

Critchley looking for instant bounce back by Hearts

The last time Dundee squared-up against Hearts the Dens Park men were hammered 6-0 thanks to a double from Elton Kabangu and singles from Lawrence Shankland, Blair Spittal, Musa Drammeh and Kenneth Vargas.

That notable result was on February 1 on Tayside and, since then, the Jambos have beaten St Mirren 4-2 on penalties in Paisley after being level at 1-1 after extra time in the fifth round of the Scottish Gas, Scottish Cup.

In the William Hill Premiership, they have lost 3-1 at home to Rangers William Hill Premiership but edged St Johnstone 2-1 at Perth, beat St Mirren 3-1 at Tynecastle and lost 2-1 at Hibs.

Tony Docherty's men followed the thumping by the Men in Maroon with another 6-0 demolition at Celtic, but they beat second-tier opposition, Airdrie, 4-0 in the fifth round of the Scottish Cup.

Then they lost 2-1 at home to Aberdeen, suffered another reverse in a 3-1 defeat at Dingwall to Ross County, which was followed by a 2-1 jolt at Fir Park by Motherwell, but they drew 1-1 at home to St Johnstone in the Tayside derby in their last outing.

Dundee are in second bottom spot of the 12-strong league table

with 28 points from 29 games while defeat at Easter Road meant Hearts slip out of the top six and down to seventh. They have 36 points from 29 starts.

Worrying for Docherty is his club's goals against total with 61 having hit the rigging during the league season so far. That's the worst total in the division with bottom club St Johnstone the next worst with 54.

In contrast, Hearts have scored 41 goals and let in 40 and they have won three of their last five league games. Dundee have only one point to show for their efforts in the last five.

Simon Murray, Dundee's Tayside-born striker, is a real threat, and the 32-year-old former Ross County star has scored 11 goals in 29 matches so far this term, assisting in two other strikes.

However, Kabangu, on loan at Tynecastle from Belgian Pro League club, Union SG, has been finding the net regularly since arriving in the January transfer window, the 27-year-old having scored five goals in his seven appearances. He also set-up another strike.

Neil Critchley, Hearts' head coach, is looking for a bounce back after Sunday's disappointment against in-form Hibs, and he was particularly disappointed with the performance of his men in the second-half of the televised Derby.

He added: "I don't think we played well enough."

Looking back, Critchley said: "First half we had a slight advantage, we played with good control and we responded after a poor start, it was a poor goal to give away. Second half we were unrecognisable from the team we have been for the past few months. We did not show enough quality on the ball, enough courage."

The Englishman will certainly be looking for those attributes on Friday (kick-off 19.45) as a passport to Hampden and the semi-finals is available to the winners. That's where Critchley wants to be.

EASTER ROAD FLASHBACK: Picture courtesy of ***Ian Jacobs***