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CELTIC v ROSS COUNTY

Celtic Park, Saturday 10 January 2004, Kick-off 3.00pm

Tennent's Scottish Cup 3rd Round 2003/04

Programme No.17



CARLING



Celtic 





CARLING ARE PROUD TO BE SUPPORTERS OF CELTIC FC. LOVEFOOTBALL



“We need to be focussed for every single game, starting today with the visit of Ross County”

OUR last match here at Celtic Park was obviously a wonderful victory, and it is one which should give us tremendous confidence going into this afternoon's vital Scottish Cup tie against Ross County.

Any victory over our great rivals is an achievement worth celebrating, but to have won with such style and aplomb was particularly gratifying. The players had to be focussed, and they were. Their performance was quite outstanding, and the margin of victory - secured by terrific goals from Stilian Petrov, Stan Varga and a sublime Alan Thompson free-kick - didn't flatter them slightest.

That it saw the team set a new club record of 18 consecutive league victories in what was also our 67th match unbeaten is also a testament to their consistency, and I must say again how delighted I have been with the manner in which they have gone about their business this season.

There will be no complacency, however. Naturally, I'm still very concerned that these standards are maintained because there is, without any shadow of a doubt,

still a great deal to play for. We are only now at the half-way stage of the season, after all, and there are no less than 57 league points still to play for.

Yes, we have something of an advantage as things stand, but I honestly believe that we may need every one of those 11 points as the race for the title goes down to the wire. You only have to look at our next four league games, four of which are away from home, to see that there are plenty of matches in which we could drop points. I've said already, and I will say it again, that this period just beginning is one of the most difficult and crucial periods of our entire season.

We cannot look any further than that at the moment, and I would hope that the players will realise as well as I do the likely consequences of losing concentration over the next few months. All it takes is losing a couple of matches for confidence to be dented, and that's why we need to be focussed for every single game, starting today.

No-one at this football club will need reminding of what happened

in our last game in this competition when we were brought back down to earth with something of a bump after the great euphoria which followed our victory at Anfield. We have also endured some uneasy evenings in the cup competitions here at Celtic Park - Partick Thistle springs immediately to mind - and will need to play very strongly if we are to progress this afternoon.

That's why, while we have one or two of our senior players with niggling injuries which might benefit from a slight rest, it will be a strong Celtic side that takes to the field today. And it will need to be.

All the reports I have received on Ross County from our Chief Scout Tom O'Neill have been very complimentary, and I understand that their derby against Inverness Caledonian Thistle last week was a terrific match. They will be full of confidence having claimed victory in that one, and I know that Alex Smith, for whom I have the utmost respect, will put a side that will not easily be beaten.

CELTIC FOOTBALL CLUB FACTFILE

Formed: 1888

Stadium: Celtic Park
 (capacity 60,506)

Home strip: Green/white hooped shirts,
 white shorts, white socks

Away strip: Black shirts, black shorts and socks with
 gold trim

Third strip: Gold shirts, green
 shorts, gold socks

Record attendance: 92,000 (v Rangers, 1938)

Record victory: 11-0 (v Dundee, 1895)

Record defeat: 0-8 (v Motherwell, 1937)

Most league goals (1 season): 50, Jimmy McGrory,
 1935/36

Most Premier/SPL goals (1 season): 35, Brian McClair
 1986/87, Henrik Larsson 2000/01

Website: www.celticfc.net

HONOURS

Scottish League (38)

1892/93, 1893/94, 1895/96, 1897/98, 1904/05, 1905/06,
 1906/07, 1907/08, 1908/09, 1909/10, 1913/14, 1914/15,
 1915/16, 1916/17, 1918/19, 1921/22, 1925/26, 1935/36,
 1937/38, 1953/54, 1965/66, 1966/67, 1967/68, 1968/69,
 1969/70, 1970/71, 1971/72, 1972/73, 1973/74, 1976/77,
 1978/79, 1980/81, 1981/82, 1985/86, 1987/88, 1997/98,
 2000/2001, 2001/2002

Scottish Cup (31)

1892, 1899, 1900, 1904, 1907, 1908, 1911, 1912, 1914,
 1923, 1925, 1927, 1931, 1933, 1937, 1951, 1954, 1965,
 1967, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1985,
 1988, 1989, 1995, 2001

League Cup (12)

1956/57, 1957/58, 1965/66, 1966/67, 1967/68 1968/69,
 1969/70, 1974/75, 1982/83, 1997/98,
 1999/2000, 2000/2001

European Cup (1) 1967 **Coronation Cup (1)** 1953

CELTIC FACTS

- On January 8, 1910, Peter Somers played his last game before leaving the club to join Hamilton. He had played 219 games, scoring 62 goals.
- In one of the biggest-ever football shocks, Celtic lost 2-4 to non-league Arthurlie in the Scottish Cup on January 9, 1897.
- On the same day in 1981, Alan Sneddon was transferred to Hibs for £60,000. Hibs went on to win the First Division title, so Alan received a medal for that and also one from Celtic's Premier Division win the same season.
- On January 19, 1995, Pierre van Hooijdonk joined the club from NAC Breda for a fee of £1.5 million.
- In Celtic's 9-0 defeat of Dunfermline on January 14, 1928, Jimmy McGrory scored eight.
- On the same day in 1993, Jacki Dziekanowski was sold to Bristol City for £250,000. He had scored 22 goals in 66 appearances.
- Against Motherwell, on January 17, 1925, Charlie Shaw made the last of his 436 appearances, having previously made 223 for Queen's Park Rangers. In his time with Celtic, Charlie won six championships and two Scottish Cups but was never capped.
- On January 18, 1973, Lou Macari was sold to Manchester United for a Scottish record fee of £200,000. Lou had scored 57 goals in 102 matches.



ROSS COUNTY FACTS

- Ross County FC was founded in 1929 and play all their home matches at Victoria Park in Dingwall.
- The ground's record attendance is the 6,600 who turned up for the visit of Celtic in a benefit match on August 31, 1970.
- The club's best-ever victory came in the Scottish Cup against St Cuthbert Wanderers in December 1993, when Ross County won 11-0.
- Heaviest defeat was a 1-10 reverse at the hands of Inverness Thistle in a Highland League match.
- Ross County's biggest outlay was the £25,000 paid to Southampton for Barry Wilson.
- The record transfer fee received was the £200,000 paid by Aston Villa for Neil Tarrant in April 1999.
- Ross County first joined the Scottish Football League in season 1994/95 in Division 3. They won promotion to Division 2 in 1998/99 and then made the step to Division 1 a year later.
- The 'most league goals in a season' record is held by Derek Adams, with 22 in season 1996/97.
- David McKay made the most league appearances, with 157 between 1995 and 2001.





TODAY'S VISITORS - ROSS COUNTY
MANAGER - ALEX SMITH

CELTIC



ROSS COUNTY

Michael Gray	2	1
Momo Sylla	3	2
Jackie McNamara	4	3
Joos Valgaeren	5	4
Bobo Balde	6	5
Henrik Larsson	7	6
Alan Thompson	8	7
Chris Sutton	9	8
John Hartson	10	9
David Fernandez	12	10
Paul Lambert	14	11
Bobby Petta	15	12
Ulrik Laursen	16	14
Didier Agathe	17	15
Neil Lennon	18	16
Stilian Petrov	19	17
Robert Douglas	20	18
Magnus Hedman	21	19
David Marshall	22	20
Stanislav Varga	23	21
Shaun Maloney	29	22
Steve Guppy	30	23
Ross Wallace	33	24
Johan Mjallby	35	
Craig Beattie	37	
Jamie Smith	39	
Stephen Craigne	40	
John Kennedy	41	
Liam Miller	43	

Colin Stewart	1
Graeme Smith	2
Kevin Miller	3
Les Fridge	4
Sean Webb	5
Jordan Tait	6
Stephen O'Donnell	7
Jamie McCunnie	8
Stuart Malcolm	9
Jim Lauchlan	10
Steven Mackay	11
Hugh Robertson	12
Mark McCulloch	14
Martin Canning	15
Don Cowie	16
John Rankin	17
David Hannah	18
Conor Gethins	19
Steven McGarry	20
Graham Bayne	21
David Winters	22
Jim Hamilton	23
Sean Higgins	24

CURRENT SCOTTISH PREMIERLEAGUE 2003/04

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
CELTIC	19	18	1	0	62	7	55	55
Rangers	19	14	2	3	43	18	25	44
Hearts	19	10	3	6	28	23	4	33
Dunfermline	19	8	6	5	25	27	-2	30
Motherwell	19	6	6	7	20	22	-2	24
Livingston	19	5	8	6	21	22	-1	23
Hibernian	19	6	4	9	20	33	-13	22
Dundee Utd	19	5	5	9	18	32	-14	20
Kilmarnock	19	6	2	11	24	41	-17	20
Aberdeen	19	5	4	10	23	34	-11	19
Dundee	19	4	6	9	21	27	-6	18
Partick Thistle	19	2	3	14	19	38	-19	9

CLUB SPONSORS



FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

Scottish Premierleague HEARTS v CELTIC	SUN 18 JANUARY 3:00pm
Scottish Premierleague ABERDEEN v CELTIC	SAT 24 JANUARY 12:30pm
Scottish Premierleague CELTIC v KILMARNOCK	SAT 31 JANUARY 12:30pm
Scottish Premierleague DUNFERMLINE v CELTIC	WED 11 FEBRUARY 7:45pm
Scottish Premierleague CELTIC v DUNDEE UTD	SAT 14 FEBRUARY 3:00pm
Scottish Premierleague PARTICK TH v CELTIC	SUN 22 FEBRUARY 3:00pm

RECENT FORM



Scottish Premierleague, January 3, 2004
CELTIC 3 v O RANGERS (Petrov, Varga, Thompson)

Scottish Premierleague, December 28, 2003 CELTIC 6 v O HIBERNIAN (Sutton 2, Hartson 2, Larsson, Petrov)
Scottish Premierleague, December 21, 2003 MOTHERWELL 0 v 2 CELTIC (Hartson, Thompson)
CIS Cup 4th Round, December 18, 2003 HIBERNIAN 2 v 1 CELTIC (Varga)
Scottish Premierleague, December 13, 2003 CELTIC 3 v 2 DUNDEE (Larsson, Balde, Kennedy)
UEFA Champions League, December 10, 2003 LYON 3 v 2 CELTIC (Hartson, Sutton)

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee:	Iain Brines
Assistant Referees:	Jim Lyon George Drummond John Flemming
Fourth Official:	John Flemming

Celtic Football Club, Celtic Park, Glasgow G40 3RE 0141-556 2611

CELTIC plc DIRECTORS Brian Quinn, Peter Lawwell, Eric Riley, Dermot Desmond, Tom Allison, Eric Hagman

CFAC DIRECTORS Peter Lawwell, Eric Riley, John Keane, Michael McDonald, Kevin Sweeney

MANAGER Martin O'Neill ASSISTANT MANAGER John Robertson COACH Steve Walford

HEAD OF YOUTH Tommy Burns YOUTH TEAM COACH Willie McStay UNDER-21 COACH Kenny McDowall

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS Tim Williamson & Gavin McCarthy CLUB DOCTOR Roddy Macdonald KIT CONTROLLER John Clark



Slovakian defender Stanislav Varga is desperate to bring the Scottish Cup back to Paradise but warns the Hoops will have to remain fully focused

Exclusive Interview: ALISON MCCONNELL

STANISLAV VARGA made his senior debut for Celtic in Inverness last April when John Robertson's Caledonian Thistle side eliminated the Hoops from the Scottish Cup.

It was an ignominious arrival for the Slovakian internationalist who had to bide his time for his chance to hold down a regular first-team place, but since breaking into Martin O'Neill's squad in the second league game of this season against Dundee United, Varga has been a mainstay.

This afternoon Ross County make the journey to Celtic Park in an attempt to repeat the giant-killing feats the Scottish Cup has occasionally thrown up in the past, and Varga is determined that Celtic will be doing their utmost to ensure they aren't one of the casualties this season.

O'Neill's side have now gone 67 games without defeat on their home turf while also notching 18 successive league wins this season, but such statistics haven't been created courtesy of any complacency on Celtic's part and Varga has insisted that this afternoon will require another concentrated effort.

"The Inverness match wasn't the best game that I would have wanted to have made my debut in and it was a terrible feeling going out of the Scottish Cup up there," recalled Varga. "I'm just glad that things have improved since then.

"I have watched Ross County a couple of times on TV at the weekend and I know that they are a decent team. They will be coming to Celtic Park wanting to give it their very best shot and we have to be ready for that.

"At the moment Celtic are a team that

everyone would like to beat because we have been doing quite well this season, but we have to make sure that we play our own game and keep our focus. We always take each game as it comes and we will give Ross County every respect because we know that anything can happen in football, especially in the cup competitions.

"Everyone involved in football knows that it will be a big thing for a First Division side to come down to Glasgow and play Celtic and we have to be on our guard and try to concentrate on nothing more than winning the game.

"We need to be aware of the threat that they bring and avoid a repeat of what happened up at Inverness last season."

Varga has a league and cup double to boast of from his time with Slovakian side Slovan Bratislava and the defender is inevitably keen to supplement that with silverware from Scotland.

Celtic remain in pole position at the summit of the league table and Hibs are so far the only team to beat O'Neill's side in domestic competition this season.

Nevertheless, Varga has maintained that the hard work of the opening half of the campaign that has taken Celtic into the enviable position they currently enjoy has to be continued before anyone can begin to think of success at the end of the season.

"The FA Cup is probably the most famous domestic cup competition around the world but the Scottish Cup is no different and it is something that everyone here would like to win," he said. "Every player wants to win every competition that they enter and going out of the CIS Insurance Cup against Hibs was disappointing last month.

"You want to win everything that you possibly can but right now we aren't looking any further than the next game. We expect it to be a hard game and we know



VARGA VALUE
Varga has been in fantastic form this season, not least last week against Rangers



that we need to be ready for it. "We have been pleased with the fact that we have lost just seven league goals this season, but the whole team deserves credit for that because of the way that everyone works together.

"It isn't just the defenders who should take pride in that because even the front players like Henrik (Larsson) and John (Hartson) work hard to win the ball and keep possession.

"In the game up at Dundee which we won 1-0 after Didier (Agathe) was sent off, Henrik was terrific in the way that he kept

"The team are pleased that we've only lost seven league goals, and we all deserve the credit for that because of the way that we all work together"

coming back and you can see how hard everyone works for the team. We need to keep that going over the next few months because we don't want any slip-ups."

Varga has put his name on the scoresheet four times already this season, the last occasion being last weekend's 3-0 Old Firm derby win, but he's not quite ready to

look for a change of position.

"It is always nice to score but as a defender my priority is a clean sheet," he said. "Coaches have always told me that I have the ability to go forward and I do enjoy that, although I don't go up too often. Martin O'Neill told me my first job is to defend and that is always my main priority."