UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE - 2019/20 SEASON
MATCH PRESS KITS

ADO DEN HAAG STADIUM - Den Haag
Thursday 28 November 2019
18.55CET (18.55 local time)
Group L - Matchday 5

Last updated 25/11/2019 15:37CET

Match background
Legend
Unbeaten AZ Alkmaar go into their Matchday 5 encounter with Partizan in The Hague knowing that they will qualify for the round of 32 if they avoid defeat.

• The Dutch side drew their opening two fixtures – 2-2 at Partizan and 0-0 at home to Manchester United – before racking up big wins in both games against Astana (6-0 h, 5-0 a) to lift themselves into a position of strength in Group L, two points behind leaders United. Partizan had four points after two games following a 2-1 victory in Kazakhstan, but lost both encounters against United (0-1 h, 0-3 a) to drop four points behind an AZ side they must now beat to stand a chance of qualifying as group runners-up.

Previous meetings
• The Matchday 1 encounter in Belgrade ended all square after both teams had led, AZ going 1-0 up through Calvin Stengs before a Bibras Natcho double put Partizan ahead, only for 18-year-old Myron Boadu to draw the Dutch side level again – and complete the scoring – shortly afterwards.

• The clubs had already been paired once before in a UEFA Europa League group stage, Partizan winning both encounters in 2015/16 – 3-2 at home on Matchday 1 and 2-1 away on Matchday 5 – but nevertheless accompanying bottom-placed AZ out of the competition in December as Athletic Club and Augsburg progressed instead.

• AZ have won only two of their seven matches against Serbian sides (D3 L2), their one home win coming back in 1980 when they beat Radnički Niš 5-0 in the third round of the UEFA Cup to seal the tie 7-2 on aggregate. Partizan’s only other two visits to the Netherlands both brought defeats by Groningen – 3-4 in the 1989/90 European Cup Winners’ Cup second round and 0-1 in the 2006/07 UEFA Cup first round – though the Serbian side won both ties.

Form guide
AZ
• AZ finished fourth in the 2018/19 Eredivisie at the end of a campaign that started with a shock defeat by Kairat Almaty in the UEFA Europa League second qualifying round – the earliest European exit in the club’s history.

• The Alkmaar club’s six group stage participations have all required pre-qualification and this season they negotiated more summer preliminary ties than ever before, three in total, knocking out BK Häcken, Mariupol and, after extra time in the play-offs, Antwerp (1-1 h, 4-1 a). They have progressed to the knockout phase on three previous occasions, reaching the quarter-finals in 2011/12 and 2013/14 and the round of 32 in 2016/17.

• The 1980/81 UEFA Cup runners-up are unbeaten in their ten European games this season (W5 D5), keeping seven clean sheets. Their all-time home record in UEFA Europa League group stage matches is W8 D5 L4 – though they have lost three of the last seven (W2 D2).

Partizan
• Third in the Serbian Superliga last term, Partizan won the domestic cup for the fourth year running, defeating league champions Crvena zvezda 1-0 in the final. In Europe they came through three UEFA Europa League qualifiers before losing out to Beşiktas in the play-offs (1-1 h, 0-3 a).

• This season Partizan entered the competition a round later, defeating Connah’s Quay and Malatyaspor and edging past Norwegian side Molde in the play-offs (2-1 h, 1-1 a) to book a sixth group stage berth. After failing to gain further progress on their first four attempts, the Serbian side succeeded on their most recent participation, in 2017/18, before falling in the round of 32 to Viktoria Plzeň (1-1 h, 0-2 a).

• Partizan have lost 11 of their 17 away fixtures in the UEFA Europa League group stage, winning just three, all of them, curiously, at teams whose names begin with the letter ‘A’ – AZ in 2015/16 among them.

Links and trivia
• Lazar Marković, Partizan’s Serbian international midfielder, was a substitute in both of Benfica’s matches against AZ in the quarter-finals of the 2013/14 UEFA Europa League, helping the Portuguese club to a 1-0 win in Belgrade and a 2-0 success in Lisbon.

• Partizan’s Nigerian forward Umar Sadiq, on loan to the club from Roma, spent the second half of 2017/18 in the Dutch Eredivisie with NAC Breda. He scored NAC’s consolation goal in a 1-3 home defeat by AZ.

• AZ have used only 15 players in their opening four fixtures, fewer than every other club in this UEFA Europa League group stage bar Group J’s Wolfsberg, who have fielded the same number.

The coaches
• When John van den Brom ended his five-year stint as AZ’s head coach by moving to Utrecht in summer 2019, his job was passed on to assistant Arne Slot, whose first task was to steer the Alkmaar club through three qualifying rounds into the UEFA Europa League group stage. This is his first post as a head coach although he is a well-known...
former player in the Netherlands having operated in the Eredivisie for NAC Breda, Sparta Rotterdam and PEC Zwolle, where he started both his playing and coaching careers, the latter in charge of the youth side in 2013/14.

- Short of managerial experience but a key figure at the club with whom he started his career in the early 1990s, Milošević was appointed as Partizan's head coach in March 2019 and within less than two months had steered the Belgrade club to victory in the Serbian Cup. A powerful left-footed striker, he scored 37 goals in 102 international appearances, five of them for Yugoslavia at UEFA EURO 2000, where he was the tournament's joint top marksman. He left Partizan for Aston Villa in 1995 and later played in Spain (Zaragoza, Espanyol, Celta Vigo, Osasuna) and Italy (Parma) before ending his career with a Russian league title at Rubin.