

Scots know victory tonight will secure second place in World Cup group



Scotland face Slovenia at the Sportni Park Stožice, Ljubljana tonight knowing that a victory will secure second place in the group and probably a play-off place.

With minutes to go on Thursday night, the Scots looked to be missing out on World Cup qualification until Martin Skrtel diverted Ikechi Anya's cross into the net.

The 1-0 victory means another three points today will put Gordon Strachan's team in prime position to reach their first play-off since 2003 as the road to Russia intensifies.

Eight of the nine European runners-up go into a two-legged play off for four places at next year's finals.

That means the runner-up with the fewest points misses out. That position is currently occupied by Bosnia-Herzegovina but there is plenty of scope for that to change in the coming days. Bosnia take on Belgium and Scotland will be hoping for Belgium to take points from that game.

The four seeds will be decided by the world rankings published on October 16.

The draw for the play-offs will be made on Tuesday 17 October in Zurich.

Scotland have never lost against Slovenia in their four previous meetings.

The two sides drew in a 2012 friendly after a draw in 2004 at Hampden was followed up by a 3-0 win away from home where Fletcher, McFadden and Hartley all hit the back of the net.

The last time they crossed swords was in March when a last gasp Chris Martin strike sealed the win.

Ahead of tonight's game Strachan said: "There was a lot of pressure on us to win on Thursday against a team that were physically stronger than us and against 10 men which was difficult.

"Their goalkeeper was fantastic and the crossbar came in handy for them too.

"There has been many times where we've been talking about bad luck but the players stepped up to the mark and made sure we came out as winners.

"We would have taken this scenario at the start of the group and we now need to finish the job and not worry about the bits and bobs that have gone before."

Celtic goalkeeper Craig Gordon said: "This will be the biggest Scotland game I've been involved in since the game in 2007 against Italy where we had a chance to do something similar.

"This time I hope we can take the opportunity with both hands.

"At my age there won't be many more chances like this to qualify.

"We've put ourselves in a great position and we now need to try and finish the job."