

# AS Roma v FC Shakhtar Donetsk

## MATCH PREVIEW

Olimpico, Rome

Tuesday, 12 September 2006 - 20:45CET

Group D - Matchday 1



AS Roma are itching to claim their first points of the UEFA Champions League season against Matchday 1 visitors FC Shakhtar Donetsk following a year-long absence from the competition and a disappointing campaign in 2004/05.

### Spalletti delight

After a record eleven straight victories in Serie A last term, manager Luciano Spalletti says it is "wonderful" to have Roma back in the tournament, adding that he feels "a real sense of responsibility, not to mention some tension and nerves".

### 'They demand respect'

His Shakhtar counterpart Mircea Lucescu arrives in Rome with two Ukrainian titles under his belt, a strong start to the domestic season, and a roster of young stars including Elano Blumer - who scored twice for Brazil against Argentina last week. "They have a team full of internationals," said Spalletti, "they've won five out of six in the league, scored a lot of goals, can switch formation, are fast and can play good football. They are a team that demand respect."

### Mutual appreciation

"Roma are favourites," countered Lucescu, "although it is important for us to pick up points everywhere in the group." The Romanian does admit, however, that he fears the kind of atmosphere Roma's fans can conjure at the Stadio Olimpico. "We are just not used to 70,000 fans," he said. With Italy's season kicking off at the weekend, Roma have played only one game - Saturday's 2-0 home success against AS Livorno Calcio, in which Mancini and Daniele De Rossi scored. Shakhtar have been in action since July, including a third qualifying round victory over Legia Warszawa.

### Midfield trio

Spalletti is set to keep faith with the team that beat Livorno, deploying Francesco Totti as lone forward, supported by Simone Perrotta and Brazilians Rodrigo Taddei and Mancini, the midfield that pushed Roma to fifth place last term. Punishments to Juventus and AC Milan subsequently propelled the Giallorossi into the UEFA Champions League. In defence, Cristian Chivu comes in for the suspended Philippe Mexes, while Chilean international David Pizarro – a summer signing from FC Internazionale Milano – should feature. "He's the playmaker we were looking for."

### Happy coaches

"I am more comfortable this year because I know the team better," Spalletti went on. "When things go wrong now, the team know how to fix them on the pitch." Lucescu, too, is comfortable with the tools he has to work with. The Shakhtar boss expects the "vision, control and intelligence" of Elano to trouble Roma, although "Fernandinho is suspended and will be sorely missed, while Matuzalem has had fitness problems but will play – he is very important". Matuzalem, once coveted by Roma, could lead a midfield diamond flanked by Elano and Igor Duljaj and backed by Anatoliy Tymoshchuk.

### Old ground

Playing in Italy brings extra motivation for Lucescu, who has coached Serie A clubs including Inter, the side that eliminated Shakhtar from last season's UEFA Champions League. "It may not be the most spectacular but the Italian league is the hardest in the world," he said. Just how hard, Shakhtar will discover on Tuesday.

### Probable teams

**Roma:** Doni Marangon; Max Tonetto, Cristian Chivu, Matteo Ferrari, Christian Panucci; Daniele De Rossi, Alberto Aquilani; Simone Perrotta, Rodrigo Taddei, Mancini; Francesco Totti.

**Shakhtar:** Dmytro Shutkov; Tomáš Hübschman, Razvan Rat, Mariusz Lewandowski; Darijo Srna; Elano Blumer, Anatoliy Tymoshchuk, Matuzalem, Igor Duljaj; Brandão, Ciprian Marica.

