

CFR 1907 Cluj - Chelsea FC

MATCH PREVIEW

CFR, Cluj- napoca

Wednesday 1 October 2008 - 20.45CET

Group A - Matchday 2



Although Chelsea FC swept aside FC Girondins de Bordeaux two weeks ago to claim pole position in Group A, the undisputed result of the night was CFR 1907 Cluj's shock 2-1 victory away to last season's quarter-finalists AS Roma. The question now is: can the Romanian side upset the form book again?

Record attendance

"I hope we can surprise Chelsea," said the Liga 1 side's Italian coach Maurizio Trombetta, "but maybe it was easier to do so against Roma because no one expected it." His team will benefit from the backing of what is certain to be a club-record attendance, with the CFR Stadium capacity having been increased to over 23,000 during the summer. "That will definitely help," he said, "although it's what happens on the pitch that counts."

Full squad

The Romanian champions have not enjoyed the best of starts to their title defence, although a 1-1 draw against fellow UEFA Champions League competitors FC Steaua București on Friday extended their unbeaten home record and brought them up to fifth in the table. Trombetta has the luxury of a full squad to choose from, with Sixto Peralta fit following an adductor strain. The Argentinian midfielder is expected to begin on the substitutes' bench as Trombetta keeps faith with the XI that prevailed in Rome.

'Extremely motivated'

In stark contrast to CFR Cluj's first-ever tilt at the UEFA Champions League, their Matchday 2 opponents are last term's runners-up and are attempting to qualify for the knockout phase for the sixth successive year. Not that the team from Transylvania are ready to slip meekly into the role of underdogs. "Chelsea are a very powerful side, full of stars," said Trombetta. "But if we just think about them and our own limitations, we will lose before the game has started. That is not our philosophy. My players are extremely motivated and I just have to make sure the conditions are right so they can perform to the best of their ability."

Respect

Chelsea manager Luiz Felipe Scolari is also playing down his side's apparent superiority. "These days all teams know about their opponents, and their players are in good shape," said the Brazilian, who will be without the injured Deco (hamstring), Michael Essien and Ricardo Carvalho (both knee). "Cluj will be confident because they won in Rome. They also want to show the world that they are a big club. We have to treat them with respect. Cluj are thinking about going as far as they can in world football and if they keep improving as they are, they will be a team we come to know for many years."

No complacency

Chelsea are obviously no strangers to rapid rises themselves having grown into a continental heavyweight since the arrival of Roman Abramovich. They go into Wednesday's contest fresh from assuming the Premier League lead for the first time this season following Saturday's 2-0 victory at Stoke City FC – not that they are about to get complacent. "If [CFR Cluj] beat us it will not be a surprise," said Scolari. "It will be because they are better on the day."



Koné convinced Chelsea are only human

It was Argentinian midfielder Juan Culio who grabbed the headlines on Matchday 1 with a double strike in CFR 1907 Cluj's 2-1 win at AS Roma, but Yssouf Koné could pose just as serious a threat against Chelsea FC on Wednesday.

Scoring knack

The 26-year-old forward has a knack of getting important goals wherever he plays. He registered for Rosenborg BK against Valencia CF and FC Schalke 04 in last season's UEFA Champions League group stage and also scored three times in as many games for the Norwegians in this year's UEFA Intertoto Cup before joining CFR in the summer. His first strike for the Romanian champions – one of two goals against FC Farul Constanța on 21 September – was the club's 500th in the top flight. However, he is not particularly concerned about getting on the scoresheet on Matchday 2. "What is most important is that we play together as a team," he said. "Whether I score or not doesn't really matter."

Biggest game

The Burkina Faso international has not exactly followed a well-trodden career path. A natural globetrotter, he represented sides in Italy, Morocco and China before spending two and a half years in Norway with Rosenborg. Now he is facing what he describes as "without doubt the biggest game of my career so far". So how to prepare for such a challenge? "No differently from any other game." Unfazed, Koné is relishing the chance to come up against defenders as formidable as John Terry or Alex. "I have played against Chelsea before [for Rosenborg in last season's group stage] so I know them pretty well. And in any case, I'm not afraid of anybody. Just respectful."

Excitement

Having sampled the UEFA Champions League last term, he is delighted to be back. "You can really feel the excitement here," he said. "Rosenborg had played in the tournament on a number of occasions, but this is our first time so there is a big difference. You can see that our players are still learning how to compete at this level. But I think we are ready for Chelsea, and I believe we have a chance. Obviously we know it's going to be a tough game, but it is still eleven against eleven. Who knows what can happen?"