Match background
Legend
Match background

LASK and Sporting CP meet in Upper Austria with both clubs’ places in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase already booked but first place in Group D still on the line.

• The Austrian club secured springtime European football for the first time in their history by beating Rosenborg 2-1 in Trondheim on Matchday 5 – a result that lifted them on to ten points, three more than PSV Eindhoven, over whom they have head-to-head superiority (0-0 a, 4-1 h). Sporting, meanwhile, clinched a record eighth appearance in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase with a handsome 4-0 victory against PSV in Lisbon – their fourth win in a row – to remain top on 12 points.

• A victory for LASK will enable them to leapfrog Sporting and win the group. Any other outcome at the Linzer Stadion means the Portuguese team will qualify as section winners.

Previous meetings

• LASK had never faced a Portuguese club in UEFA competition until they visited Lisbon on Matchday 2, Sporting overturning a half-time deficit to win 2-1 – and make it five home wins out of five against Austrian visitors – Bruno Fernandes scoring the decisive goal.

• While Sporting have a perfect record against Austrian opponents in Lisbon, they have never won in four visits to Austria. Having lost their first three UEFA matches in the country, conceding 11 goals in the process, they managed to stop the rot in their most recent encounter, drawing 0-0 at Rapid Wien in the second leg of the 2004/05 UEFA Cup first round to win the tie 2-0 – their first step on a journey that took them all the way to the final, which they lost 3-1 to CSKA Moskva in their own stadium.

Form guide

LASK

• Runners-up to Salzburg in the Austrian Bundesliga last season, LASK also took part in UEFA competition for the first time since 2000. Having defeated Lillestrøm 6-1 on aggregate, they were then eliminated by Beşiktas in the UEFA Europa League third qualifying round on away goals (0-1 a, 2-1 h).

• LASK entered Europe this season in the UEFA Champions League third qualifying round, where they recorded a 5-2 aggregate victory against Switzerland’s Basel (2-1 a, 3-1 h) but could not repeat the trick in the play-offs, losing home (0-1) and away (1-2) to Club Brugge and therefore entering the UEFA Europa League group stage instead.

• LASK have won five of their six European home games over the past two seasons, scoring 14 goals in the process, the sole defeat coming in that UEFA Champions League play-off tie against Club Brugge.

Sporting

• Sporting qualified automatically for the 2019/20 group stage by winning last season’s Portuguese Cup, a penalty shoot-out victory in the final against Porto adding to a third-placed finish in the Liga. They also reached the UEFA Europa League round 32 of 32, where they were knocked out by Villarreal.

• This is Sporting’s ninth appearance in the UEFA Europa League proper – a competition record – and their seventh in the group stage, six of which have brought further progress into the knockout phase, where they have also appeared twice (in 2014/15 and 2017/18) after crossing over mid-season from the UEFA Champions League. The Lisbon side’s best performance in the competition came in 2011/12, when they reached the semi-finals.

• Sporting’s record away from home in the UEFA Europa League group stage is W8 D2 L10. They were unbeaten outside Lisbon in last season’s competition (W2 D2) and have lost just one of their last six European away fixtures – on Matchday 1 at PSV (2-3).

Links and trivia

• LASK are one of six clubs making their debut this season in the UEFA Europa League group stage, along with Espanyol, Wolves, Olexandriya, Ferencváros and fellow Austrian side Wolfsberg. They are one of three – together with Espanyol and Wolves – who have already secured their place in the knockout phase.

• Bruno Fernandes has hit five goals in this season’s group stage, including two at home to PSV on Matchday 5, and is its joint top scorer alongside Munir of Sevilla and Alfredo Morelos of Rangers.

• Sporting’s qualification for the round of 32 means they will be competing in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase for a competition-record eighth time.

• Sporting became the fifth team to register 100 goals in the UEFA Europa League, group stage to final, when Sebastián Coates opened the scoring in their 2-0 win at Rosenborg on Matchday 4.

The coaches
A former central defender who started out with home-town club Strasbourg, Valérien Ismaël spent the latter part of his career in Germany, winning the domestic double with both Werder Bremen and Bayern. His final club, Hannover, gave the Frenchman his first coaching opportunity in charge of the reserves, and he occupied a similar role at Wolfsburg, which was punctuated by a brief spell as head coach at Nürnberg. After another short stint as the main man at Wolfsburg, from October 2016 to February 2017, he resurfaced in Austria as the new boss of LASK in May 2019.

The son of a former player, Emanuel Ferro opted instead for a career in coaching that began at the age of 24 and led to a job with Benfica's youth team. Between 2014 and 2015 he had a spell abroad as the assistant coach to Malaysia and the head of Espérance de Tunis's youth sector before returning to Portugal to work at Sporting CP as assistant to the Under-14, B and U23 teams. He was briefly head coach of the latter, replacing Leonel Pontes, and now works alongside Silas in the senior side's current regime.