

Russia's Football Team Held to Surprise Draw by Moldova in Euro-2016 Qualifier

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Moldova's Victor Golovatenco (L) challenges Russia's Artem Dzyuba during their Euro 2016 Group G qualifying soccer match at the Otkrytie Arena in Moscow, Oct. 12, 2014.

Fabio Capello's 100 percent record in home qualifying matches as Russia's manager came to an end in Moscow as his side were surprisingly held to a 1-1 draw by Group G outsiders Moldova in their Euro 2016.

After six previous triumphs on home soil stretching back two years, Capello's men looked on course for victory number seven on Sunday as their dominance was rewarded with Artem Dzyuba's 73rd minute penalty, which he both earned and converted.

Yet only a minute later, Moldova equalized with captain Alexandru Epureanu heading home from Alexandru Dedov's corner, leaving the visitors, ranked 82 places lower than Russia at 105th in FIFA world rankings, to treat escaping with a draw as if it were a victory.

"We knew Moldova wouldn't be an easy rival, and they always defend with big effort," said Capello. "The visitors were working 10 together in defense and successfully running back

to counter-attacks. Unfortunately, we lost two points."

Capello's plan to field a rather experimental side against lesser opposition, making six changes from the team which drew 1-1 in Sweden on Thursday and resting key personnel, backfired as they took on a Moldovan side that included five Russian-based players.

Moldovan coach Alexander Kurtryan plumped for a safety-first approach, playing with five defenders who effectively snuffed out the threat of the Russian strike pair, Alexander Kerzhakov and Dzyuba, despite the home side's near-monopoly of possession.

"We played in an orderly way. Devotion and diligence helped us today. Over time we'll also improve the quality," Kurtryan said.

In the first half, Russia created only one opportunity, spurned in the 15th minute by winger Denis Cheryshev, with Moldova's Alexandru Gatcan also wasting a chance just before halftime.

After the break, Denis Glushakov and Alan Dzagoyev wasted further chances for Russia before Dzyuba netted in his home stadium, the Otkrytie Arena.

Moldova's surprise equalizer, though, leaves Capello's team second in the group, two points behind Austria, who won 1-0 at home to Montenegro.

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