about a month.”