
Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by FCLymond - 16-05-2008 16:42

In my ongoing effort to make my consumption of football as geographically and temporally difficult as possible, I am getting a teeny bit interested in the Russian league. (Though probably just because of curiosity about who the hell Zenit were anyway...)

It seems a perfect opportunity not only to watch and read about football, but keep up my rapidly fading fluency in Russian as well--thanks to SopCast, Sport-Express, and so forth.

Wholly capriciously, I've chosen Spartak as my team of choice--believe they have a legacy of being the "people's" (i.e., non-Party sanctioned) team back in the day.

Curious if anyone else follows Russian footie here?

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 16-05-2008 17:06

To be frank, I may significantly more attention to Russian ice hockey.

Though after Zenit's performance in Europe this year, I'm trying to keep a bit more up to date. I didn't realise that Sopcast etc had Russian matches.

Spartak were the agricultural club in the Soviet era; there were no clubs that didn't have some kind of party affiliation.

There is an interesting article in the current So Foot (sort of the French WSC) on Terek Grozny. And I'm keeping an eye on newly promoted Shinnik Yaroslavl because we support Lokomotiv Yaroslavl in hockey and because they have a fetching badge:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/6/6c/Logo_fc_shinnik_yaroslavl.gif

Zenit are still in the relegation places though with a bunch of games in hand, aren't they?

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Bombanero - 16-05-2008 17:34

I try and follow it, mainly for Alexei Eremenko jr's progress with FC Saturn. They have an unusual badge, but I like it:

http://www.footballimpact.com/myimages/logos/saturn_ramenskoe.jpg

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 16-05-2008 17:40

Another thing I've noticed is that Rubin Kazan, who are currently top of the table, have one of the stranger shirts in top flight football:

<http://www.subsidesports.com/uk/images/product/large/Rubin3rdLS2006.gif>

The mythological creature is the symbol of TAIF, one of the largest industrial groups in Tartarstan.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Bombanero - 16-05-2008 17:45

Oh man, that's tremendous. I wonder what their games against Zenit are like?

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ad hoc - 16-05-2008 17:47

There's a possibility (around 50%) that I'll be spending three weeks in Kazan in June, but I assume the Russian league will be suspended for the duration of Euro 2008, sadly.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by rick derris - 16-05-2008 17:47

i am dynamo moscow, as i have seen them play at home

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Bombanero - 16-05-2008 17:54

Their next home match is on the 15th of July against Saturn, ursus.

2-0 to Russia in the hockey, btw.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by FCLymond - 16-05-2008 20:30

ursus arctos wrote:

Spartak were the agricultural club in the Soviet era; there were no clubs that didn't have some kind of party affiliation.

As far as I can tell, although they seem to have had some relationship with the kolkhozi and sovkhozi, Spartak's roots were among the workers, outside of "institutional" sponsorship. That in contrast to Lokomotiv, for instance (railways), or Dynamo (security services/K.G.B.), or CSKA (army). The club apparently started in the traditionally working class district of Moscow (Krasnya Presnya). The fact that they don't have their own stadium, but play in the Luzhniki, is linked to the fact that they were never traditionally sponsored by a ministry.

Also, have to love Spartak's traditional nickname--"myaso", which means "meat". Evidently their detractors also call them "sviniy", meaning "swine" or "pigs".

I lived in Moscow for a couple of years when I was growing up, just prior to the 1980 Olympics, and to be honest, I don't remember football being that big a deal there at that time--hockey was much more dominant. I understand, though, that today football is at least as popular, if not more popular, than hockey. In both sports, tons of money being poured into talent, stadiums, etc, by the oligarchs.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by SamLKelly - 17-05-2008 00:21

I imagine you've done so already, but if not do check out Jonathan Wilson's book Behind The Curtain, which deals with Eastern European football as a whole rather than Russian specifically, but is still a superb intro.

A Slovenian website editor I talk to frequently tells me Wilson is regarded as an expert on Eastern Europe even by Eastern Europeans themselves, and when the locals give him that sort of recognition you know he must good.

He also does a semi-regular column for Guardian Online which is one of their better ones. In fact he did one prior to the UEFA Cup semis on Zenit and why they were dark horses. A good footballing team, he said. 'But Bayern are on another level, they'll beat the poor little Ruskiies easily' was a popular consensus on the replies to that blog. After the first leg they failed to stop saying it. Then came the second leg.

I'm not so bothered about the Russian league, but for the hell of it I always like to think Vladivostock will get promoted to the top flight again some time... and perhaps qualify for Europe. Imagine that.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Kowalski - 17-05-2008 00:32

I came across this book today, may be interesting

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Football-Dynamo-Modern-Russia-Peoples/dp/0753513196/ref=pd_bxgy_b_text_b?ie=UTF8&qid=1210984187&sr=8-1

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by SamLKelly - 17-05-2008 00:36

That's reviewed in this month's FourFourTwo. I can't remember what they say about it, and I've got to go to bed now because I'm working at 9 tomorrow morning. I'll dig the review out then.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 17-05-2008 08:06

I didn't mean to suggest that the Spartak/Kolkhozi and Sovkhozi relationship was as strong as those you mention, Lymond, merely to note that they did have an official patron. I wouldn't be surprised if the primary manifestation of the relationship was that bureaucrats from the relevant ministries got preferential treatment for tickets and use of any multi-sport facilities. There were always a lot more soldiers and interior ministry types in Moscow than farmers (and Lokomotiv's relationship with the railways has continued into the present day). There is also the whole story of the persecution of the Startostins by the pre-WWII authorities, which I had forgotten.

I spent a few weeks in the USSR in the early 80s and can certainly second your sense of the relative importance of football. Like their clients in the DDR, the official Soviet focus was very much on Olympic sports (especially in the run-up to Moskva '80) and hockey, and I recall seeing things like artificial ski-jumping facilities in the Lenin Hills. Football always had a popular base though, and got more official support in places like Kiev and Tblissi (in large part, I'd say, because it provided a relatively safe outlet for rivalry with Moscow and Russia).

The question of why the oligarchs chose football is an interesting one, and I think has a lot to do with the fact that their business interests are much more international in their outlook and customer base than the equivalent Soviet enterprises. It also allows them a chance to capitalise on the popular appeal of the sport, while away trips to places like Milan in the Champions League are more appealing to them and their hangers-on than hockey matches in Oulu. It will be interesting to see if the rise of clubs (like Kazan) from autonomous republics continues; you may know that AK Bars (also from Kazan) have become a major force in European hockey (and that this year's Russian championship was won by a club from Ufa).

I have always shared Sam's soft spot for Vladivostok, it is one of those intrinsically exotic places I discovered as a kid that somehow didn't seem quite real (like Ulan Bator and Samarkand). Luch-Energia Vladivostok have been in the Premier League for a couple of years, but are struggling again this year. The travel alone has to be daunting for them.

A number of the Premier League clubs have decent English language websites, though it does not appear that the league does. Here is bit from Spartak's that supports your view:

"Championship of the USSR could not remain out of the policy of the country. So many statesmen saw in the wins of their teams the superiority over the opponents patronizing other teams. Almost all the teams had such kind of patrons: «Dinamo» – police, CSKA – army. And only created by trade union public organization «Spartak» remained really «people's team». Therefore a lot of people in victories of «Spartak» over imperious opponents saw a victory of the ordinary person over the government machine. Fans saw this opposition in all aspects even in the opposition of the horizontal rhombus of the «Spartak's» logo from the vertical rhombus of «Dinamo's» logo."

Spartak
Kazan
Lokomotiv
CSKA

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by FCLymond - 17-05-2008 14:52

ursus arctos wrote:

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I think the ne plus ultra of exotic places in Russia would have to be Magadan, though the Google doesn't seem to know about any football teams there.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by pawlu - 18-05-2008 07:17

As Sam said, that book was reviewed by 442 (specifically by Jonathan Wilson) and they said that it was good but took in the myths - such as that of Spartak being the people's club - without really challenging to see if it is true. Anyway, it is the kind of book I like so I'll probably buy it. Incidentally, another book about Russian football is Passovtchka by David Downing. There's also Dynamo by Andy Duggan but that is about Dynamo Kiev. Behind the Curtain, by the way, is a must read regardless of your interest in Eastern football.

I used to follow Spartak in the 80s and 90s first because that was where Rinat Dasaev played and then because of Victor Onopko. Anyway there is always a good roundup of the goals from the Russian league here.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by mnb098mnb - 18-05-2008 10:20

I believe Alania Vladikavkaz are not allowed to play their home ties in Europe in Vladikavkaz which I find a great shame.

Even the Moscow clubs don't like playing there. I've heard a great story of a player of a Moscow team saying Alania should "play in Japan" after being beaten there.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 18-05-2008 10:52

Alania were a dodgy club even by Russian standards, and were eventually thrown out of the league. The current version

(which are in the "First Division" (second level)) is supposed to be somewhat cleaner and more stable, but I'll reserve judgement until they make it back to the top.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Kowalski - 18-05-2008 11:05

There's also this;

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Comrade-Jim-Spy-Played-Spartak/dp/0007251149/ref=pd_bxgy_b_text_b?ie=UTF8&qid=1211108675&sr=8-1

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by jamzinho - 25-07-2008 16:48

Bump.

I saw some highlights of Lok v Spartak on Setanta's World Football show earlier this week. Look like a cracking game. Lok lead 2-0, missed a sitter at 2-1, and ended up holding on at 2-2 after a Kovac header hit the bar with the last touch of the match.

This came a week after Spartak had lost 5-1 at home to CSKA (The Loverman scored a hattrick).

Rubin continue to lead the way after 14 games with 28 points, Amkar have 26 and Dinamo Moscow 24. Champions Zenit have two games in hand and lie in 9th place, 10 points behind Rubin.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by FCLymond - 26-07-2008 12:10

Dinamo-Zenit is on right now if anyone's interested--streaming nicely for me on Sopcast channel 22947...

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by dogbeak - 26-07-2008 13:53

1-0 to Dinamo, lovely volley by Kombarov, that.

It's pretty galling that I can watch Dinamo - Zenit in far, far greater quality than I can watch any Newcastle game.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 29-07-2008 10:49

Ah, a Russian thread.

The league's actually been pretty mediocre this year - no stand out side, really, and apart from Rubin's start to the season, not much consistency from anyone.

Spartak's owner Fedun basically won't mind selling the club. Quite a number of fans I know can't stand him - hasn't run the club particularly well and a succession of decidedly average managers just wanna make one tear one's hair out.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Hieronymus of Hesselink - 29-07-2008 11:12

Is Cherchesov not doing well then? Spartak looked a very good side at Celtic Park last August and were unlucky to lose.

I took -- and scored -- a penalty against Cherchesov at Lansdowne Road during a training session years ago.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 29-07-2008 11:21

I went to that match at Celtic Park last year - great game, great atmosphere but I think Spartak played well not because of Cherchesov but despite him. Pretty good 'keeper in his but his managerial record - pffft.. mediocre in Austria before Spartak. Tactically weak but very stubborn. Treatment of players like Pavlyuchenko and Titov has been very odd to say the least. The 1-5 against CSKA (who are far from world beaters this season) is a sad indictment of his capabilities. Spartak could be even worse off were it not for some ridiculous refereeing in the home match against Shinnik (4-2), for example.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 29-07-2008 11:51

The CSKA match was broadcast live in Italy and I can confirm that Spartak were abject.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 30-07-2008 18:21

Well, by the sounds of things, the... errrm... people who "run" Spartak are succeeding in forcing Titov out of the club. Might've played his last game for the club in the reserves match against Luch. C*nts.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by dogbeak - 31-07-2008 08:39

Interesting article about the history of Spartak, for anyone who's interested (and hasn't seen it before):

A Small Way of Saying "No": Moscow Working Men, Spartak Soccer, and the Communist Party, 1900–1945

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 31-07-2008 17:46

Looks like an interesting read, that. Will have a closer look later. Quick scan again reveal accusations of criminal activity against the Starostins; however, these are still mere accusations and I kinda resent the "no smoke without fire" approach used to present them in the article.

In other news, Spartak source suggest Pavlyuchenko is on the verge of a move to Spurs. I think he could turn out to be a pretty useful signing, actually. On the other hand, if Spurs do decide to go for Arshavin, I think they'll be in for a severe merking.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Belhavka - 01-08-2008 11:52

Good article by Edelman. He does a good job at distinguishing between Spartak's being an independent (of state insitutions) club rather than an anti-Communist "dissident" type of club.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 04-08-2008 10:50

RPL delivers a riveting round of games - 9 goals in 7 matches. Spartak win in Tom' and are now within 3 points of the top spot. What a sh*t league.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 06-08-2008 18:42

Last-32 of the Russian Cup today. Some upsets and riots.

1. Spartak Ressies just about scrape a win in Bryansk (rock bottom of D-2) 2-1. Some Spartak fans rip out seats and build a bonfire in away end and then have a little dance around it whilst the fire crews are trying to put it out. Game stopped for several minutes. F*ck knows why they did it. Some mixed reports about pre-match policing - some say it was OK, others say that they were being herded into holding areas/couple of hundred ticketless fans were loaded onto a train back to Moscow/that people were getting finger-printed. Apparently a hundred chaps from Orel (Bryansk rivals) also turned up for a ruck. 12 arrests so far. Cherchesov being very rude in the post-match interview for NTV+.

2. Sibir (D2) 1 Zenit (D1) 0. Zenit's form worse and worse.

3. Metallurg Lipetsk (D3) 0 Lokomotiv Moscow (D1) 2. Lokomotiv fans get into the home end = mini-riot.

4. Gazovik Orenburg (D3) - Krylya Sovetov (D1) 2-2, 3-5 pens. Away fans fighting with Gastarbeiters.

5. Vityaz (D2) 2 Spartak Nalchik (D1) 1

6. Torpedo Vladimir (D2) 1 CSKA (D1) 4

7. Volga Nizhny Novgorod (D2) - Saturn (D1) 1-1, 4-3 pens.

8. Salyut-Energia (D2) 0 Shinnik (D1) 1

9. Baltika (D2) 3 Luch Vladivostok (D1) 0

10. SKA Rostov-on-Don (D2) 3 Khimki (D1) 2 aet.

11. Kuban (D2) 0 Dynamo Moscow (D1) 1

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by jamzinho - 11-08-2008 13:47

Interesting feature on Luch from Vladivostok on Futbol Mundial this week. It shows just how hard it is for them when they play away from home.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 20-08-2008 14:32

Yippee - one good thing to come out of the Spartak hammering at the hands of Dynamo Kiev is that Cherchesov's finally been sacked. Spartak drew with Amkar with Ledyakhov in temporary charge. According to fans' reports, it looked as if Ledyakhov was trying to teach the team to pass the ball from scratch.

Zenit lost again. One of their fan leaders was killed by a security guard in a nightclub recently, so the fans spent 2 games in silence.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Hieronymus of Hesselink - 20-08-2008 16:09

Ledyakhov was a good player, I remember him running rings around Liverpool's midfield in the Cup-Winners' Cup years ago.

For some reason, he was only given about half a game at USA 94, even though most of the first-choice players had stayed at home.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 26-08-2008 18:54

Looks like Pavlyuchenko -> Spurs has almost been tied up. I understand he's not playing in Kiev. Of all the English sides, a move to Spurs is probably the most suitable one for him.

PS Oh, got a confirmation here that at 16:40 BST Pavlyuchenko set off on the route Kiev-Moscow-London.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 27-08-2008 08:11

Pavlyuchenko's just been on the Spartak Moscow fans' website I use to thank the fans and bid everyone farewell. Nice touch.*

*Before people get cynical, he's been on there before.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by jamzinho - 27-08-2008 08:51

Good luck to him.

Any thoughts on Danny, the player who Zenit have just signed from Dynamo Moscow? I think he was the last remaining Portuguese import at Dynamo.

Just read the book Football Dynamo by Marc Bennetts which is pretty good, for anyone interested in reading about Russian football.

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Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 28-08-2008 12:11

jamzinho wrote:
Good luck to him.

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Just read the book Football Dynamo by Marc Bennetts which is pretty good, for anyone interested in reading about Russian football.

I don't think Danny's worth anything approaching that transfer fee but Dynamo have enjoyed a pretty good season with him so far.

Oh, well, Spartak managed to get walloped in Kiev as well with Pletikosa poor again. Making that current Dynamo Kiev team look like Brazil takes some doing. A half-decent side towards the end of last year, we now have absolute shambles.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Swindon fan - 01-09-2008 16:18

A good site for keeping up with Russian football. They have a report every Monday. Friend of a friend of a friend writes for them.

<http://en.rian.ru/sports/20080901/116436270.html>

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Swindon fan - 02-09-2008 08:23

Oh sorry, wrong link...

<http://en.rian.ru/sports/20080901/116429351.html>

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 10-09-2008 14:21

Looks like Michael Laudrup is all set to take over as Spartak manager.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 21-10-2008 15:08

Jonathan Wilson raises some interesting questions.

"Back in May, in Moscow for the Champions League final, a contact with links in the betting industry mentioned that Rubin Kazan were going to win the league. They had, it was claimed, been throwing games over the previous two or three seasons on the understanding that they could reclaim those points in this, the season of their 50th anniversary."

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 22-10-2008 20:51

Games involving Rubin raised eyebrows much earlier - as early as their 3rd match - against Zenit but in a slightly different context. One... errrrmm... "malicious" line of thought has it that Zenit have been "paying back" their opponents this season for rolling over last year (in helping Zenit secure the league title), thus the strange late 10-minute spell in that match in March, when Zenit shipped three goals against Rubin. The match in Kazan in August ended up 4-1 to Rubin. Rubin lost both matches to Zenit last season. Another weird Zenit match that stands out is the 3-4 home reverse against Spartak Nalchik and there are others.

In general, the standard of football in the Russian league has been pretty appalling this season, so it's not entirely impossible that Rubin could be the best of a mediocre domestic bunch but once again too many results have just been odd.*

*that's includes Spartak's results - but there is a perfectly legitimate explanation for that - Spartak are simply particularly sh*t this season. :)

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 31-10-2008 22:49

4 games to go, the big Moscow derby tomorrow but given CSKA's winning streak (11 in all competitions, if I am not mistaken) and Spartak comedy performances (which still somehow's left them just 4 points off a Champions' league place), Spartak might well get another tonking. Will be following this on my phone in a pub in the vicinity of White Hart Lane tomorrow - can't wait... right...

PS Rubin, 7 points ahead of CSKA at the top, at Saturn on Sunday. Saturn, 8 points clear of the relegation zone, playing after the Luch (currently 15th) match... nod-nod, wink-wink... etc...

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 01-11-2008 09:06

Sash, what kind of press is Laudrup getting at Spartak?

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 02-11-2008 11:43

The press is not really passing any judgement yet - he took taken over a team in freefall and arresting that was the 1st priority. He's tightened up the defence a bit, for starters. Call the Derby "just another game" and Spartak went on to beat CSKA Moscow 1-0 yesterday (Bazhenov '56) - for the 1st time in over 7 years. Zhirkov sent off towards the end of the match. That result alone means a decent-sized pile of kudos for Laudrup.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by ursus arctos - 02-11-2008 12:44

I saw bits of the match on Sky Italia and figured that Michael had bought himself at least six months of peace with the result. Spartak were clearly more committed than CSKA (who seemed to give up quite a while before the end). It certainly wasn't a classic, though.

Re:Anyone following Russian Premier League here?

Posted by Sash - 02-11-2008 13:14

Important psychologically and still, ridiculously, keeps them in the hunt for that CL spot.

Rubin have just wrapper up the league - two subs scoring late on either side of a Saturn equaliser, Savo Milosevic clinching the title in the 90th minute.

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