

# PORTUGAL - TURKEY

## MATCH PREVIEW

Stade de Genève, Geneva

Saturday 7 June 2008 - 20.45CET (20.45 local time)

Group A - Matchday 1



Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari was in bullish mood on the eve of his side's opening UEFA EURO 2008™ Group A match against Turkey at the Stade de Genève.

### 'Winning mentality'

The charismatic Brazilian, who steered hosts Portugal to the final in the 2004 edition, said: "We have an extremely talented squad with a midfield which is the envy of almost every team in Europe. To do well at a tournament like this you have to believe you will be there until the bitter end. I know we are good enough to win this tournament, but right now we have to focus on the first match. We lost our first game against Greece four years ago and put a great deal of pressure on ourselves. A victory would be the perfect start to get us in the winning mood."

### Brazilian blend

Scolari is no stranger to facing Turkey in the finals of a major tournament having twice encountered them during his tenure as Brazil coach at the FIFA World Cup in 2002. "I have a lot of respect for the Turkish team," he said. "They play like a South American team – fast-flowing football backed by a great coach [Fatih Terim]. Most people expect us to beat them but they forget Turkey lost very narrowly to my Brazil team in a World Cup semi-final. They are strong starters so we must be careful."

### Ronaldo threat

Portugal are expected to play a 4-3-3 formation with Petit sitting in front of a defence of Bosingwa, Ricardo Carvalho, Pepe and Paulo Ferreira, allowing João Moutinho and Deco the freedom to push forward from midfield to support their attack. The major talking point in the Portuguese press concerns which of their wing quartet will provide the ammunition for lone striker Nuno Gomes. Scolari has toyed with the idea of using Ricardo Quaresma on the left but the smart money is on Simão to start there with Cristiano Ronaldo weaving his magic down the right.

### Marking mission

Turkey coach Terim's biggest headache will be taming the seemingly unstoppable Ronaldo as he squares off against left-back Hakan Balta. "It's not about just one man marking him," said Terim. "You defend as a team and I am not going to criticise one player for failing to stop Ronaldo. He is the best player in the world but we have practised a number of systems which will help contain him."

### Familiar look

Terim admitted that there will be no major surprises in his starting lineup. "We have a number of systems up our sleeve but we will not make any radical changes," he said. "We haven't beaten Portugal since 1955 but we have reversed the tide before and why not this time?" With Volkan Demirel's outstanding form for Fenerbahçe SK ensuring his selection ahead of Rüştü Reçber between the posts, and Nihat Kahveci now stepping into the shoes of record scorer Hakan Şükür, Turkey are an entirely different proposition to the side Scolari got the better of in 2002. Perhaps this new generation are destined to end that 53-year wait for victory against Portugal.



### **Rüştü plays up Turkey's prospects**

Despite being ousted as Turkey's first-choice custodian, Rüştü Reçber is not bitter and hopes his presence can help inspire his side to an opening-day triumph against Portugal.

#### **Tough opener**

Luiz Felipe Scolari's team represent a tough proposition for Turkey in their first Group A fixture. Turkey have not beaten them in 53 years but the goalkeeper - who was on the losing side against the Portuguese at both EURO '96™ and UEFA EURO 2000™ - believes his side have the ability to upset the odds. "We know that it won't be an easy game against Portugal," he said. "It is obvious that they have a top-quality squad and we know they are one of the tournament favourites. But it doesn't put any pressure on us. We have self-confidence. Names won't win the game. Hard work and effort will decide who deserves the victory."

#### **Bench role**

At 35, Rüştü is an iconic figure in Turkish football, and while he has seen his place in Turkey's starting lineup pass to his former Fenerbahçe SK understudy Volkan Demirel, he is fiercely proud of his place in the national squad - and the role he can still play. "We are a national team," he said. "The most important thing is not to complain about things. Your behaviour is even more important if you are on the bench. You can make a very valuable contribution to the team as a player or a substitute. Everyone know Turkish people are proud of their country so it is an honour just to be here."

#### **Total belief**

Having played with Turkey on their UEFA European Championship finals debut in 1996, Rüştü also featured at UEFA EURO 2000™ and then earned a bronze medal at the 2002 FIFA World Cup - still Turkey's crowning achievement in international football. Capped 116 times, he has no doubt that he is part of a squad capable of competing with the very best in Austria and Switzerland. "We are completely focused and our aim is to get to the final," said Rüştü, who controversially left Fenerbahçe for city rivals Beşiktaş JK in the summer of 2007. "We planned everything before this tournament. We came through some hard times - our path was not easy - but I can say that this team has the ability to get to the final."

### **Tough love can help Portugal blossom**

Simão is looking forward to Portugal putting the lessons of a tough qualifying series to good use when they begin their UEFA EURO 2008™ campaign against Turkey at the Stade de Genève.

#### **Hard campaign**

After helping his club side Club Atlético de Madrid to a UEFA Champions League place in his first season at the Estadio Vicente Calderón, the 28-year-old forward is expected to start on the left in the Group A opener. Simão admits that Portugal's evolution into a younger team affected the squad during qualification, but says the experience will help them succeed at the Austria/Switzerland tournament.

#### **No looking back**

"Qualifying had become normal in recent years," he said. "But we had a few difficulties in these qualifying matches as we were making changes to the team and our game was under construction. We had difficult games, especially against Serbia and Finland, but the most important thing is that we managed to qualify. There's no point looking back now at what went before."

#### **Lessons from 2004**

The winger accepts that expectation has been raised by their achievements under coach Luiz Felipe Scolari. "Portugal have to be one of the favourites," he said. Simão also hopes that the squad can draw from the negatives, as well as the positives, in their recent past to help them go as far as possible. "Our principal objective is to win the first game, so we can be a little more relaxed for the following matches. We know, after EURO 2004, how important it is to get off to a good start."

#### **Plans hatched**

Simão's successor as SL Benfica captain, Nuno Gomes, says that Portugal will keep their tactical plan secret until the last minute. "We don't need to say publically what we need to do to beat Turkey, but we have our ideas," said Gomes. Nor is the striker taking anything for granted despite previous good results against Saturday's opponents. "It would be good if we could repeat the last few results against Turkey. But we're concentrating on the game rather than statistics."

#### **Goals guaranteed**

Gomes also dispels worries about Portugal's perceived lack of a genuine out-and-out forward in a squad full of quality midfielders and wingers. "Since the days of Eusébio we've been saying that our national team have been lacking in strikers," he said. According to the 31-year-old, he and his colleagues will not be found wanting at the vital moment against Turkey. "If the passes arrive, the centre-forwards will be there," he said.