

(((WATCH LIVE!))) Hearts vs Viktoria Plzeň live free 29 August 2024

11 min ago - Fighting for a place in the new-look Europa League group phase, Hearts will host Viktoria Plzen in the second leg of their playoff tie on Thursday.



The Scottish side trail 1-0 following last week's first leg, having succumbed to a stoppage-time goal after holding firm for 90 minutes. Continuing their wretched start to the new season, Hearts lost out to virtually the last kick of the game in Plzen, as substitute Daniel Oyegoke turned a cross into his own net to hand the home side victory.

The Jambos therefore return to Tynecastle with a deficit to overturn, and failure would see them drop down into the third-tier Conference League.

Form is certainly not on their side, as after concluding an otherwise successful 2023-24 campaign by winning just one of their last six matches, Steven Naismith's men have started very slowly this season.

Sunday's 3-1 defeat against Motherwell sees them sitting 10th in the very early Scottish Premiership standings, and they have scored only twice across all competitions so far.

Hearts have taken just one point from three league games - also losing both their first continental contest and to Falkirk in the League Cup - piling pressure on Naismith to turn things around.

Making their first appearance in Europe since reaching the Conference League two years ago, the Jambos may be bound for the same competition again this term, barring a spirited fightback on Thursday. Viktoria Plzen start favourites to get their name into Friday's Europa League draw, though they may feel their advantage heading into the second leg should be greater, having had 18 goal attempts last week - only three were on target.

By contrast with Hearts - who also finished third in their domestic league last season - the Czech side have got off to a rapid start in 2024-25, starting with four wins and one draw.

A recent 3-0 victory over Ceske Budejovice makes Miroslav Koubek's men the closest challengers to First League leaders Sparta Prague, and an unbeaten start extends to UEFA qualifying, having previously overcome Kryvbas in their opening Europa League qualifier.

Plzen's weekend league fixture was postponed to boost hopes of thriving in Europe, which the six-time Czech champions certainly did last term: after taking maximum points from their Conference League group, they went out in the quarter-finals to eventual finalists Fiorentina.

With a record of six clean sheets from eight games so far this season - including an ongoing streak of four - they will now expect to defend their first-leg advantage in Scotland.