



Coaching Department Study Visit

UEFA Under 21 Championships

Sweden 2009

England v Finland

15th June 2009

Halmstad 18.15 KO

Report on Finland

Squad	Name	DOB	Club
1	Anssi Jaakkola	13.3.87	AC Siena
14	Joni Aho	12.4.86	FC International Turku
4	Jonas Portin	30.9.86	FF Jaro
5	Tuomo Turunen	30.8.87	FC Honka Espoo
3	Jukka Raitala	15.9.88	HJK Helsinki
16	Perparim Hetemaj	12.12.86	AEK Athens FC
8	Mehmet Hetemaj	8.12.87	Panionios GSS
6	Tim Sparv	20.2.87	Halmstads BK
7	Kasper Hamalainen	8.8.86	TPS Turku
11	Jarno Parikka	21.7.86	HJK Helsinki
9	Berat Sadik	14.9.86	DSC Arminia Bielefeld
Subs			
20 on for 11	Teemu Pukki	29.3.90	Sevilla FC
17 on for 8	Juha Hakola	27.10.87	Heracles Hakola
18 on for 7	Jussi Vasara	14.5.87	FC Honka Espoo



This game was a huge challenge for the Finns as Stuart Pearce, England U.21s coach, was able to call upon a side of considerable experience who boasted a combined total of 263 Premier League appearances last season.

Attacking Strategy

Finland started brightly at a high tempo and after initially playing direct up to the target man No.9 Berat Sadik they then switched to play out from the back. Finland's back four looked reasonably comfortable in possession but they tried to get No. 6 Tim Sparv, the former Southampton youth player and No.8 Mehmet Hetemaj on the ball as often as possible.

From the middle third No. 6 Tim Sparv hit long diagonal passes towards the right flank. This long passing game stretched England and prevented both England full backs going forward. Finland's lone striker constantly tried to hurt England by looking for the ball behind the English centre backs.

When Finland entered the final third No. 16 Perparim Hetemaj created some opportunities but his final pass or cross was poor. With England playing with a defensive screening midfielder the Finns found it difficult to play through England in central areas this resulted in several wasteful long range shots.

When England went down to 10 men, Finland failed to create overloads in wide areas and didn't switch play enough and at a pace to expose England's midfield three. They lacked the tactical awareness to recognise this and didn't exploit their numerical advantage.

The Finnish players tired in the second half, the Coach made some like for like substitutions. In the last ten minutes they created three or four half chances as they were chasing the game.

Defensive Strategy

They didn't press the ball high up the pitch, Finland defensive tactics were to drop deep as a team, the No.9 Berat Sadik split the England centre backs and applied pressure on the ball 5-10 yards from the half way line.

No.11 Jarno Parikka marked England's deep lying midfielder, No. 6 Tim Sparv and No.8 Mehmet Hetemaj matched up against Noble and Cattermole in central midfield.

The wide players No.16 Perparim Hetemaj and No.7 Kasper Hamalainen dealt with the England full backs and supported their own full backs by doubling up against Milner and Walcott, they tried to create 2 v 1s in Finland's favour in wide areas.

The Full backs No. 14 Joni Aho and No.3 Jukka Raitala didn't appear to have great pace but they both coped well with 1v1 situations. There was no consistent policy as to whether to show 'outside' or 'inside'. Finland's centre backs No.4 Jonas Portin and No.5 Tuomo Turunen marked zonally held a good line and were responsible to deal with the lone striker of England.

Transition

Finland were not adventurous when they had attacking set plays in the attacking half, they left three or four behind the ball to deal with potential counter attacks. However England's first goal came from a classic counter attack, England won the ball from a Finnish throw in high up the pitch and broke on them quickly in two passes.

When Finland gained possession they could not attack quickly due to physical or technical deficiencies and as a result tended to build attacks slowly.

When they lost possession they were never over stretched due to their cautious attacking strategy.

Set Plays

No 3 Jukka Raitala had a long throw which they used in the final third, centre backs went forward and No 6 Tim Sparv was the target around the near post.

All other defending and attacking set plays were standard. Finland marked man for man apart from a player on the near post hole, and rather unusually No. 14 Joni Aho who came off the back post when defending corners against and defended a zone between the far post and edge of the six yard box.

Game Management

Finland did not deviate from their initial game plan, even when England went down to ten men. With hindsight will the Finns feel that they should have posed England more problems as a result of having an extra player for a large part of the game?

The Coach, Markku Kanerva made substitutions on 65, 80 and 86 minutes but without any great impact as tactics or team shape did not change just the personnel.

Post Match Comments from Finland Coach Markku Kanerva

"I'm very disappointed we didn't get any points but am very proud of the way we played and the courage and fighting spirit we showed. We can take a lot of positives from this game into the matches against Germany and Spain. We'll have to defend better from set-pieces but I have to be satisfied with my players. England defended well and had experienced players who were able to calm things down even when we had them under pressure. We know that the difference between two teams is often about efficiency in front of goal. They didn't create many chances but scored two goals – otherwise there wasn't much between the teams.

I'll have to analyse the game more thoroughly after I've seen it again but when we went 2-1 down we made some substitutions which led to three or four scoring chances. Our boys are not used to that kind of tempo in international games but our opponents were Premier League players who are used to it and they had that little bit of extra energy. We got tired, for sure. We played well but they had almost 60 minutes with ten men. The first goal was particularly sloppy and I'm disappointed with that – otherwise I was very satisfied with the game as whole."

Markku Kanerva Finland U.21s Coach

Background (Information sourced from UEFA.com)

Date of birth: 24 May 1964

Playing career: HJK Helsinki, IF Elfsborg, FinnPa, HJK, Finland (59 caps, 1 goal)

Coaching career: HJK (2001-02 assistant coach), FC Viikingit (2003), Finland Under-21s (2003-present)

Former Finnish international Markku Kanerva was a no-nonsense centre-back during a distinguished playing career and has similarly built his Under-21 side around a well-drilled defence. With strikers expected to also contribute defensively, Finland are at their most dangerous when winning possession in midfield before hitting sides on the break. Kanerva likes to keep the ball on the ground and deploys two wingers, and allies his tactical acumen with great motivational skills.

A team captain in his playing days, Kanerva likes to encourage his players to take responsibility on the field and express themselves, and this has helped foster an excellent team spirit that was best shown in the play-off for the 2009 UEFA European U21 Championship final tournament against Austria, when the side scored two late goals in the second leg to force extra time before going on to win on penalties.

After learning his trade as an assistant coach at HJK Helsinki, Kanerva had a short stint in sole charge of second division side FC Viikingit before moving on to the U21s in 2003. After learning the lessons of fruitless qualifying campaigns in 2004, 2006 and 2007, he got things right this time round.