

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE - 2019/20 SEASON MATCH PRESS KITS



**Wolverhampton
Wanderers FC**

Molineux - Wolverhampton

Thursday 19 September 2019
21.00CET (20.00 local time)
Group K - Matchday 1



SC Braga

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Match background

Having flawlessly negotiated three qualifying rounds in their first European outings for 39 years, Wolverhampton Wanderers embark on their maiden UEFA Europa League group stage adventure with a home fixture against experienced European campaigners Braga, who also came through qualifying with a perfect record.

Previous meetings

- Although Wolves have never faced Braga, this is their seventh UEFA encounter with Portuguese opposition. Victories have been recorded in five of the previous six including all three at home, the first of them against Académica Coimbra in the first round of a 1971/72 UEFA Cup campaign that took them all the way to the final.
- Braga's record in 18 matches against English opposition is W6 D2 L10. Only one of those victories has come in England – 3-1 at Birmingham City on matchday one of the 2011/12 UEFA Europa League. The first of their six defeats on English soil was 0-1 against Wolves' local rivals West Bromwich Albion back in November 1978, the most recent of them 2-3 at Old Trafford against Manchester United in the group stage of the 2012/13 UEFA Champions League after the visitors had taken a 2-0 lead.

Form guide

Wolves

- In their first season after promotion to the Premier League, Wolves finished seventh in 2018/19 to qualify for European competition for the first time since they lost in the 1980/81 UEFA Cup first round to PSV Eindhoven.
- The West Midlands' best European experience by some distance was that 1971/72 campaign in the inaugural UEFA Cup, when they lost 2-3 to Tottenham Hotspur in the two-legged final.
- Wolves have won all six of their qualifying matches this season, ousting Crusaders (2-0 h, 4-1 a), Pyunik (4-0 a, 4-0 h) and, in the play-offs, Torino (3-2 a, 2-1 h). That means they have won all seven European fixtures at Molineux since losing 1-2 to Spurs in the first leg of that 1972 UEFA Cup final.

Braga

- Braga's 15th European qualification in the last 16 years was achieved with a fourth-placed finish in the 2018/19 Portuguese Liga, a season in which their European ambitions ended early with elimination on away goals by Zorya Luhansk in the UEFA Europa League third qualifying round.
- Brøndby (4-2 a, 3-1 h) and Spartak Moskva (1-0 h, 2-1 a) were both overcome in this season's qualifying phase to take Braga into the UEFA Europa League group stage for the fifth time. They have made further progress on three of the previous four occasions, though their best season in the competition – and in Europe overall – came in 2010/11 when they crossed over mid-season from the UEFA Champions League and knocked out, among others, Liverpool and Benfica before losing 1-0 in the Dublin final to domestic rivals Porto.
- Braga are unbeaten in seven European games (W5 D2), their last defeat having come at Marseille (0-3) in the 2017/18 UEFA Europa League round of 32. Their away record in the UEFA Europa League group stage is W3 D6 L3, all three wins coming on matchday one – against Birmingham, Slovan Liberec (1-0 in 2015/16) and Hoffenheim (2-1 in 2017/18).

Links and trivia

- In addition to coach Nuno Espírito Santo, there are seven Portuguese players in Wolves' squad – Rui Patrício, Rúben Neves, João Moutinho, Diogo Jota, Rúben Vinagre, Pedro Neto and Bruno Jordão, the latter two products of Braga's youth academy.
- Wolves' French defender Willy Boly was a Braga player from 2015–16, while Mexican striker Raúl Jiménez scored three goals against Braga during his time at Benfica from 2015–18.
- João Moutinho (Sporting CP, 2005/06) and Diogo Jota (Paços de Ferreira, 2015/16) have also scored in 1-0 Liga wins against Braga.
- Braga goalkeeper Eduardo was on Chelsea's books for three years but played no official games for the London side before leaving this July to rejoin the club that launched his career.
- Braga forward Rui Fonte has also had spells in London, with Arsenal, Crystal Palace and Fulham.
- Wolves are one of six UEFA Europa League group stage debutants this season; the others are Espanyol, Ferencváros, Olexandriya and two Austrian clubs, LASK and Wolfsberg.

The coaches

- A former goalkeeper who was in Portugal's UEFA EURO 2008 squad but never won a senior cap, Nuno was mostly a back-up during his playing career but as a manager he is very much at the forefront, having emerged as a studious,

progressive coach during spells at Valencia, Porto and, since May 2017, Wolves. He first made his mark by taking Portuguese provincial club Rio Ave to two cup finals and into Europe before shining in Spain during an 18-month stint at Mestalla. He led Wolves into the Premier League in his first season and into the UEFA Europa League in his second.

- A gifted support striker who represented Portugal on 45 occasions, scoring ten goals, and appeared at the UEFA European Championship in 1996 and 2000, Ricardo Sá Pinto spent the majority of his club career at Sporting CP, his two spells at the Lisbon club broken by a three-year stint at Real Sociedad. His first head coach position was back at Sporting, in 2012, but it was short-lived and from there he moved abroad, working in Serbia, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Belgium and latterly Poland with Legia Warszawa before signing a two-year contract with Braga in July 2019.

Legend

Competitions

Club competitions

UCL: UEFA Champions League
ECCC: European Champion Clubs' Cup
UEL: UEFA Europa League
UCUP: UEFA Cup
UCWC: UEFA Cup Winners' Cup
SCUP: UEFA Super Cup
UIC: UEFA Intertoto Cup
ICF: Inter-Cities Fairs Cup

National team competitions

EURO: UEFA European Football Championship
WC: FIFA World Cup
CONFCUP: FIFA Confederations Cup
FRIE: Friendly internationals
U21FRIE: Under-21 friendly internationals
U21: UEFA European Under-21 Championship
U17: UEFA Under-17 Championship
U16: UEFA European Under-16 Championship
U19: UEFA Under-19 Championship
U18: UEFA European Under-18 Championship
WWC: FIFA Women's World Cup
WEURO: UEFA European Women's Championship

Competition stages

F: Final	GS: Group stage	(aet): After extra time	pens: Penalties
GS1: First group stage	GS2: Second group stage	No.: Number	og: Own goal
3QR: Third qualifying round	R1: First round	ag: Match decided on away goals	P: Penalty
R2: Second round	R3: Third round	PID: Matches played	agg: Aggregate
R4: Fourth round	PR: Preliminary round	Pos.: Position	AP: Appearances
SF: Semi-finals	QF: Quarter-finals	Pts: Points	Comp.: Competition
R16: round of 16	QR: Qualifying round	R: Sent off (straight red card)	D: Drawn
R32: Round of 32	1QR: First qualifying round	Res.: Result	DoB: Date of birth
1st: first leg	2QR: Second qualifying round	sg: Match decided by silver goal	ET: Extra Time
2nd: second leg	FT: Final tournament	GF: Goals for	GA: Goals against
PO: Play-off	ELITE: Elite round	gg: Match decided by golden goal	t: Match decided by toss of a coin
Rep: Replay	3rdPO: Third-place play-off	Y/R: Sent off (two yellow cards)	W: Won
PO - FT: Play-off for Final Tournament	GS-FT: Group stage – final tournament	f: Match forfeited	Y: Booked
			L: Lost
			Nat.: Nationality
			N/A: Not applicable

Statistics

-: Denotes player substituted
*****: Denotes player sent off

+: Denotes player introduced
+/-: Denotes player introduced and substituted

Squad list

D: Disciplinary

*****: Misses next match if booked

S: Suspended

QUAL: All UEFA qualifiers

UEL: Current season total UEFA Europa League appearances from the group stage onwards prior to the current matchday

UEL: Total appearances in the UEFA Europa League, group stage to final only

UEFA: All-time total appearances in UEFA club competition including qualifying

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