

McInnes: 'Hearts are a good fit'

Derek McInnes sat on the podium behind a microphone-filled desk in the spacious Gorgie Suite bereft of match-day decoration and he hoped the excitement he was experiencing at being appointed head coach at Hearts shone through.

The former Aberdeen boss talked at length, voicing phrases fans want to hear like winning silverware, making cup finals, challenging in the Premiership top six and qualifying for Europe on a regular basis.

Basically, the 53-year-old wants to harness the undoubted power of Tynecastle fan base. They want to win silverware and so does McInnes.

The former Greenock Morton, Rangers, West Bromwich Albion and Dundee United player believes Hearts have a jump on other teams in the 12-strong division as they harness the backing of Jamestown Analytics, vociferous support on the terracing and also in the backroom staff to achieve.

Yes, the Paisley-born coach comes in after a disappointing past season for the ambitious Jambos, who finished seventh in the table, but McInnes said his appointment is for the future and he spoke about having quality in the current playing staff.

Naturally, the twice capped McInnes wants to supplement that and the work starts here. In-depth talks are planned with Hearts' sporting director, Graeme Jones, as work starts to build a side which teams hate to play, particularly at Tynecastle.

McInnes told the packed media conference he was "absolutely delighted" to be confirmed as the new head coach and he declared: "The opportunity to manage Hearts was everything I wanted. It is a club I always wanted to manage. It is a good fit.

"Hopefully, I can give them (the club) what they want. The intention is to try and deliver silverware and sustained success on the pitch and to just be the biggest animal we can be."

He is also determined to meet the expectation that is there from everybody in Gorgie and said: "I have managed before at a similar sized club at Aberdeen and there are similar expectations. I feel there is so much going for us here at Tynecastle and at Hearts that I have real excitement at being the guy to take it on.

"There is a structure there, behind us there is a support network and I feel it is something that we can really get our teeth into and deliver."

The Paisley-born former player said he loved his time at Kilmarnock which he described as "a brilliant club". There he made so many good friends and built relationships and there were some real highlights.

However, when Hearts' interest was first mooted, McInnes spoke to businessman, Billy Bowie, the owner and major shareholder, at Rugby Park. He told Bowie that he did not want to leave Rugby Park until the club was safe from relegation from the Premiership, but he did intimate that the interest from the Capital club was something he was keen to explore.

He added: "For me, it is all about the new start with Hearts. For me and my family, this is what I wanted and here we are. It is all about trying to move forward now. I feel as though I can get everything I want from the job."

Initially, he wants to deliver what is expected, what the Hearts support expect from the team, and then, in time, exceeding those expectations and he declared that a solid support network as a manager is vitally important.

Jamestown Analytics, a world-leader in football player and head coach data, gives Hearts, he said, an added advantage over other teams.

But McInnes cautioned: "That support network is brilliant as long as you utilise it to its maximum. They (the data) will help me build the squad and I will build the team and it is up to me deliver on the pitch.

"It is about players ultimately. I want to work with good players and the club's relationship with Jamestown can help us get more good players into the club. Ask any manager, you just want to work with good players."

Ultimately, it is all about trying to get players to perform on a daily basis and McInnes believes he can get the most out of squad.

Hearts, he declared, do have advantages over others, the support, the stadium, the infrastructure, the budget which is afforded to the manager, and it is important to utilise that to the maximum.

He stressed: "With those advantages, we have got to work more effectively and we have got to have a togetherness and be able to tap into the support we have.

"It does not come automatically, and it is important that everybody at Tynecastle realises that. We are going to have to

work for everything we get and it is up to me to drive those standards and set the pace.”

Earlier, Andrew McKinlay, Hearts’ chief executive, thanked interim manager, Liam Fox, for his efforts after taking over from Neil Critchley, sacked after the 1-0 home defeat to Dundee in the first match in the second phase of the league, and he told the media pack: “Welcome to Tynecastle for the dawning of a new era at the club.

“I want to say a few thanks to a few people who thoroughly deserve it. Firstly, thanks to Liam Fox for expertly guided us through what was a precarious situation and all at the club wish Liam all the very best as he moves on to the next stage in his career.”

He also thanked Kilmarnock FC for their co-operation in the recruitment process and he also thanked colleague Graham Jones who led the process professionally and expertly led us to where the club are today, appointing a new head coach.

McKinlay also wanted to put on record his thanks to Gary Locke, who played for and managed Hearts and Kilmarnock, as well as Raith Rovers, for what he termed “his invaluable insight and input” into the process of acquiring McInnes.

As the manager left the podium before speaking directly to print media he spotted my green jersey. He declared: “The wrong colour.” An eye for detail, and small details count.

Hearts fans will hope that the newcomer will use that attribute to pilot their club to great things in the future.

PICTURE: Derek McInnes at the press conference at Tynecastle.
Picture courtesy of ***Heart of Midlothian FC***