PFC Ludogorets 1945

RCD Espanyol

Last updated 21/10/2019 14:19CET
Match background

Ludogorets have made a lightning-fast start to UEFA Europa League Group H, scoring eight goals in their opening two victories, but the Bulgarian champions and league leaders host tricky Matchday 3 opposition in Espanyol, who are on a long unbeaten away run in European competition.

• A Claudiu Keşerü hat-trick completed a stunning 5-1 home win for Ludogorets against CSKA Moskva on Matchday 1, and there was a second big win a fortnight later as they prevailed 3-0 away to their UEFA Champions League first qualifying round conquerors Ferencváros. Espanyol, meanwhile, shook off the disappointment of an opening 1-1 draw in Barcelona against the Hungarian champions by winning 2-0 next time out at CSKA. The Spanish club have since changed coach, replacing David Gallego with Pablo Machín.

Previous meetings
• This is Espanyol's first UEFA encounter with Bulgarian opposition.
• Ludogorets' record against Spanish clubs is P4 L4, a 2013/14 UEFA Europa League round of 16 elimination by Valencia (0-3 h, 0-1 a) preceding two UEFA Champions League group stage defeats later that year by Real Madrid (1-2 h, 0-4 a).

Form guide

Ludogorets
• Ludogorets' eighth consecutive Bulgarian league title earned them a place in this season's UEFA Champions League first qualifying round, where they were knocked out by Ferencváros, losing both legs (1-2 a, 2-3 h). They subsequently came through UEFA Europa League qualifiers against Valur, The New Saints and, in the play-offs, Maribor to reach the group stage of this competition for the third year in a row, and fourth time in all.
• The Razgrad club were successful in their first two UEFA Europa League group stage participations, reaching the round of 16 in 2013/14 and round of 32 in 2017/18, but failed to win any of their six games last season (D4 L2), finishing bottom of a group containing Bayer Leverkusen, Zürich and AEK Larnaca. They also competed in the 2016/17 round of 32, having finished third in their UEFA Champions League group.
• Ludogorets have kept clean sheets in eight of their 12 European home games over the past two seasons (W6 D4 L2). Their UEFA Europa League group stage record in Bulgaria is W4 D4 L2.

Espanyol
• Espanyol finished seventh in the 2018/19 Spanish Liga, edging out Athletic Club on the head-to-head rule to book a return to the European stage for the first time since their appearance in the 2006/07 UEFA Cup final, which they lost on penalties to Sevilla after a 2-2 draw in Glasgow.
• The Barcelona-based club, who also lost the 1987/88 UEFA Cup final on spot kicks to Bayer Leverkusen, cruised through their first two qualifying ties this term, defeating Stjarnan 7-1 on aggregate and Luzern 6-0 over the two legs before overcoming Zorya Luhanski in the play-offs (3-1 h, 2-2 a).
• Espanyol are undefeated in their last 22 European games against non-Spanish opposition (W17 D5), including the last 11 on their travels (W7 D4). They have not lost a European match in regulation play since Schalke beat them home (2-1) and away (3-0) in the 2005/06 UEFA Cup third round.

Links and trivia
• Espanyol goalkeeper Diego López played for Villarreal against Bulgarian side Levski Sofia in the 2009/10 UEFA Europa League group stage, winning both games and keeping two clean sheets (1-0 h, 2-0 a).
• Ludogorets' only goal against Spanish opposition was scored five years ago at home to Real Madrid by Marcelinho, who is still with the club.
• Eight-goal Ludogorets are the top-scoring team across all 12 UEFA Europa League groups after two matches.
• Espanyol are one of six clubs making their debut in the UEFA Europa League group stage this term. The others are LASK, Olexandriya, Wolfsberg, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Group H rivals Ferencváros.

The coaches
• Stanislav Genchev stepped up from his position as Ludogorets assistant coach in August 2019 to oversee the club's UEFA Europa League play-off elimination of Maribor just days after replacing Stoycho Stoev in the hot seat. A 38-year-old former midfielder with seven caps for Bulgaria, he only hung up his boots in June 2017 and went straight into coaching with his final club Etar. He won two successive Bulgarian league titles, in 2011/12 and 2012/13, as a player with Ludogorets – one of a dozen clubs he represented in an eventful career.
• Machín was appointed by Espanyol as Gallego's replacement on 8 October, thus returning to Spanish Liga and...
UEFA Europa League duty seven months after being dismissed by Sevilla. He was in charge of the Andalusian side for less than a year following four progressive campaigns at the helm of Catalan outfit Girona, whom he guided into the Spanish top flight before further exceeding expectations by leading them to a tenth-placed Liga finish in 2017/18. Forced to retire from playing at 23, he had a lengthy association with home-town club Numancia before joining Girona in 2014.

FootballPeople weeks
The FootballPeople weeks take place from 10 to 24 October 2019 and are organised by UEFA’s social responsibility partner Fare. The weeks are a global campaign aimed at tackling discrimination and celebrating diversity in football. The UEFA Europa League is offering its full support to the FootballPeople weeks; teams will line up for a mixed photo with the referees, while an #EqualGame hashtag will also be on display. Videos will be played on giant screens at stadiums across Europe, and child mascots will be wearing #FootballPeople t-shirts. UEFA’s collaboration with the Fare network’s FootballPeople weeks has been running since 2001. The aim of this initiative fits in perfectly with the goals of #EqualGame, which is looking to promote inclusion, diversity and accessibility.
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Thursday 24 October 2019 - 18.55CET (19.55 local time)

Ludogorets Arena, Razgrad

Legend

Competition stages
- F: Final
- GS1: First group stage
- 3QR: Third qualifying round
- R2: Second round
- R4: Fourth round
- SF: Semi-finals
- R16: Round of 16
- R32: Round of 32
- 1st: first leg
- 2nd: second leg
- PO: Play-off
- Rep: Replay
- PO - FT: Play-off for Final Tournament
- GS: Group stage
- GS2: Second group stage
- R1: First round
- R3: Third round
- PR: Preliminary round
- QF: Quarter-finals
- QR: Qualifying round
- 1QR: First qualifying round
- 2QR: Second qualifying round
- FT: Final tournament
- ELITE: Elite round
- 3rdPO: Third-place play-off
- GS-FT: Group stage – final tournament
- (aet): After extra time
- No.: Number
- ag: Match decided on away goals
- Pl: Matches played
- Pos.: Position
- Pts: Points
- R: Sent off (straight red card)
- Res.: Result
- sg: Match decided by silver goal
- GF: Goals for
- gg: Match decided by golden goal
- Y/R: Sent off (two yellow cards)
- f: Match forfeited
- pens: Penalties
- og: Own goal
- P: Penalty
- agg: Aggregate
- AP: Appearances
- Comp.: Competition
- D: Drawn
- DoB: Date of birth
- ET: Extra Time
- GA: Goals against
- t: Match decided by toss of a coin
- W: Won
- Y: Booked
- L: Lost
- Nat.: Nationality
- N/A: Not applicable

Statistics
- #: Denotes player substituted
- *: Denotes player sent off
- +: Denotes player introduced
- +/-: Denotes player introduced and substituted

Squad list
- D: Disciplinary
- *: Misses next match if booked
- S: Suspended
- QUAL: All UEFA qualifiers
- UEL: Current season total UEFA Europa League appearances from the group stage onwards prior to the current matchday
- UEL: Total appearances in the UEFA Europa League, group stage to final only
- UEFA: All-time total appearances in UEFA club competition including qualifying

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