

Juventus - Chelsea FC

MATCH PREVIEW

Stadio Olimpico, Turin

Tuesday 10 March 2009 - 20.45CET

Matchday 8 - First knockout round, second leg



Claudio Ranieri says Juventus will "exceed their limits" to overturn the first-leg deficit against Chelsea FC, doing whatever it takes to reach the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals at the expense of their visitors.

'European force'

Ranieri's side were beaten by an early Didier Drogba strike two weeks ago and, after giving Chelsea a stern test during an eventful second half at Stamford Bridge, the Juventus coach has promised more of the same at the Stadio Olimpico. "I have some great players at this club," said the 57-year-old, who was Chelsea's manager between 2000 and 2004. "And they know that they are playing for a great club. Juve are an international club who have been a force in Europe over the years. The players sometimes feel the weight of the shirt but they also know that they have what it takes to win at this level. These players are ready to give their all to get the result they need."

Nedvěd influence

The Bianconeri beat city rivals Torino FC 1-0 on Saturday, their third successive Serie A win and a result all the more impressive given the catalogue of injuries that continues to dog their season. Mohamed Sissoko became the latest victim, fracturing a bone in his right foot after he was introduced with six minutes remaining. He follows Cristiano Zanetti (thigh), Mauro Camoranesi (rib) and Nicola Legrottaglie (knee) on to the sidelines, with Marco Marchionni possibly joining them there as he struggles with a muscular problem. Ranieri can at least welcome back Pavel Nedvěd, Alessandro Del Piero and David Trezeguet, having dropped the trio to the bench for the Derby Della Mole. Nedvěd eventually came on as a late substitute to set up Giorgio Chiellini's 80th-minute headed winner.

Essien return

Nedvěd and Del Piero are survivors of the last Juve team to lose a UEFA Champions League match at home, a record that stretches back five formidable years and 16 games. To underline just how long ago that was – when RC Deportivo La Coruña beat the Bianconeri at this stage of the 2003/04 campaign, Ranieri was Chelsea manager. Yet his old side arrive in Italy in high spirits after extending their 100 per cent record under manager Guus Hiddink to six matches with Saturday's FA Cup victory at Coventry City FC; their morale being further lifted by Michael Essien's appearance as a second-half substitute, his first game in six months. Ricardo Carvalho (hamstring) and Nicolas Anelka (foot) are also close to comebacks, softening the blow after Paulo Ferreira was ruled out for the season when he tore a cruciate ligament last week.

Attack-minded

Hiddink is confident his charges can build on their 1-0 lead in Turin. "It was important for us to keep a clean sheet at home, but if we only work on not conceding and not taking the initiative, we will have problems," he warned. "It is in the character of the team to attack and whenever possible we will because if we just defend we're asking for trouble. When you reach the knockout rounds at this level it is always very close and the match can go either way. We have players here that can take us all the way."



Ballack hails Hiddink effect

Michael Ballack has paid tribute to the "charisma" of manager Guus Hiddink, whom he credits with returning Chelsea FC to the force of old by helping the players regain their "team spirit, fighting ability and power".

Turin test

Chelsea have won six successive games since Hiddink replaced Luiz Felipe Scolari last month, including a 1-0 first-leg victory in their UEFA Champions League last-16 tie with Juventus. Ballack concedes the English side may not have it all their own way in Turin, and that the match "could last 120 minutes", yet is confident Hiddink will see them through. "The coach and I have met a couple of times over the years," said the German international. "He has had great success in the past and has great experience and charisma, which has really come through in the last few matches. In the last five or six games our results have been fantastic and we've got back to winning ways. We have started to show our strengths again – our team spirit, fighting ability, power. We still have improvements to make but we're on the up."

'Risk'

Chelsea's return to form – as well as that room for improvement – was in evidence at Stamford Bridge a fortnight ago. Didier Drogba capped a bright start with a 12th-minute opener but Juventus worked their way back into the game, coming close to the all-important equaliser. "Juventus played very well in the first leg," said Ballack after dismissing suggestions of a disparity in fitness levels. "They had to take more of a risk and come forward once they went behind and we had to defend more, which is normal against a good team."

'Character'

"We can play better than we did in the first leg, and I'm positive because in the last few league games we've started to play well and shown good character – like we did against Wigan [Athletic FC] when we conceded but had the character to react," the 32-year-old continued. "When you play the first leg at home, it is never easy because you're not sure what a good result is – 1-0, 2-0? Do you go for another goal? The opponent attacks more when they're behind so you have to be cautious. We're just happy that we didn't concede. It was a good result and now we'll see how much it was worth."

Valuable experience

With 76 UEFA Champions League appearances to his name, Ballack is one of the older hands charged with ensuring Hiddink's instructions are carried out on the pitch, even if he believes Chelsea are perfectly equipped to share the responsibility. "The senior players should always lead from the front but the youngsters play their part as well and we have a good balance," he said. "We've done well in this competition in recent years, our goal is to reach the final and we won't settle for less."

Fan power key for confident Del Piero

Alessandro Del Piero has urged the Juventus fans to get behind the team on Tuesday as he believes the "special atmosphere" of the Stadio Olimpico can help his side overcome Chelsea FC and earn a UEFA Champions League quarter-final place.

Major role

Del Piero says the Bianconeri are focused and determined to rise to the challenge of overturning a 1-0 first-leg deficit from Stamford Bridge, adding that their cause can be significantly aided by passionate home support. The Stadio Olimpico is sold out for the visit of last year's losing finalists – potentially a crucial factor in smoothing Juventus's passage to the last eight according to the captain.

'Intense'

"These last few days have been intense," he said. "We've all been looking forward to the Chelsea game with great enthusiasm and we'll need to play the perfect match. We will need to push ourselves to the maximum and we will also need the crowd to get behind us. In the first leg they played well and got the win, but we played pretty well and lost, so we will need to turn those two things around. But a special atmosphere in the ground is crucial."

'Memorable moments'

Del Piero has played in no fewer than 86 UEFA Champions League ties in his glittering career and is eager to help his team recover from a first-leg reverse for the fifth time in nine attempts since 1992. 'Pinturicchio' remembers well three of those comebacks, in 1995/96, 2002/03 and 2004/05 – each against Real Madrid CF – and hopes to revive that spirit against Chelsea. "Every different era in your career provides its own memorable moments. We had the right stuff to come back from adversity on those occasions and we want that to be the case again."

'Team spirit'

"The team spirit we must show will be essential. We must be united. We will have to keep possession, not concede too much space, and try to score whenever we can by playing with intelligence. The first-leg result was negative but not disastrous. To get back in the tie we need to show character. We must show heart, will to win, enthusiasm and the desire to come out on top." But the 34-year-old Italy playmaker is aware how difficult it is has become to face Premier League clubs.

English improvement

"Over the last few years there has been a sea change in English football. They have invested a great deal, not just in financial terms, but also in hiring quality players and great coaches from abroad who have managed to find the right mix of foreign talent to complement the strength of the English game. Whereas before English clubs were very strong in certain areas, now they have all bases covered and, in some cases, have created the complete side." For Del Piero, however, that does not make English success a foregone conclusion. "We'll have to wait and see whether they are still on top in the next few days."