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Russian Coach Capello Confident Ahead of Do-or-Die Match

By Jennifer Monaghan

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Russia's national soccer team coach Fabio Capello attends a news conference at the Arena Baixada football stadium, a day before the team's match against Algeria, in Curitiba.

As Russia prepares to take on Algeria in its final match of the World Cup group stages on Thursday, players and fans alike know that nothing less than victory will assure their passage through to the next round of the tournament.

"Will the Russian team advance from the group? Of course! I have no doubt!" former Russia midfielder Konstantin Zyryanov, who has more than 50 caps for his country, was quoted as saying by sports website Sport Express.

Coach Fabio Capello also had high hopes for the match, saying Wednesday in a press conference that he "still believed that [Russia can qualify]. Absolutely I believe," Reuters reported.

Algeria, Russia's opponent on Thursday, has surprised many football fans with its performance during the World Cup. In their opening match, the North Africans were unlucky to lose to a highly rated Belgian side, while in their next match they demolished South Korea 4-2 — a team that Russia only managed to record a lackluster draw against.

Speaking ahead of Thursday's match, Algerian midfielder Yacine Brahimi said he was confident his side, which has never advanced from the group stages of the tournament, could pull off a win against Russia.

"We are more than determined. We will try to win this match against Russia even though we know it will be very hard," Brahimi said in an interview with Fifa, international football's governing body.

Capello, who has faced Algeria once before while head of the England national team, praised the performances of the North Africans, saying in comments carried by Reuters that "they are doing really well."

But while Russia's manager will be hoping Algeria take it easy in their match on Thursday — the North African side need only one point from the game to advance to the knockout rounds — Brahimi said his side will not play for a draw.

"Of course we will try to win ... playing for a draw is not part of our principles. We will do everything to win the match, to put in a second good performance," Brahimi added.

Should Russia manage to beat Algeria on Thursday evening, they face the tantalizing prospect of taking on Germany or the U.S in the next round, with the two Group G teams — who are tied on level points — also set to play each other on Thursday to determine their final rankings.

The prospect of a showdown against the U.S. will surely give Capello's side a much needed boost ahead of its game against Algeria, while the Americans need only a draw against Germany to advance to the knockout stages of the tournament.

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