

Chelsea FC - AS Roma

MATCH PREVIEW

Stamford Bridge, London

Wednesday 22 October 2008 - 20.45CET

Group A - Matchday 3



Luiz Felipe Scolari is predicting a "beautiful" game when AS Roma visit Chelsea FC – despite the Italian side's recent poor form.

Roma style

While Scolari's team are top of both the English Premier League and UEFA Champions League Group A, Roma's 4-0 home loss to FC Internazionale Milano on Sunday left them 14th in Serie A. The Brazilian, though, has been impressed by Roma's flair and high technical ability. "Roma play like us, with a lot of touches of the ball," the Chelsea manager said. "The players try to play, they don't just hit the ball forward, and I believe this will be a beautiful game."

Results the thing

If it is not, Scolari will not be losing any sleep. Even though the London club are setting themselves new standards with the quality of their football and the goals they are scoring, nothing matters as much as winning. "It's nice for me [to hear this praise] but it's down to the players," the trainer said. "They are doing a good job and it's nice for them, as well as for me, that people like the way we play. But I want to say something to the Chelsea fans – we play beautiful football but we need three points every game. Sometimes it's not possible to play beautiful football and, in that case, we have to get the three points because otherwise it is difficult to arrive in the finals in May."

Strength in depth

The strength of Scolari's squad was underlined when a side shorn of eight potential starters won 5-0 at Middlesbrough FC on Saturday. Petr Čech, Ricardo Carvalho and Deco were the only three of those absentees who trained on Tuesday, and Scolari might well decide to include them on the bench against the Giallorossi. Their opponents also have injury concerns but more worrying is a sequence of two wins from seven league games this season. They also lost at home to CFR 1907 Cluj on Matchday 1, so a defeat here would leave them with just three points and put their qualifying prospects in jeopardy. Coach Luciano Spalletti remains hopeful, though. "We need to fight for the 50-50 balls, get back behind the ball and squeeze space," he said. "I still have high hopes that we can get results in the group."

Totti return

On Sunday Francesco Totti made his first Serie A start since undergoing knee surgery in April and is expected to stay in the team. Philippe Mexès and Christian Panucci should also return to the heart of the defence after suspension. However, centre-back Juan suffered a muscle strain at the weekend, Simone Perrotta is running a high temperature as well as carrying a knock, and fellow midfielder David Pizarro hurt his left ankle in training having been likely to make a comeback after a thigh problem. "We know it's going to be tough because Chelsea are one of the best teams in the world and they have one of the best managers," Spalletti added. "We have to roll up our sleeves, work in the right way and then things will turn for us."



In-form Malouda no longer feeling blue

Florent Malouda believes that by keeping his head down and playing the long game he can provide good value for Chelsea FC over the course of his four-year contract.

Contrasting fortunes

Last season, his first at Stamford Bridge, brought contrasting fortunes for the French international as he began promisingly only to find his form and momentum blunted by injury. At the start of this campaign he also had to bide his time as a galaxy of Stamford Bridge stars vied to make an early impression on manager Luiz Felipe Scolari. Now Malouda is having an impact again. Certain of a starting place in Wednesday's home game against AS Roma, he is relishing the chance to catch the eye in a Chelsea team who under their Brazilian boss are playing entertaining football.

'Quality players'

Both in UEFA Champions League Group A and the Premier League, the Blues are enjoying the view from the summit – though in each case they share top spot, with CFR 1907 Cluj and Liverpool FC respectively. Yet with everything in place for a successful season, the 28-year-old winger hopes to make a more lasting contribution over the duration of the ten-month marathon. "I am enjoying it at the moment, but the season is very long and, because of my injury, I wasn't able to experience a full season last time," Malouda said. "The most important thing with all the injuries is that the spirit is good in the squad. We have a group of quality players and you can see that everybody is enjoying themselves on the pitch. "

Injury problems

The misfortune he encountered in his first term in England following a reported €20m move from Olympique Lyonnais is now affecting others, and Chelsea could have as many as eight first-choice members of the Scolari set absent at kick-off against Roma on Matchday 3. Malouda is just keen to hold on to his place, saying: "I think I showed my best form last year but maybe not every time. I was used to playing at that level as a regular and it was up and down for me, but sometimes that happens in your career.

Confident and calm

"I just said to myself that I had come to Chelsea for four years and that I had to be patient and accept things like injuries and the fact that sometimes you are not in good form. That's life. I never thought about leaving [in the summer] but sometimes when you don't speak other people speak for you. I didn't say anything. I am somebody who is really confident and calm, and I just focused on training, enjoying myself, and trying to show in every game what I can do."