Match background

Legend
Two teams making their UEFA Europa League debut in 2019/20 have been paired together in the round of 32, with Group K runners-up Wolverhampton Wanderers hosting Group H winners Espanyol in the first leg at Molineux.

- Wolves actually finished up with more points in the group stage than Espanyol, 13 to 11, closing with a 4-0 home win against Beşiktaş. The Barcelona club’s only defeat – a first in 26 European games against non-Spanish opposition – came on Matchday 6, 0-1 at home to eliminated CSKA Moskva after qualification had already been assured.

Previous meetings
- This is the clubs’ first meeting and Espanyol’s maiden encounter with English opposition.
  - Wolves’ only previous matches against a Spanish club came in the 1959/60 European Champion Clubs’ Cup quarter-final against Espanyol’s city rivals Barcelona and resulted in their heaviest UEFA competition defeats both away (0-4) and home (2-5).

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.
  - Wolves began this UEFA Europa League campaign in late July and went on to win all six qualifying matches, knocking out Crusaders, Pyunik and, in the play-offs, Torino. They lost their opening group game, 0-1 at home to eventual section winners Braga, but took maximum points off Beşiktas and Slovan Bratislava as well as drawing 3-3 in northern Portugal.
  - The West Midlanders’ best European experience by some distance came in the inaugural UEFA Cup of 1971/72, when they went all the way to the final before losing 3-2 on aggregate to English rivals Tottenham Hotspur.
  - The Matchday 1 defeat by Braga ended a seven-game European winning streak at Molineux that had lasted since Wolves were beaten 2-1 by Spurs in the first leg of that 1972 UEFA Cup final. They have since prevailed with clean sheets against both Slovan (1-0) and Beşiktas (4-0).

Espanyol
- Espanyol finished seventh in the 2018/19 Spanish Liga, edging out Athletic Club on the head-to-head rule to book a return to the European stage for the first time since their appearance in the 2006/07 UEFA Cup final, which they lost on penalties to Sevilla after a 2-2 draw in Glasgow.
  - The club from Catalonia, who also lost the 1987/88 UEFA Cup final on spot kicks to Bayer Leverkusen, cruised through their first two qualifying ties this term, defeating Stjarnan and Luzern, before overcoming Zorya Luhansk in the play-offs. They topped Group H ahead of second-placed Ludogorets, beating the Bulgarian champions twice (1-0 a, 6-0 h) and CSKA away (2-0) as well as drawing both games against Ferencváros (1-1 h, 2-2 a).
  - The Matchday 6 loss at home to CSKA ended Espanyol’s run of 25 European games unbeaten against non-Spanish opposition (W19 D6) and was their first continental defeat in regulation play since Schalke beat them home (2-1) and away (3-0) in the 2005/06 UEFA Cup third round.
  - Espanyol remain on a run of 13 European away games without defeat (W8 D5), keeping clean sheets in seven of those matches and conceding just nine goals over that stretch.

UEFA Europa League squad changes
Wolves
- In: Leonardo Campana (Barcelona SC), Daniel Podence (Olympiacos), Renat Dadashov
- Out: Ryan Bennett (Leicester City, loan), Harry Burgoyne (Shrewsbury), Patrick Cutrone (Fiorentina, loan), Jesús Vallejo (end of loan)

Espanyol
- In: Leandro Cabrera (Getafe), Raúl de Tomás (Benfica), Adrián Embarba (Rayo Vallecano)
- Out: Sébastien Corchia (Sevilla, loan), Esteban Granero (Marbella), Lluís López (Tenerife, loan), Javier Puado

Links and trivia
- Three members of Espanyol’s squad have been affiliated to English clubs – Facundo Ferreyra (Newcastle 2015), Jonathan Calleri (West Ham 2016/17) and Bernardo Espinosa (Middlesbrough 2016/17).
- Three Wolves players have operated in Spain – Jonny (Celta Vigo 2012–18), Adama Traoré (Barcelona 2013–14) and Raúl Jiménez (Atlético Madrid 2014/15).
- Espinosa and Traoré were Premier League team-mates at Middlesbrough in 2016/17.
Substitute Diogo Jota's hat-trick for Wolves against Beşiktaş on Matchday 6, with goals in the 58th, 63rd and 69th minutes, was the third fastest in the history of the UEFA Europa League, group stage to final.

Wolves and Espanyol were among six UEFA Europa League group stage debutants this season; only one of the others, LASK, made it through to the knockout phase, Ferencváros, Olexandriya and Wolfsberg all suffering elimination.

The coaches
A former goalkeeper who was in Portugal's UEFA EURO 2008 squad but never won a senior cap, Nuno Espírito Santo 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.

Abelardo Fernández was named as Espanyol's third coach of the season on 27 December, succeeding David Gallego and Pablo Machín. A Spanish international defender with 54 caps, he also won 1992 Olympic gold in Barcelona, where he later shone for the local giants at the Camp Nou, winning the Spanish Liga and Copa del Rey twice plus the 1997 UEFA Cup Winners' Cup. His coaching path, like his playing career, began at hometown team Sporting Gijón, where he was head coach from May 2014 to January 2017. He subsequently spent 18 months in charge of another former club, Alavés, before stepping down in May 2019.

UEFA Europa League knockout debut for VAR system
Video Assistant Referees (VAR) will be deployed in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase. The decision was taken by the UEFA Executive Committee last September, following the introduction of the system in several UEFA competitions in the 2018/19 campaign.
Legend

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
CONF: 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: Fourth round
SF: Semi-finals
R16: 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
GS: Group stage
GS2: Second group stage
R1: First round
R3: Third round
PR: Preliminary round
QF: Quarter-finals
QR: Qualifying round
1QR: First qualifying round
2QR: Second qualifying round
FT: Final tournament
ELITE: Elite round
3rdPO: Third-place play-off
GS-FT: Group stage – final tournament
(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)
Y: Booked
L: Lost
Nat.: Nationality
N/A: Not applicable

Other abbreviations
(f): Match forfeited
(pens): Penalties
og: Own goal
P: Penalty
agg: Aggregate
AP: Appearances
Comp.: Competition
D: Drawn
DoB: Date of birth
ET: Extra Time
GA: Goals against
t: Match decided by toss of a coin
W: Won
Y: Booked
Res.

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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