

## Product Overview

The Opta ethos is to provide a level of analysis and insight that is ideal for driving the editorial agenda.

### Still not sorted for summer?

There are a number of teams who are looking to make a late booking for South Africa in 2010, and the play-offs - or disappointment - beckon for some famous names. What can they do to make sure they secure a place in the World Cup final? Bill Edgar runs his eye over the sides on the brink at qualification nears its end and looks at the lessons they can learn from this weekend.

#### Irish green light

Italy must restrict the space of the opposition's playmakers when they contest their play-off. Against Italy, Glenn Whelan, left, and Keith Andrews, the central midfield players, allowed Andrea Pirlo plenty of room between them and their back four. The Italy veteran, instrumental in the 2-2 draw in Dublin that booked the team's World Cup place, played a number of penetrative balls forward, as his passing graphic indicates.

#### Ronaldo crucial

Portugal will take their probable place in the play-offs after overhauling Hungary with a fine display of high-speed counter-attacking. Cristiano Ronaldo should be back after an ankle injury that could take four weeks to heal. Nani and Simão were also prominent as Portugal looked for defences with effective short passing and dribbling.

Portugal long ball %: 9.4% (vs England's 21%)  
Portugal passes: 25 (vs England's 18)

#### Little carrot for Swedes

Ronaldo is better placed to reach the World Cup after Portugal all but booked a play-off slot but Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the world's second most expensive player after Ronaldo, is highly unlikely to be there. The Barcelona striker, by far the best Swedish player in the 10 closest away to Denmark, suffers for a lack of talent among his team-mates.

Sweden's World Cup qualifying campaign:  
Most goals: Ibrahimovic (2), Kalisto (2), Safari (7), Ibrahimovic (9)  
Most chances created: Ibrahimovic (14), Kalisto (20)  
Aerial duels success among main forwards:  
Ibrahimovic: 58%, Larsson: 19%, Elminder: 9%

#### Possible number of Barclays Premier League players at the World Cup

Chelsea	18	Everton	7	Sunderland	2
Arsenal	15	Fulham	7	Wigan Athletic	2
Liverpool	14	Blackburn Rovers	5	Wolverhampton	2
Manchester United	12	Aston Villa	4	Wanderers	2
Manchester City	11	Hull City	3	Burnley	1
West Ham United	8	Portsmouth	3	Birmingham City	0
Tottenham Hotspur	7	Stoke City	2	Bolton Wanderers	0

#### Qualified success

Countries who have booked their place in South Africa:

- United States
- Mexico
- Holland
- England
- Spain
- Chile
- Navy Coast
- Brazil
- Paraguay
- South Africa (hosts)
- North Korea
- Japan
- South Korea
- Denmark
- Germany
- Serbia
- Italy
- Australia
- China

#### Runners up table

The eight runners-up with the best record in European qualifying progress to four two-legged play-offs. When calculating this table, results against the bottom placed team do not count in groups one to eight which have six teams each. In five in group one, or if the identity of the bottom side changes after the last round of fixtures on Wednesday this table could alter dramatically.

Played	Points	Goal difference
7	16	+9†
8	15	+4
8	14	+6
7	13	+10†
7	13	+6
8	13	+4
7	12	+†
7	11	+2
8	10	+2

†Guaranteed play-off place

#### Importance dates

- 2009 OCT 19: Play-off draw
- 2009 NOV 14 and 18: Play-off dates
- 2009 DEC 4: World Cup draw
- 2010 JUNE 11 to JULY 11: Tournament

#### Stadiums

Stadiums for the 2010 World Cup:

- Lotus Stadium, Pretoria
- Royal Bafobengobong Stadium, Rustenburg
- Mbombeni Stadium, Durban
- Soccer City and 11th Park Stadium, Johannesburg
- Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium, Port Elizabeth
- Free State Stadium, Bloemfontein
- Green Field Stadium, Cape Town

#### Numbers game failing

Countries tend to draw on vast reserves of players in the lengthy South American qualifying campaign, but Argentina have used the most players among the six countries who have either qualified for the World Cup or may still do so. Despite the large-scale tinkering, Lionel Messi, right, has remained a regular.

Players used in South American qualifying:

Argentina	45
Brazil	39
Ecuador	39
Chile	36
Uruguay	34
Paraguay	33

Most Argentina appearances in qualifying:

Messi, right	17
Zanetti	16
Marquessano	15

10 Years of Martin Palermo's Argentina exile before recent recall. The striker scored their last winner against Peru.

36 Age of Rolando Schiaffino, the centre back, when he made his Argentina debut last month.

3 Teams among Argentina's nine South American rivals who have not beaten them in the qualifying tournament, including Uruguay, whom Argentina visit on Wednesday.

#### Russia must capitalise

Russia, consigned to the play-offs, must capitalise better on their sick build up play than they did in the 2-0 home defeat by Germany. Vladimir Bystrov, the winger, frequently engineered good positions on the left yet attempted only two crosses and used up only one scoring attempt (although the referee missed Arne Friedrich's trip on Bystrov in the penalty area). Yuri Zhirkov, of Borussia Dortmund, struggled as left back as he receives full fitness, receiving a booking for one of his five fouls and offering little in attack.

Most Russia fouls:

Zhirkov	5
Semshov	3

Bystrov touches

## Product Detail

Example used in the The Times, October 2009.

You can use our graphical analysis, comprehensive statistics and sensational facts to support predictions and previews or to construct the best possible match reviews.

## Features & Benefits

Our editorial products include:

- Preview data, analysis and facts.
- Predictions.
- Features and news.
- Commentary.
- Post-match data and points of interest from matches.
- Graphical data and analysis.
- Team and player rankings.

## For More Information

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