

LEGENDS 108

Chapter 108: First Start I

****2nd March 2020****

3:04 pm

At the CTFD Portugaia, the Porto players were walking off the field after rounding up their pre-match training for their match at the Estadio de Sao Miguel against Santa Clara when the manager called for a tactical meeting.

Sergio Conceicao was going to name the players who would be in the lineup, both the starting players and the ones on the bench, as well as address the tactics they would be using against Santa Clara.

The players gathered in the hall where team meetings were usually held and sat down in the available chairs, waiting for the manager to begin.

While waiting for all the players to gather around and settle down, Sergio Conceicao exchanged greetings with some of the players, asked about their families, and made some small talk.

After the exchange of pleasantries with some players, the rest of the team was already gathered around and Sergio Conceicao started the team meeting.

“Good work in training lads, I’m impressed by your hard work and enthusiasm in training recently and I also like how it is reflecting on your performances on the pitch,”

“As usual, there is no better evidence than results and it is quite clear right now, as we qualified for the round of 16 in the Europa League and are currently at the top of the table in the league, so I want to first say that good work,” Sergio Conceicao first addresses the team’s recent performances.

“Nevertheless, we have been losing a few games recently that we should by all rights, have come out on top, so while I am happy with your recent performances, I still have to tell you that a lot of improvements have to be made, and we will be starting with fixing those faults in our next match,”

"I'll start with the line-up for today's match against Santa Clara,"

"As usual, we'll be playing our 4-4-2 formation,"

"We'll have our no.1 goalie in between the sticks, Augustin Marchesin. His job doesn't need any further explanations, I believe," Sergio Conceicao started

"On the left side of the defensive line is Alex Telles and on the right is Wilson Manafa,"

"They'll combine with the center backs to form an impregnable line while also always keeping an eye out to help the team on the attacks by making inverted runs down the wings and sending the ball into the penalty box," Sergio Conceicao explained what he wanted from the wing-backs.

"In the center back positions, we have our team captain, Pepe, on the right center, and standing beside him on the left would be, Diogo Leite,"

"They are the main points of our defense and would be looking to shut down any attacks that manage to make their way past the midfield,"

"Our primary defensive tactic for this match will be man-marking, you all should stay on your man and harass them. Don't give them any space to even think of creating something,"

"If snatching the ball directly isn't working, try to push them out towards the wings and keep them away from the center of the field so that they have no choice but to send the ball into our penalty area from the wings where our center backs will be waiting to clear the incoming crosses," Sergio Conceicao explained to the team, forgetting that he hadn't even finished calling out the line-ups.

"In central mid-field, we will be having a partnership between Sergio Oliveira and Romario Baro,"

"When we are not in possession, I want you hovering between the midfielders and the forwards of the other team, always looking to intercept."

“I don’t want any of their passes to make it through you guys and I believe you can do that,”

“When we are with possession or on the attack, I want you guys somewhere in-between the edges of the opponent penalty area and the midfield center circle, supporting the wingers and the strikers with your passes and connecting them if they are too far away from the other,”

“Depending on the situation, you can also make decoy runs to confuse the opposition defense,” Sergio Conceicao gave full instructions to the center mid-fielders.

He was going above and beyond to make his instructions as clear as possible as he wanted his team to get over their current inconsistent run of form.

“On the left wing, Is Luiz Diaz, he’ll be combining a left-midfield and winger role as I want him constantly dropping back to receive the ball from the midfield before driving the ball forward and cutting into the box or releasing the ball forward, depending on the situation,”

“On the right wing, I expect Jason to do the same, but I want him to stay forward a bit more and not drop back as much. Only drop back when the ball is being pushed back, is that clear?” Sergio Conceicao asked his eyes on Jason.

“Yes coach,” Jason responded immediately, a smile on his face after realizing that he would be starting the match.

“Ok, good... Moving on, I want Moussa Marega and Ze Luis upfront as our two center forwards, but I want Ze Luis dropping coming to the wings whenever Luis Diaz drops back while Marega stays in the middle, and Jason would stay on the right wing to ensure that there are no holes in our attack.”

Sergio Conceicao then went on to give out more detailed instructions before calling out the players who would be on the bench.

The team meeting ended shortly after and the players who were part of the line-up, quickly headed over to the locker room to prepare to leave for Estadio de Sao Miguel.

Quickly washing up and getting into their NewBalance-sponsored track tracksuits and shoes, they packed up their kits and got on the team bus, heading to Ponta Delgada.

The drive took about thirty minutes before they arrived at the stadium and it was worth noting that the amount of fans at the stadium was quite low.

As the two teams did their pre-match warm-up routines, Jason quite easily noticed that the number of fans filling up the stadium was quite low and unless a huge wave of fans suddenly arrived, the stadium would probably only be half-filled by the time the match started.

The effects of the coronavirus on daily life were gradually increasing, but even then, people were still willing to come out to support their football clubs no matter how bad it was, which was something Jason was definitely grateful for as football was always better when the fans were there to support.

But for now, he placed the matter of the virus aside and focused on psyching himself up as he did his warm-up routines, his major focus of the day being to perform well.