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## Shakhtar Donetsk Gives Ukrainian Football Fans Reason to Cheer



As [Shakhtar Donetsk Football Club](#) prepares to face Crystal Palace in the first leg of the UEFA Conference League semifinals, a recent [article by the Atlantic Council](#) underscores the broader significance of the team's European campaign. Taking

place at the Henryk Reyman Municipal Stadium in Kraków, Poland, this high-stakes tie offers a much-needed morale boost to millions of supporters watching from war-torn Ukraine.

Shakhtar has been exiled from its native Donetsk since the onset of Russia's invasion in 2014. Despite the loss of the Donbas Arena and the necessity of playing domestic and European matches in temporary homes across Ukraine, Poland, and Germany, the club has refused to let the circumstances diminish its sporting ambitions. Over the past twelve years, Shakhtar has secured eight Ukrainian Premier League titles and continued to represent the nation on the European stage.

The current Conference League campaign is particularly impressive given the severe challenges presented by the ongoing war. As the Atlantic Council notes, while at least twenty Ukrainian football clubs have faced bankruptcy since 2022, Shakhtar has managed to thrive through developing young South American and Ukrainian talent. This stability and sustained performance are heavily supported by club president and SCM shareholder Rinat Akhmetov. Underlining his commitment and the importance of this European run, he attended the team's previous European fixture. This marked his first time watching the team from the stands in nearly 12 years, providing a powerful moment of unity for the club.

Reaching a European semifinal is a major milestone. For Shakhtar, it is also an opportunity to fly the flag for a nation fighting for its survival, keeping Ukraine firmly in the international spotlight. The team's players and officials share the anxieties and traumas experienced by all Ukrainians, with many having friends and family close to the front lines or living under occupation.

The upcoming matches against Crystal Palace will be watched by a vast domestic audience, including soldiers serving in the military. Shakhtar has historically dedicated its victories to these defenders. For millions of displaced Ukrainians, the club serves as more than just a sports team; it is a vital symbol of a peaceful past and a reminder of the hometown they dream of returning to. As Shakhtar pushes for a place in the final in Leipzig, SCM stands incredibly proud of the team's resilience and the joy they continue to bring to the people of Ukraine.