ŠK Slovan Bratislava

SC Braga

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Match background 2
Legend 4
**Match background**

Slovan Bratislava will be hoping to halt a run of three successive Group K defeats as their longest ever European campaign comes to a close at home to a Braga side who have already qualified for the knockout phase and will be keen to prolong an impressive run of away wins this season and advance as group winners.

- Slovan started the group with a memorable 4-2 home win against Beşiktaş, but after holding Braga 2-2 in Portugal have not added to their total, losing home and away to Wolves before conceding an added-time penalty to go down 2-1 at Beşiktaş and confirm their elimination. Braga, meanwhile, maintained both their unbeaten record and leadership of the group by coming from 3-1 down to draw 3-3 at home to Wolves. With three wins and two draws, they top the group with 11 points, one more than their fellow qualifiers from England.

- A win in the Slovakian capital will clinch first place for Braga, as will any result if Wolves fail to win at home to bottom-placed Beşiktaş in the group's other Matchday 6 encounter.

**Previous meetings**

- Braga led twice when they hosted Slovan in the Estádio Municipal on Matchday 2 but the Slovakian champions levelled on each occasion, an own goal from Bruno Viana, who had opened the scoring for the Portuguese side, securing a 2-2 draw for the visitors three minutes from time.

- Slovan's only other two games against Portuguese opposition are of considerable historical significance as they came in the second round of the 1968/69 European Cup Winners' Cup – a competition the then Czechoslovakian side went on to win. Defeated 1-0 away by Porto in the first leg, Slovan overturned that deficit in style with a 4-0 victory in Bratislava.

- Braga's only official matches against Slovakian opponents before this season came in the first round of the 2008/09 UEFA Cup, when they won home (4-0) and away (2-0) against MFK Petržalka.

**Form guide**

**Slovan**

- Slovan's ninth Slovakian league title since independence – and 21st national championship in all – was won at a canter in 2018/19, with a final victory margin of 17 points. Their European campaign, however, ended in the UEFA Europa League third qualifying round at the hands of Rapid Wien.

- This term the club from the Slovakian capital lost a penalty shoot-out against Montenegro's Sutjeska in the UEFA Champions League first qualifying round, but won both legs of their first two UEFA Europa League qualifying ties against Feronikeli and Dundalk before stunning Greek double winners PAOK on away goals (1-0 h, 2-3 a) to reach the group stage for the third time. Their previous two participations, in 2011/12 and 2014/15, yielded a sum total of one point, and they have not played a European fixture in the spring since their 1968/69 European Cup Winners' Cup triumph, when they beat Barcelona 3-2 in the Basel final.

- Defeated in nine successive UEFA Europa League group stage games, following a 0-0 draw at home to Paris Saint-Germain on Matchday 3 of the 2011/12 campaign, Slovan stopped the rot in this season's opener against Beşiktaş. Since the end of the 2014/15 group stage they have won ten of their 15 home European matches, losing just two, including the most recent against Wolves (1-2).

**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 unusually 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 group stage for the fifth time. They have now made further progress on four occasions, though their best season in the competition – and in Europe overall – came in 2010/11 when they crossed over in mid-campaign 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 12 European matches (W8 D4) and have won seven out of nine this season, their last defeat dating back to the 2017/18 UEFA Europa League round of 32 when they lost 3-0 at Marseille. Their away record in the UEFA Europa League group stage is W5 D6 L3, and they have won all four of their fixtures outside Portugal this season.

**Links and trivia**

- Slovan's Rabiu Ibrahim and Braga's Uche Agbo are both Nigerian internationals.

- Ibrahim started his career in Portugal with Sporting CP, though he never played for the Lisbon club's first team.
Although a run of nine successive defeats in the UEFA Europa League, group stage to final, ended for Slovan on Matchday 1, it remains a competition record.

Slovan's Dutch defender Myenty Abena turns 25 on the day of the game.

Slovan have a ten-point lead at the top of the Slovakian Super Liga at the winter break following their 2-0 home win against closest challengers DAC Dunajská Streda last Saturday. Šporar was on target for the 12th time in this season's league campaign and tops the scoring charts.

The coaches

The assistant coach in Slovan's runaway 2018/19 Slovakian title triumph, his fourth season in the role, Ján Kozák was promoted to the position of head coach in the summer as a replacement for Martin Ševela and duly succeeded in fulfilling his first assignment by steering the club through to the UEFA Europa League group stage. Capped 25 times by Slovakia, and a participant at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the former midfielder won four Slovakian league titles – one each with Košice and Slovan and the other two with MFK Petržalka.

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
UEFA Europa League
UEC: UEFA Cup
UCWC: UEFA Cup Winners' Cup
SCUP: UEFA Super Cup
UIF: 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
GS1: First group stage
3QR: Third qualifying round
R2: Second round
R4: Round of 16
R32: Round of 32
1st: first leg
2nd: second leg
PO: Play-off
Rep: Replay
PO-FT: Play-off for Final Tournament

Other abbreviations
(aet): After extra time
No.: Number
ag: Match decided on away goals
Pld: Matches played
Pos.: Position
Pts: Points
R: Sent off (straight red card)
Res.: Result
sg: Match decided by silver goal
GF: Goals for
gg: Match decided by golden goal
Y/R: Sent off (two yellow cards)
f: Match forfeited

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
UEFA: 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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