

LEGENDS 191

Chapter 191: Road to Liga NOS Champions 2019/20 XVIII

As soon as the whistle was blown, Soares sent the ball back to Marega who quickly laid the ball off to Otavio.

Just like that, the game began.

A game that would decide if Porto would lift the trophy after the game or wait to try again in the next match.

It was a match that held a lot of meanings thus not only were emotions running high, but the tension ran high as well.

However, it soon became apparent that Porto had more positive emotions than tensions on their mind as they soon began attacking the Sporting CP side incessantly.

In the middle of the park, they smoothly exchanged the ball among themselves as they tried to find space in between the Sporting CP players while also making sure they did not lose possession.

But Sporting CP was not a weak team and their players rushed at the Porto team in systematic pressing formation making it more difficult than ever for the Porto team to do anything with the ball and it did not take long before they lost possession of the ball.

Immediately the Porto team lost the ball, the Porto players immediately moved behind the ball, setting the focus on plugging any holes in their formation instead of immediately trying to get the ball back.

With Sporting CP now in control of the ball, they also tried to break through the Porto defense but they also came up short due to the tight defense of the Porto team.

For the first ten minutes of the game, this back-and-forth situation constantly repeated itself and it was obvious that each team was testing each other and waiting to see who would buckle first.

In Portugal, it was well known that Porto and Benfica were the most decorated teams in first division football with Porto having won the Primeira Liga twenty-eight times and looking to win it their twenty-ninth time after this game.

But another undisputed fact was that the only other team in Portugal that could stand up to the two behemoths, Porto and Benfica, was Sporting CP, thus the Porto players knew that they couldn't dare to slip up against Sporting CP.

The same went for the Sporting CP team.

Thus it was only natural that they were playing cautiously against each other for the time being.

Porto was being especially cautious as the game was a very important one for them and they would rather not take a blow to their confidence by carelessly allowing the Sporting CP team to get a goal against them first.

However, they couldn't remain cautious for the whole match and soon, the two teams began to make more aggressive attempts at each other and trying to score.

The attacking players worked at trying to break through the opposition's defense and the defending players immediately went on the defensive whenever their team lost the ball and tried to quell the opponent.

This was how the players of both teams began playing.

They still retained some of their cautiousness, but soon, even that went flying out the window and both teams soon started fully attacking each other, intent on scoring first, and shots were sent flying at each other's goals from all sorts of angles.

The match heated up and the ball flew from one end of the pitch to the other constantly within seconds, but somehow, even as the first half neared its ending, neither of the two teams had been able to put one past the opponent's goalkeeper despite coming close to doing so a couple of times.

Porto had come close to taking the lead twice with clear shots on goal from Otavio and Marega, but the Sporting CP goalkeeper had been able to keep the ball out, proving that his five-digit monthly salary was not for nothing.

On Porto's end, Augustin Marchesin had to keep out four potential goal-scoring opportunities, displaying the skill that made him the goalkeeper with the most clean sheets in the season.

From this, it was clear that the Sporting CP had a slight edge over the Porto attack, but Porto's defense seemed to be better since they had managed to keep out the Sporting CP team's attacks from hitting the back of the net.

Possession, however, was almost equal and both teams matched up well against each other, canceling each other out

In the end, the referee finally blew the whistle, signifying the end of the goalless first half.

The players of the two teams trudged off the green field of the Estadio do Dragao and headed into the inner quarters of the stadium, each team going to their locker rooms for a much-needed break and a more required change in tactics as it was clear that the two teams were just canceling each other out.

In the Porto locker room, the starting eleven players chugged down water and tried to rest a bit while Sergio Conceicao watched them while waiting.

He planned to give them 5 minutes of rest before he started making changes to the tactics, and at the moment, he was currently thinking of the changes he could make to the tactics.

Different ideas arose in his head and he began sifting through the ideas, throwing aside the dumb ideas and mentally simulating the good ones to determine the likely effect on the game, and in the end he settled for a particularly unconventional, but probably ingenious idea.

His face lit up in a slight smile as he mentally simulated the idea and did not find any major problems wrong with the idea, not to mention, the likely effectiveness of the plan.

Since it was very likely to work, Sergio Conceicao immediately decided to try out what he had in mind, so he called out to the players,

“Attention boys, I’m going to make a few changes that should help us gain a better result against our opponents in the second half,”

“First, Jason, suit up, you’re coming on for Marega,” Sergio Conceicao stated.

“Yes Coach,” Jason stated outwardly, but inwardly his thoughts were, ‘Sorry, what?’