

How Greece Shocked Europe



1) Discussion

- a) What do you know about Greek football?
 - b) Can you think of any surprises at the European Championships?
 - c) Can you think of any underdogs who have won major tournaments?
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2) Vocabulary

a) Match the vocabulary to the definition.

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| 1) Talisman (verb) | a) A mix of different things. |
| 2) To suit (verb) | b) A very important or magical person or thing. |
| 3) Goal-difference (noun) | c) The difference between goals scored and goals conceded. |
| 4) Opportunistic (adjective) | d) Taking advantage of opportunities as they come. |
| 5) Well-drilled (adjective) | e) Trained to perform well. |
| 6) Blend (noun) | f) To be right or appropriate for. |



b) Complete the sentences with the vocabulary from exercise 2a.

Talisman

To Suit

Goal-difference

Opportunistic

Well-drilled

Blend

- 1) Antonio Conte's Chelsea were a _____ team, with a disciplined defence and effective counter-attacking strategy.
- 2) Germany's 2014 World Cup-winning team had a perfect _____ of experienced players like Miroslav Klose and young talents like Mario Götze.
- 3) Thomas Müller is known for his _____ instincts, often finding himself in the right place at the right time to score for Bayern Munich.
- 4) During the 2018 World Cup, Luka Modrić was the _____ for Croatia, leading them to the final with his exceptional performances.
- 5) In the 2011-2012 Premier League season, Manchester City won the title over Manchester United due to a superior _____ .
- 6) Jürgen Klopp tailored Liverpool's high-pressing system to _____ the aggressive playing style of players like Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mané.



3) Quick Read - Read the article quickly and answer the question.

a) Which teams did Greece play in the tournament?

Greece Lightning

In the summer of 2004, Greece achieved one of the most remarkable feats in football. Their journey to glory was a testament to determination, tactical discipline, and team spirit, capturing the imagination of football fans worldwide.

Greece's success was built on a foundation of collective effort rather than individual brilliance. Central to this was the formidable defence, anchored by captain Theodoros Zagorakis, who was named the tournament's best player. Goalkeeper Antonis Nikopolidis provided a safe pair of hands, while defenders Traianos Dellas and Michalis Kapsis were rock solid. In midfield, the industrious Zagorakis and Kostas Katsouranis ensured stability and work rate, allowing the team to break up opposition play and transition swiftly into attack. Upfront, Angelos Charisteas emerged as the talisman, with his crucial goals propelling Greece forward. Rehhagel's tactical acumen emphasised a robust defensive strategy, quick counter-attacks, and making the most of set-pieces, which suited the team's strengths perfectly.

Drawn into Group A alongside the host nation Portugal, Spain, and Russia, Greece was immediately tested. They stunned the football world with a 2-1 victory over Portugal in the tournament opener, thanks to goals from Giorgos Karagounis and Angelos Basinas. A hard-fought 1-1 draw against Spain followed, with Angelos Charisteas scoring the crucial equaliser. Despite a 2-1 defeat to Russia in their final group match, Greece advanced to the knockout stages on goal difference, demonstrating their ability to compete against Europe's elite.

In the quarter-finals, Greece faced defending champions France, a team containing the likes of Zinedine Zidane and Thierry Henry. Rehhagel's tactical masterclass shone through as they executed a perfect game plan, with Charisteas heading the decisive goal in a 1-0 victory. The semi-final against the Czech Republic, one of the tournament favourites, went into extra time. Traianos Dellas became the hero by scoring a silver goal from a corner, sending Greece to their first major final. Throughout the knockout stages, Greece's disciplined defence and opportunistic scoring were pivotal, embodying the ethos of a well-drilled unit capable of overcoming more technically gifted opponents.



On July 4, 2004, Greece faced host nation Portugal once again, this time at the Estádio da Luz in Lisbon. Portugal, led by young superstar Cristiano Ronaldo and the experienced Luis Figo, were the favourites. However, Greece's tactical discipline and resilience came to the fore. In the 57th minute, Angelos Charisteas rose above the Portuguese defence to head home a corner from Basinas, scoring the only goal of the match. Greece's defence then absorbed relentless pressure from Portugal, maintaining their lead with a combination of organised defending and crucial saves by Nikopolidis. The final whistle confirmed Greece's 1-0 victory, sealing one of the greatest underdog stories in sports history.

Greece's triumph at Euro 2004 remains a poignant reminder that football is not always about individual stars but about teamwork, strategy, and the unyielding spirit of the underdog. Their victory not only brought joy to their nation but also inspired countless others, proving that with the right blend of determination and tactical nous, even the most unlikely of teams can achieve greatness.

4) Discussion

- a) What do you think about Greece's Euro 2004 success?
- b) Why do you think they were able to win?
- c) Where does it rank in your list of underdog stories in football?

