

# ACF Fiorentina - FC Steaua București

## MATCH PREVIEW

Artemio Franchi, Florence

Tuesday 30 September 2008 - 20.45CET

Group F - Matchday 2



Two weeks after surrendering a two-goal lead in Lyon, ACF Fiorentina return to UEFA Champions League action determined to take all the spoils from Matchday 2 when they host FC Steaua București on Tuesday.

### Frustration in France

With Italy forward Alberto Gilardino having scored twice and with only 17 minutes remaining on the clock against Olympique Lyonnais, Cesare Prandelli's Fiorentina looked set for a flying start to their campaign in Group F. Instead, late strikes left Prandelli's men with a creditable if frustrating 2-2 draw, and with a real desire to let nothing slip a second time at their Artemio Franchi Stadium.

### No fear

"We're ready," Prandelli told a news conference on the eve of the game. "It's an important match and the team are in good shape. We're not afraid of Steaua, but we're aware we're taking on a big club. We've studied them, we've watched their games – they're technically very good, they play good football and they really play as a team. There is no fear, but we've the right level of concern about them."

### 'Difficult games'

Fans of the Viola have waited eight long years for a home fixture in UEFA's flagship competition, having bowed out in the second group stage with a 3-3 draw against FC Girondins de Bordeaux in Florence in 2000. Aware that Serie A rivals AS Roma lost at home to Romania's other contender CFR 1907 Cluj on Matchday 1, Prandelli is taking nothing for granted. "They're all difficult games at this level," he said. "You've got to be well-prepared and know there will be times during a match when you're going to suffer. But we believe we can have a good game."

### Room for improvement

Despite the fact his charges had to settle for a point in France, the 51-year-old coach went on: "I want the kind of performance we put in against Lyon." However, he clearly expects a better result on Tuesday. "A team that wants to improve always has to give something extra, both in terms of the way they play and the attitude they have."

### Lăcătuș' return

The game will be a special one for Steaua coach Marius Lăcătuș, who spent the 1990/91 season with Fiorentina during his playing career. "I'm really pleased to be back," the 44-year-old said. "It's been a long time but I had some wonderful times here. I know what the crowd will be like and I know they'll get behind the team." Lăcătuș needs to lift his men, however, after a narrow 1-0 defeat by FC Bayern München in Bucharest leaves them searching for their first points in the section.

### Time to attack

"It's going to be a tough game, particularly having lost our home match," he said. "But we'll be going out there to play an attacking game and to score goals." Steaua will be helped in that objective by the return from suspension of midfielder Bănel Nicolîță, who missed the game against Bayern. Brazilian striker Arthur Bernhardt and Colombian playmaker Dayro Moreno will also be hoping for better this time around after both were denied an equaliser by the woodwork at the Steaua Stadium.



### Mutu stirred, not shaken by Steaua visit

ACF Fiorentina's Romania striker Adrian Mutu is braced for an emotional night when he lines up against his compatriots from FC Steaua București in Group F on Tuesday.

#### Spotlight beckons

The 29-year-old was a key figure in Fiorentina's run to fourth place in Serie A last season, a feat which booked them into the UEFA Champions League third qualifying round at the expense of AC Milan. Now in the competition proper, Mutu is bound to be in the spotlight when the former FC Argeș Pitesti and FC Dinamo 1948 București forward partners Alberto Gilardino at the Artemio Franchi Stadium.

#### 'Emotional moment'

"Clearly, it's going to be an emotional moment for me," Mutu said. "It's the first time I'll be playing against a Romanian team in an official match. But all of us are ready to play the game with the right attitude and we want to win it." There are unlikely to be many surprises for him against opponents who went down fighting in a 1-0 defeat by FC Bayern München in Bucharest two weeks ago. "I know the players, I know what they're capable of. But we've got to play our own game and, if we do, there's nothing we should be worried about."

#### Steaua experience

Though Fiorentina will enjoy home advantage after opening their campaign with a 2-2 draw at Olympique Lyonnais, Steaua have the better record in Europe's top club competition. The Viola have played in only one UEFA Champions League season, last hosting a game in March 2000, while Romania's 1986 European champions are making their third consecutive appearance among the élite and their sixth in total. "I think Steaua have more experience and more of a tradition of playing in the UEFA Champions League and in that respect they have something extra," Mutu said. "But this doesn't frighten us – quite the opposite in fact."

#### Going for goal

Mutu, who could face international team-mate Dorin Goian in the Steaua defence, is looking to rediscover his form after a patchy run, notably during Saturday's 1-0 Serie A victory over Genoa CFC in which Gilardino scored and the No10 was substituted. "It's just one of those periods you go through," he said. "There are times when you're able to score and times like the other day when you just don't manage it. At the moment, Gilardino is taking the lead. But we'll both be trying to score on Tuesday night."