

Slutsky Relies on Veteran Players for Euro 2016

August 23, 2015



Leonid Slutsky

New Russia coach Leonid Slutsky is putting his trust in veteran players as he tries to save his team's hopes of reaching next year's European championship.

Slutsky took over as coach of the 2018 World Cup host on Aug. 7 on a short-term deal after poor results under his predecessor Fabio Capello left Russia in danger of failing to reach Euro 2016.

His first Russia squad focuses on veterans, with no players younger than 24 and seven over the age of 30, a profound change after Capello had tried to bring in youngsters ahead of the 2018 World Cup.

The only two debutants are midfielder Alexander Erokhin, 25, and fullback Oleg Kuzmin, who is 34.

Slutsky also remains in charge of club side CSKA Moscow, which has five players in his first

Russia squad. Attack options are provided by Dynamo Moscow's Alexander Kokorin and Zenit St. Petersburg's Artyom Dzyuba, while FC Krasnodar striker Fyodor Smolov returns for the first time since 2013.

All but one of the 24-man squad play their club football in Russia, with Real Madrid winger Denis Cheryshev the exception.

Russia hosts Sweden on Sept. 5 in a crunch qualifier before visiting Liechtenstein three days later. Russia sits third in qualifying Group E, outside the automatic qualifying places.

Russia has won just two of its last 10 competitive matches in a run of poor form dating back almost two years. During that time, the only wins in official games came against Liechtenstein and Montenegro, the latter victory awarded by default when the match was abandoned due to crowd trouble.

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