

Olympique Lyonnais v FC Steaua Bucuresti

MATCH PREVIEW

Stade de Gerland, Lyon

Wednesday, 6 December 2006 - 20:45CET

Group E - Matchday 6



Olympique Lyonnais coach Gérard Houllier is hoping to show off the depth of his squad as he rings the changes for the visit of FC Steaua Bucuresti on Wednesday.

Houllier target

With the French champions already sure of top spot in Group E and their Romanian counterparts certain to finish third, there would appear to be little at stake at Stade de Gerland. But Houllier sees things differently and is keen to stress the significance of registering a fifth victory in the group stage. "It's important for three reasons," he said. "First, because we want to finish with a 100 per cent home record, second because every UEFA Champions League victory gives us confidence, and third because we're chasing a tenth consecutive home win."

Caçapa return

The former France coach will nevertheless make a host of changes to the team that triumphed 1-0 at Le Mans UC 72 on Saturday. Cris, Juninho Pernambucano and Eric Abidal are rested, Florent Malouda serves a one-match ban and forwards Karim Benzema and Fred are still injured. But with captain Claudio Caçapa back after a three-month absence and several fringe players eager to impress, Lyon's starting eleven will be anything but weak. "It's a good opportunity for Caçapa to come back and for other players like Hatem Ben Arfa to show their quality," Houllier said.

Squad rotation

Ben Arfa should fill Malouda's left-sided role, while Jérémy Berthod, Alou Diarra and Kim Källström are also set for starts. "We have 20 outfield players and in order to achieve our objectives this season, we'll need everybody to contribute," said Houllier, whose side are 14 points clear at the top of Ligue 1 and remain in contention in both domestic cups. "There are lots of games to play but my players all have quality and I'm convinced they'll play well against Steaua."

'Playing for pride'

Steaua coach Cosmin Olariu admits he has fewer options and will be naming a similar team to the one that beat FCU Politehnica Timisoara 3-1 on Saturday. "Most of the Lyon players are of a comparable standard but that's not the case with us," he explained. "We'll put out our best team because this is an important game and we're playing for our pride."

'Great courage'

The omens are not good for the visitors, who were defeated 3-0 by Lyon in September and have lost on all seven previous visits to France. But Olariu believes his side have improved throughout the campaign, saying: "Steaua have not been in this competition for a decade and it's taken us time to acclimatise. But we've learned a great deal, particularly in the games against Real Madrid [CF] and Lyon. This time we must show Lyon less respect and play with great courage."

Iacob return

Olariu must decide whether to start with captain Mirel Radoi who has been stepping up his comeback following a serious knee injury in recent weeks. Left-back Mihai Nesu is still missing but forward Victoras Iacob is fit again and should begin on the bench as Frenchman Cyril Thereau leads the Steaua attack on his return to his homeland.

Probable teams

Lyon: Grégory Coupet; Anthony Réveillère, Sébastien Squillaci/Patrick Müller, Claudio Caçapa, Jérémy Berthod; Tiago, Alou Diarra, Kim Källström; Sidney Govou, Hatem Ben Arfa; John Carew.



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Steaua: Cornel Cernea; Stelian Stancu, Dorin Goian, Sorin Ghionea, Petre Marin; Banel Nicolita, Mirel Radoi, Sorin Paraschiv, Vasilica Cristocea; Nicolae Dica; Cyril Thereau.