

Team News vs Sheriff Tiraspol

Sheriff Stadium

UEFA Europa League

Thursday 24th September 2020

9 p.m. (Local) 7 p.m. (Irish Time)

We continue our European journey in 2020 with another away tie as we travel to Moldova to take on Sheriff Tiraspol in the third qualifying round of the UEFA Europa League.

This year's competition has been altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic meaning that there is single leg knockouts instead of the traditional two-legged affairs. After being defeated in the first round of the UEFA Champions League by Slovenian champions NK Celje, that led us to the UEFA Europa League second qualifying round and a tie with Inter Club d'Escaldes. Despite being reduced to ten men for the last half an hour, after Andy Boyle's dubious dismissal, the Lilywhites were able to see out a 1-0 win with David McMillan, for the first time since July 2017, netting the only goal to send us through.

The Lilywhites are looking to continue their fine record in Europe and will be looking to reach the playoff stage of the Europa League for the first time.

This will be the 77th European match in Dundalk's history with their record reading as P76 W15 D18 L33

It will be the first time that we have faced Moldovan opposition in European competition.

The nature of the one legged affairs means that a winner will be determined on the night with extra-time and penalties if required should the match finish level at the end of 90 minutes.

The prize for the victors will be home advantage to either KI Klaksvik of Iceland or Dinamo Tbilisi of Georgia with the winner taking a place in the 2020-21 UEFA Europa League group stages.

How can I follow it?

The match kicks off at the time of 9 p.m. local time which equates to 7 p.m. Irish time on Thursday evening at the Sheriff Stadium in Moldova and we will be carrying updates on official social media streams – **@DundalkFC** on Twitter, **Dundalk FC** on Facebook and **dundalkfc_** on Instagram also. Post-match reaction will be available on all streams, as well. We will provide you with pre-match, in-play and post-match updates from the evening's action.

The match will also be available to watch via stream which will be confirmed shortly.

Team news

Andy Boyle misses out through suspension after receiving two yellows and a red in the tie with Inter Club d'Escaldes last week. Patrick McEleney is available for selection following injury and the birth of his son on Monday. Dane Massey is injured and misses out following surgery on a hip injury.

Head Coach View

Speaking to dundalkfc.com Interim Head Coach Filippo Giovagnoli looked ahead to the tie and while he is anticipating the difficult challenge against Sheriff, the Italian feels his troops are ready to put in the high level of performance required to win the clash.

"We are focused. We are ready for the game and we know how good Sheriff are. We are stronger after last week's win. We learned a lot after last year's win and are happy to have got through.

"They are a really good team and have 21 international players. They are good individually, they are ambitious and we know what the challenge ahead of us is. We will have to give our best performance yet without doubt. It needs to be a high level. We are ready to perform tomorrow night for sure. "

How did we fare in Europe in 2019?

We reached the third qualifying round of the Europa League falling to Group Stage qualifiers Slovan Bratislava. That was after we had defeated Riga of Latvia on penalties at this stage of the Champions League qualifiers and then were defeated 4-1 on aggregate by Azerbaijan champions Qarabag.

Sheriff Tiraspol are regulars in European competition...

Yes they are and have reached the group stages of the UEFA Europa League on four separate occasions. They are experienced at this stage of the competition in particular and are serial winners of the Premier League in Moldova and have won the last 5 league championships in Moldova and 18 of the previous 20. Currently they have won their first ten matches to open the 2020 campaign. In Europe, they defeated Fola Esch of Luxembourg in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Champions League however Qarabag FK of Azerbaijan defeated them in the second qualifying round which has led to them competing in the Europa League.

How has preparation been?

Preparation has been good with training over the weekend after our SSE Airtricity League match against Cork City due to be played at Turner's Cross was postponed on

Sunday. Last week we defeated Inter Club d'Escaldes of Andorra on a scoreline of 1-0 with David McMillan netting the only goal after 14 minutes.

Recent European Results

10.07.2019 (Champions League 1st Qualifying Round 1st Leg) Dundalk 0-0 Riga FC

17.07.2019 (Champions League 1st Qualifying Round 2nd Leg) Riga FC 0-0 Dundalk
(Dundalk win 5-4 on penalties)

24.07.2019 (Champions League 2nd Qualifying Round 1st Leg) Dundalk 1-1 Qarabag FK (Emreli 4; Hoban 78)

31.07.2019 (Champions League 2nd Qualifying Round 2nd Leg) Qarabag FK 3-0 Dundalk (Romero 12, 85, Ailton 77)

06.08.2019 (Europa League 3rd Qualifying Round 1st Leg) Slovan Bratislava 1-0 Dundalk (Holman 86)

13.08.2019 (Europa League 3rd Qualifying Round 2nd Leg) Dundalk 1-3 Slovan Bratislava (Duffy 71; Ratao 12, Cavric 33, Daniel 90)

17.08.2020 (Champions League 1st Qualifying Round) NK Celje 3-0 Dundalk (Kerin 43, Vizinger 89, Dangubic 90+5)

17.09.2020 (Europa League 2nd Qualifying Round) Inter Club de'Escaldes 0-1 Dundalk (McMillan 14)

Match Preview – Cobh Ramblers vs Dundalk FC – EA SPORTS CUP Semi-final

Kenny Looking Forward To 'Intensive Period'

Dundalk manager Stephen Kenny admitted that Thursday was a 'very disappointing night' for his Lilywhites in Larnaca. Speaking to dundalkfc.com, the boss reflected on the defeat to AEK Larnaca and feels they were ruthlessly punished in that first half.

"It was a very disappointing night for us in Larnaca. We can't get away from that. Conceding the two goals in the first 20 minutes, made a comeback a tall order. Conceding the third before half-time made it an absolute mountain to climb.

"AEK Larnaca had three shots on target in the half and scored three goals. They punished us every time. It was very uncharacteristic of a defence which has only conceded 12 goals all season and only 1 in the previous 3 European games, including against Larnaca at Oriel Park.

"To concede the goals that we did was careless. There are lessons to be learned Trichovski scored the first with a good finish, it could have been prevented but Trichovski's finish is excellent. For the second goal Sean Hoare didn't see Tete. He just didn't see him and he crept in behind to finish. The second and third goals from the team point of view are poor defending.

"We were also denied a certain penalty from the clear foul on Jamie McGrath in the first half which would have left it 2-1."

The manager spoke about Sean Hoare and feels that the criticism has been unjustified due to some of his superb performances this season and feels that one bad half has cost them their place in this season's UEFA Europa League however has backed the players to learn from the experience.

"People have been saying Sean isn't a right back but recently he was voted not only as the best player in that position, but as the best player in any position - his performances were that good! He has been excellent at right back for us.

"We were poor collectively for the goals conceded I feel.

"In my time here that is my 24th game in Europe. We have never lost over two legs by more than a goal. We have played teams ranked a lot higher than AEK Larnaca.

"We have been punished for one bad half. When they start as quickly as that, if we can just see that period out you find that the temperature drops significantly in the second half and you have a better chance.

"The fact that we defended as poorly as we did means we got punished. It's difficult to come back from that. We have learned valuable lessons from it."

It has been two years since we reached the group stages of the Europa League and Kenny pointed to the change in squad in that time however looking at the overall picture, feels that while going to the group stages was a very difficult task this year, it has been a productive campaign with coefficient points secured to increase our seeding heading into next season's European campaign.

"The team in 2016 which qualified for the group stages of the Europa League played 12 games against some of the top teams in Europe. In the game on Thursday only 3 of those started. That was Brian Gartland, Chris Shields and Robbie Benson. A lot of the players are relatively inexperienced in the European context.

"I do feel that overall although we did want to progress this season, to go through four rounds at the level that we would have had to go through to the group stages was a very difficult assignment.

"The fact that we have won two games and got through the first round of the competition this year has lifted our coefficient. Last season we found that we were half a point short for being seeded for the Champions League. We don't know what competition we will be in next season, whether that is Champions League or Europa League, but ultimately we will be seeded for it and that is very productive. We are trying to move forward as a club. I have been informed that our coefficient is now 7."

Kenny feels that the experience will stand to his players and while the conditions were difficult, that is something which you have to deal with at that level of competition.

"The players will get the benefit of experience. Ultimately in the game itself, there's no getting away from the fact that we were too open and we always play in quite an open way. You can't play with two wingers hugging the line. Our wide players had to be more productive in terms of how they kept the ball.

"They were dispossessed trying to take a man on in their own half at times and you encourage individuality but the decision making needs to be better. Our ball retention had to be better which has always been a strong point in Europe.

"The players found the conditions difficult in the first half with the humidity, the second half they eased somewhat but these things that you have to contend with in Europe. It's better not to seek refuge in those issues although the redheads struggled in the heat!"

The disappointing factor for the boss was the fact that his side are capable of much better and while he acknowledges that, he doesn't believe the narrative that there is no progress made towards other leagues as accurate and uses our own success in the past as evidence of this.

"We are capable of doing much better than we did and that was the disappointing thing, we never gave ourselves a chance. We had a scoreless draw in the first leg and we would have liked to have taken a lead in the first leg and probably deserved it.

"We have already seen what happens when you lose a match convincingly in the manner that we did, people say 'oh we are miles away from all the other leagues.' You come in for a lot of criticism from a lot of quarters.

"Then when we beat teams that are ranked above us, it doesn't automatically mean that we are better than them. When we beat BATE Borisov, Maccabi Tel-Aviv or go away to AZ Alkmaar and get a result or Rosenborg, we don't automatically think that we are at their level. We just know that we are capable of going and putting in great performances.

"Likewise, just because we lost, defended poorly and got punished doesn't make us a bad side. We have to take the criticism. It's irrelevant to us. People talk about the 12 games in 2016 but we have lost Daryl Horgan, Andy Boyle, Ronan Finn, David McMillan and Patrick McEleney out of that side.

"Stephen O'Donnell has been injured long term and Sean Gannon only passed a late test to take part at all."

There have been many changes to the squad over the past couple of seasons and the Dublin native believes that the showing against AEK Larnaca was 'unique' in terms of the overall picture and knows that the younger players will benefit from the lessons over the two legs.

"We will debrief on the things that we didn't do right in Larnaca. We will analyse it and understand those are the mistakes that we have not made before in the 23 games. They have all been tightly contested affairs. That is a unique game in that regard.

"When we beat BATE Borisov 3-0 and played brilliantly we didn't automatically assume that we were 3 goals better than them. That game was in isolation.

"It is a steep learning curve for some of the players. Jamie McGrath, Dylan Connolly, Michael Duffy and Sean Hoare coming into their first European campaign proper.

"Sean didn't play in Europe last year, Niclas Vemmelund was playing. We have Dean Jarvis and Daniel Cleary also with their first campaigns and they will be better for the experience. "

Patrick McEleney has returned to the club and took part for all of the second half on Thursday however those exertions have now ruled him out of this week's fixtures.

"He played 45 minutes on Thursday night and played very well in the second half but his groin is tight after it. That has ruled him out of both games against Cobh Ramblers this week. He isn't going to play Monday or Friday. He had a very injury interrupted time in England. We have to tread carefully with him and we have to manage him. He is ruled out of both games this week. He clearly wasn't ready to start.

"Sean Gannon only joined in with the team the night before at the stadium having not trained properly for a couple of weeks with a calf strain. We weren't sure on him but we played him in the second half and he did well. Someone coming back from a calf strain like that without even training with the team. You never know how these things will go."

The 46 year-old heaped praise on the current squad and feels they are ready for the final stages of the season where they will try to regain their league title and is pleased with the progression of the younger players in the squad.

"This group of players have done brilliantly this season. We are looking forward to the game tomorrow in Cobh in the league cup and we are looking forward also to the FAI Cup match against them on Friday.

"We have ten games to go in the league and the main objective for us has been to win the league. We have won three league titles in a row which was historic. Cork City won the title last season and we finished second. We are trying to regain the title with a lot of young players that we signed last season including Sean Hore, Jamie McGrath, Daniel Cleary, Dylan Connolly and Michael Duffy.

"We have set a new record of 11 straight league victories plus other domestic cup victories which is a terrific achievement. Before the Larnaca tie, we had 16 straight wins in all competitions and the defeat was a kick in the teeth. It is one that we have to respond to.

"We have a tough programme coming up. We requested that the Sligo Rovers game be played next Monday or Tuesday which is the dates after the FAI Cup but that has been refused and it is being played on August 20th.

"We wanted to get that fixed soon because we have to refix the game against Shamrock Rovers as well as other possible re-fixtures depending on how we go against Cobh. We wanted to get them in as early as possible.

"We have two away matches in four days after the Cup against Bray Wanderers and Sligo. We are very focused on the run in with the final number of games. It will be an intensive programme. The players' attitude overall has been excellent."

Kenny singled out the centre midfield of Chris Shields and Robbie Benson for praise and believes that Lithuanian international Karolis Chvedukas can have a major role to play between now and November. He also is looking forward to the final stages of the season and knows his side will be ready, hailing the hunger and determination within the group.

"The central midfield pairing of Chris Shields and Robbie Benson has been excellent. Robbie Benson has got some crucial goals throughout the season. Shields and Benson have given us a great platform.

"Karolis Chvedukas is capable of having a big impact between now and the end of the season. He can make a very important contribution between now and the end of the season. He is looking quite sharp and has a key role to play also.

"We look forward to travelling to Cobh tomorrow before hosting them here on Friday. After that it is quite an intensive run of fixtures including the refixed games. It is a programme we will be ready for.

"We have an awful lot to play for this season. The players are very hungry and determined to finish the season strongly. There's a great hunger in the dressing room, a real determination.

"I think the players will get better again."

Team news vs Cobh Ramblers (EA Sports Cup semi-final)

We do indeed have the EA Sports Cup semi-final on Monday and we travel to Cobh Ramblers on Monday evening. The match kicks-off at 5 p.m. at St. Colman's Park and as the boss confirmed above, Patrick McEleney is ruled out with a groin problem and Stephen O'Donnell continues his recovery from a broken leg. Georgie Kelly is cup-tied after his earlier involvement in the competition with UCD. Stephen Folan returns to the squad after a knee injury and Sam Byrne also is in contention after shaking off a hamstring injury. Youth players Pablo Calvacante, Karl Fitsimons, Jack O'Keeffe and Nedas Maciulaitis come into the squad.

Team News vs Cork City

AVIVA Stadium

Irish Daily Mail FAI Cup Final

Sunday 6th November 2016

3.40 p.m.

The domestic season draws to a close on Sunday afternoon as Dundalk and Cork City face off in the Irish Daily Mail FAI Cup Final.

Please note that the match takes place on Sunday afternoon kicking off at 3.40 p.m. with extra-time and penalties if necessary to decide the winner.

Tickets are still on sale from the Oriel Park office.

On Thursday night Dundalk were narrowly defeated 2-1 by Zenit St. Petersburg at the Petrovsky Stadium. Brazilian Giuliano had given the hosts the lead just before half-time however Daryl Horgan equalised just after the break with a superb individual goal. Zenit would take all three points thanks to Giuliano's second just over ten minutes from time.

The result means that Zenit qualify from Group D with Dundalk and Maccabi Tel-Aviv in joint second spot on four points – the Lilywhites are ahead in the standings on the head-to-head. AZ Alkmaar are bottom with two points.

Sunday could round off what has been a magnificent season for the club as they bid to defend the FAI Cup they won last year and also add to the 'double' which was won 12 months ago also.

This is indeed a repeat of the 2015 Cup final – Richie Towell's extra-time strike won the trophy for the Lilywhites.

This is the fifth and final meeting between the sides this season with Cork City winning the first three – two in the league and the President's Cup at Turner's Cross while Dundalk were 2-1 victors in a superb encounter at Oriel Park just under a month ago.

For the match Dundalk have an injury doubt over Robbie Benson who is struggling with a hamstring injury. Shane Grimes is ruled out for the rest of the year also with a hamstring issue but his is torn with Darren Meenan returning to the squad having missed the trip to Russia due to a family bereavement.

Injured: Shane Grimes (hamstring)

Doubtful: Robbie Benson (hamstring)

Suspended: None.

Support Can Inspire – Kenny

Speaking to **dundalkfc.com** ahead of the showpiece manager Stephen Kenny feels that the support on the day is vital and can inspire the players to another 'famous' victory

"It has been a big week for us. With the Russian trip and now the Cup final. We are sitting second in the group in the Europa League and the league title already won. Adding the FAI Cup would be exceptional.

"Motivation is high to go and win the double again. We have to get our energy from the crowd and the occasion. The support has been magnificent and they can inspire us to a famous victory once again. We are motivated to have that brilliant feeling of winning the Cup again."

2016 Top Scorers (League in brackets)

David McMillan – 21 (16)

Ciaran Kilduff – 13 (8)

Daryl Horgan – 12 (10)

Ronan Finn – 9(8)

Brian Gartland – 7 (7)

Robbie Benson – 5 (2)

Paddy Barrett – 5 (3)

Dean Shiels – 5 (3)

Patrick McEleney -4 (3)

Michael O'Connor – 4 (0)

Dane Massey – 3 (3)

Andy Boyle – 3(3)

John Mountney – 2(2)

Chris Shields – 2 (0)

Darren Meenan – 1 (1)

Stephen O'Donnell – 1(1)

Jordan Kelly – 1 (0)

Last 10 meetings (All competitions)

11.10.2016 (LGE) Dundalk 2-1 Cork City (McNulty og 7, Horgan 36; O'Sullivan 56)

03.06.2016 (LGE) Cork City 1-0 Dundalk (Dooley 26)

18.03.2016 (LGE) Dundalk 0-1 Cork City (Maguire pen 68)

27.02.2016 (PRC) Cork City 2-0 Dundalk (Holohan 20, Maguire 61)

08.11.2015 (FCUP) Cork City 0-1 Dundalk (Towell 107)

23.10.2015 (LGE) Cork City 2-2 Dundalk (O'Sullivan 29, Sheppard 40; McMillan 9, Towell 25)

26.07.2015 (LGE) Dundalk 1-1 Cork City (Towell pen 10; O'Sullivan 36)

24.04.2015 (LGE) Cork City 1-2 Dundalk (Dennehy 32; Towell 45, pen 47)

24.10.2014 (LGE) Dundalk 2-0 Cork City (O'Donnell 47, Gartland 82)

01.08.2014 (LGE) Cork City 1-2 Dundalk (D. Dennehy 83; Towell 15, Gartland 85)

Match Stats

This will be Dundalk's 16th FAI Cup final overall

They have won 10 and lost 5 of the 15 they have been involved in.

A win would be the sides 11th FAI Cup.

This is Dundalk's 210th FAI Cup Tie

Their overall match record in the FAI Cup is P285 W132 D73 L81

Dundalk and Cork City have met on 76 occasions with the Lilywhites having the upper hand – P76 W 33 D 20 L23

This is the second time that they have met in an FAI Cup Final.

The first time was this time last year.

This will be the fourth tie between the sides in the FAI Cup.

Dundalk's record against Cork City in the Cup reads as P5 W2 D2 L1

Dundalk have managed 30 clean sheets against Cork City in the 76 meetings to date.

A win will mean that Dundalk have won successive matches against Cork City for the first time since 2014.

The league champions notched their 101st goal of the season on Thursday night and they will be aiming to continue their pursuit of last years tally of 112.

Dundalk have got three former Cork City players in their squad – Daryl Horgan, Ciaran Kilduff and captain Stephen O'Donnell.