UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE - 2019/20 SEASON
MATCH PRESS KITS

(First leg: 1-1)
Linzer Stadion - Linz
Thursday 27 February 2020
18.55CET (18.55 local time)
Round of 32, Second leg

LASK

AZ Alkmaar

Last updated 26/02/2020 03:14CET

Match background
Legend
LASK and AZ Alkmaar meet in northern Austria to renew their battle for a place in the UEFA Europa League round of 16 following a 1-1 first-leg draw in the Netherlands.

• LASK were impressive UEFA Europa League group stage debutants in the autumn, topping Group D, while AZ finished runners-up to Manchester United in Group L, securing their place in the knockout phase, like LASK, with a game to spare.

Previous meetings
• A deflected 26th-minute strike from LASK striker Marko Raguz looked to have given the visitors a precious first-leg advantage in Alkmaar, only for AZ skipper Teun Koopmeiners to rescue a draw for his side with an equalising penalty four minutes from time – his third successful spot kick of the competition.

• LASK have already hosted Dutch visitors this season, beating PSV Eindhoven 4-1 at home on Matchday 4 with goals from Reinhold Ranftl, Dominik Frieser and a double from Brazilian striker Klaus. Their only other UEFA game at home to a team from the Netherlands was a 0-0 draw against Utrecht in the 1987/88 UEFA Cup first round.

• AZ's two previous trips to Austria have brought a 0-2 defeat at Grazer AK in the group stage of the 2004/05 UEFA Cup and a 2-2 draw at Austria Wien in the group stage of the 2011/12 UEFA Europa League. Neither result was damaging, however, as the Dutch side went on to reach the semi-finals of the former and quarter-finals of the latter.

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 but were eliminated on away goals by Beşiktaş in the UEFA Europa League third qualifying round.

• LASK began this season's European journey in the UEFA Champions League third qualifying round, where they beat Basel (2-1 a, 3-1 h) before losing to Club Brugge (0-1 h, 1-2 a). That meant a first ever participation in the UEFA Europa League group stage, where they thrived, winning all three home games, registering 13 points and topping a group containing three European stalwarts in Sporting CP, PSV and Rosenborg.

• This is LASK's first taste of springtime European football. Their previous best seasons in continental competition were 1984/85 and 1985/86, when they reached the UEFA Cup second round.

• LASK have won six of their seven European home games over the past two seasons, scoring 17 goals in the process, the sole defeat coming in that UEFA Champions League play-off tie against Club Brugge.

• LASK have never previously drawn the first leg of a UEFA knockout tie away from home.

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 negotiated three summer preliminary ties this season, knocking out BK Häcken, Mariupol and Antwerp, to reach the UEFA Europa League group stage for the sixth time. They came through as runners-up to United with nine points, scoring 15 goals, the joint highest tally in the competition, 11 of those being registered in their only two wins, both against Astana (6-0 h, 5-0 a).

• This is AZ's fourth appearance in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase. They have unhappy memories of the most recent, in 2016/17, when they were heavily beaten by Lyon (1-4 h, 1-7 a), but won their first two ties at this juncture, against Anderlecht in 2011/12 (1-0 h, 1-0 a) and Slovan Liberec in 2013/14 (1-0 a, 1-1 h) and went on to reach the quarter-finals in each of those campaigns.

• The 1980/81 UEFA Cup runners-up were unbeaten in their first 11 European games this season (W5 D6), keeping seven clean sheets, before losing 4-0 at Old Trafford on Matchday 6. Their all-time away record in the UEFA Europa League knockout phase is W2 D1 L4, the two wins coming in the round of 32.

• Until this season AZ had never won a UEFA competition tie in which they drew the first leg at home, losing all four, the first on penalties to Barcelona in the 1977/78 UEFA Cup second round after both games had finished 1-1. In 2019/20, however, they have done so twice, defeating Häcken (0-0 h, 3-0 a) and, after extra time, Antwerp (1-1 h, 4-1 a) in the qualifying phase.

UEFA Europa League squad changes
• LASK
  In: Husein Balić (St. Pölten), Christian Ramsebner, Dominik Reiter*, David Schnegg*
  Out: Yusuf Otubanjo (Ararat), Emanuel Pogatetz
*B List

**AZ**

In: Håkon Evjen (Bodø/Glimt), Ramon Leeuwin (Odense)

Out: Léon Bergsma (Den Bosch, loan), Tijjani Reijnders (RKC Waalwijk, loan)

**Links and trivia**

- LASK’s Australian midfielder James Holland joined AZ in 2009, but he never made a first-team appearance for the club.
- LASK were one of six clubs to make their debut this season in the UEFA Europa League group stage, and one of just three, along with Espanyol and Wolves, to progress through to the knockout phase.
- LASK and AZ both improved their domestic league title chances last weekend, the Austrian side beating St Pölten 4-1 at home to move three points clear of Salzburg at the top of the Bundesliga table while the Dutch club moved to within three points of Eredivisie leaders Ajax with a 2-0 home win against PEC Zwolle, Koopmeiners scoring twice more from the penalty spot.

**Penalty shoot-outs**

- LASK have yet to feature in a UEFA penalty shoot-out.
- AZ’s record in one UEFA penalty shoot-out is W0 L1:
  4-5 v Barcelona, 1977/78 UEFA Cup second round

**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 München. 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.
- 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.