

ENGLAND V PORTUGAL Looking to break Scolari jinx

England are determined to strike it third time lucky here Saturday by hurdling Portugal and their charismatic coach Luiz Felipe Scolari to reach the World Cup semifinals...

"I don't feel it's me against Scolari at all," he said. "It's England against Portugal, it's the quarterfinal of the World Cup, and it's important to win it. I think we can."

ing. And if I haven't changed by now then I probably never will. Yet regardless of whether Eriksson's management is to blame, it is undeniable that England have been far less than the sum of their parts in four matches so far.



FREING HIMSELF FOR ANOTHER TRADEMARK FREEKICK: England captain David Beckham doing push-up sideways during a training session at Mittelbergstadion in Buhlertal on Thursday.

KEY QUOTES

England coach Eriksson: 'I'm not a man of revenge. It's not a word in my head.' Portugal coach Scolari: 'Eriksson is a competent coach with a proven track record. Both of us have ability and respect for each other. A win or a loss (on Saturday) won't change that.'

Table with 2 columns: Year, England goals, Portugal goals, Location. Includes records for 1961, 1966, 1986, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004.

Table with 2 columns: Team, Players. Lists England (4-5-1) and Portugal (4-5-1) lineups.

History beckons Portugal

Portugal have not made a World Cup semifinal since the days of the great Eusebio in 1966, but current captain Luis Figo insisted his team was focused on only getting a win against England in Saturday's quarterfinal clash.

this time round against England after being substituted in the Euro 2004 quarterfinal, acknowledged the strength of an England team that has stuttered its way through the group phases (two wins and a draw) and sneaked a 1-0 win over Ecuador in the second round.

practise. "I think Ricardo is good at stopping penalty kicks. But it depends on a lot of things at that moment." Figo also vowed to put his personal friendship with his England counterpart David Beckham to one side.



LOOKING BEYOND ENGLAND? Portugal's playmaker Luis Figo (R) and Simao Sabrosa stretch ahead of the team's training session in Mariefeld on Thursday. Portugal face off England in the quarterfinal in Gelsenkirchen today.

Now or never: Neville

Gary Neville believes it's now or never if England are to end their 40-year wait for World Cup glory and avoid being remembered as the nearly men of international football.

"I believe there is a time and a moment for players to deliver, and I believe it is Saturday," said the Manchester United defender, who is likely to start after recovering from a calf strain.

Captain confident

England captain David Beckham is tipping a physical game with tackles flying against Portugal on Saturday, and is quietly confident his team will prevail.

Portugal's last game against the Netherlands saw 16 yellow and four red cards brandished as it descended into chaos, and Beckham is ready for a tough encounter with their bogey team in the quarterfinal clash.

fully fit squad following Gary Neville's recovery from a calf injury and are keen to put one over Portugal who bundled them out of the 2004 European Championships at the same stage.

play better football. "Great teams like this you can't stop them playing sometimes," he said. "They will have a lot of possession, of course, but it's up to us to pass the ball around well. As a team and as players we know we can do that and on a big stage like this it is important."

Figo hoping for victory

Portugal captain Luis Figo has vowed to put his personal friendship with his England counterpart David Beckham to one side when the two teams clash in Saturday's quarterfinal match.

Figo played with Beckham at Real Madrid before he moved on to Inter Milan last season when he found himself largely surplus to requirements at the Spanish giants.

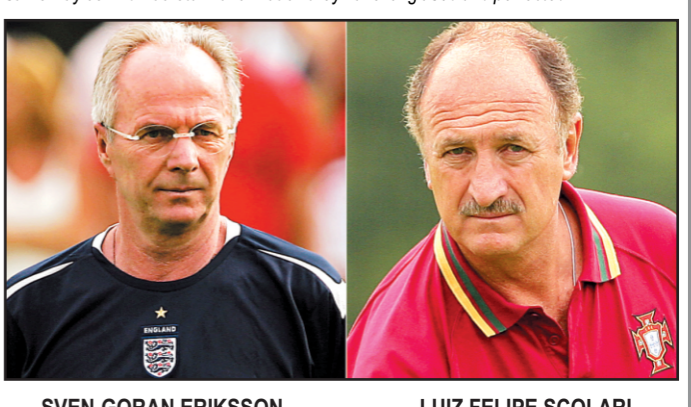
English worry

Cristiano Ronaldo and Luis Figo have been fingered as the main danger men by England as they prepare to take on Portugal in the World Cup quarterfinals on Saturday.

a calf injury that forced him to miss England's last three games, was referring to England's loss to Portugal at the same stage in the European Championships in 2004.

TACTICS

England seem set to retain a five-man midfield supporting lone striker Wayne Rooney despite their struggles with the system against Ecuador while Portugal will line up the same way behind Pauleta in a formation they have long used and perfected.



ENGLAND Defence: Central defence, traditionally an English strength, has been a worry in Germany. Woeful defending at set-pieces allowed Sweden to score twice in the 2-2 Group Draw as John Terry, Rio Ferdinand and substitute Sol Campbell all looked poor while a Terry error almost gifted Ecuador the lead in the second round.

Drop Beckham!

David Beckham should be dropped from Sven-Goran Eriksson's England team, Wigan chairman Dave Whelan said on Thursday.

by Beckham's inconsistent displays and said Eriksson should act now. "He has to have the right team selection and the guts to drop David Beckham, but he hasn't," said the Wigan supremo.

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