

LEGENDS 192

Chapter 192: Road to Liga NOS Champions 2019/20 XIX

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

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

It was to be expected, the team was currently playing in the 4-4-2 formation so if Jason came on for Marega who was one of the team’s two strikers, Jason would have to play in the striker position.

Not that Jason didn’t fancy playing as a striker, or that he was bad at scoring goals, but it was just kind of strange to him who wasn’t prepared for such a role.

Not to mention that he preferred getting involved in the attack build-up, but playing as a striker would limit him to playing only upfront thus he would not be able to get involved in driving the ball forward to create options for himself and his teammates which was what he was best at doing.

Thus he rather preferred playing on the wings instead of as a striker and he was slightly confused at the manager’s arrangement, but luckily for him, Sergio Conceicao didn’t plan on being vague as he usually was most of the time.

“We’ll be tweaking the formation a bit so Tiquiniho plays as the main striker while Jason will play as a support striker,” Sergio Conceicao began explaining with the aid of the whiteboard.

“Jason’s pace will allow him to track back to the midfield and join the other midfielders in overloading the midfield which will give us an edge over Sporting in the midfield, but once we are on the attack, Jason would head back forward and play behind Tiquiniho,”

“With this, he should be able to receive the ball if it is too difficult to get the ball all the way to Tiquiniho in the front, from there he can hold up play enough to buy you guys time so that you can support the attack, or he can break through the defense himself and take the shot or pass the ball to Tiquiniho,” Sergio Conceicao explained while drawing a circle on the board and making use of different arrows and markings to explain Jason’s role in the new tactic to the team.

“The rest of you guys just need to keep doing what you were doing while taking into account the new changes in the formation,” the Portuguese manager stated with his hand still pointed to the board.

“I think that’s clear enough, you guys played well in the first half and I’m confident you’ll do better in the second half,”

“I want you guys to go out there and forget what hangs in the balance and just focus on giving out the best performance you can,” Sergio Conceicao stated, his words contrasting what he had said in the pre-match tactical meeting, but he knew that this wasn’t the time to heap pressure on his players by being too stern, especially since they weren’t losing.

The players also noticed the conflict in the manager’s words, but not one pointed it out and some simply laughed it off... there were more important things at hand than nitpicking the manager’s speech.

Time ran down as the Portuguese manager further elaborated on the things to take note of in the new tactic while the players readied themselves for the second half.

Soon the players were back on the wide expanse of green that was the pitch of the Estadio do Dragao’s football stadium.

Jason was the first substitution for the match as he was coming on for Moussa Marega for the second half and he marched onto the field with his teammates.

As they waited for the Sporting CP team to kick off, Otavio who was nearby Jason stretched out his fist to Jason and said,

“Let’s take this trophy home today,”

Flashing a grin with a mouthful of white pearl-like teeth as an answer, Jason also stretched out his fist, but instead of a fistbump, it was their forearms that collided against each other.

They couldn't fist bump or anything like that on the field due to the safety rules made to combat Covid-19 which was kind of ironic and stupid because even though the players couldn't shake hands or bump fists, they would end up high-fiving and hugging each other after they scored a goal yet no one was ever called out for that.

Jason couldn't understand the rules, but he just went along with it.

Fweeeeeeeeeee

The second half started immediately after the shrill sound of the referee's whistle.

The whistle wasn't even done blowing when Sporting CP already kicked off and began pushing the ball back among themselves.

At first glance, it seemed like the cautiousness they had played with in the earlier parts of the first half was back, but the Porto players weren't interested in being cautious at the moment so they immediately charged at them with reckless abandon.

It didn't take long before the Porto team was once again in possession of the ball and they immediately moved to pick up where they had left off in the first half and try to score, but since the Sporting CP team had begun playing defensively, the Porto team didn't have any choice but to control the ball in the middle of the field while waiting for an opportunity to open up.

Despite playing defensively, the Sporting CP midfielders began pressing the Porto midfielders harder and making it harder for them to retain possession of the ball.

Seeing this, Jason immediately left his post as a striker and moved back to join his teammates in the midfield.

With the added presence of Jason in the midfield, it became noticeably easier to pass the ball around the Sporting CP players as Jason did well to link up his teammates who were farther away from each other.

His off-the-ball movement was excellent and he made sure he was almost always open to receive the ball which was majorly because he currently didn't have a marker.

He was currently playing as a striker which meant that his marker was one of the center backs of the other team, but that player wouldn't dare to leave his defensive position and leave only one center back to cope with Tiquinho Soares who was the highest goalscorer in the league thus far.

The Porto team ensured their dominance in the midfield until suddenly in the 59th minute of the game, the Sporting CP midfielders managed to snatch a pass that was meant for Jesus Corona and immediately launched a counterattack.

The Porto defenders who had let down their guards because of how the five-man midfield had handled their opposition since the second half started, were unable to quickly react and the Sporting CP team quickly broke in from the right side of the Porto defensive line and charged at the Porto goal while constantly exchanging the ball among each other and keeping their counter-attack alive.

The Porto defense gave chase and made tackles at the Sporting CP players yet the ball somehow eluded them and the Sporting CP team made it unobstructed into the Porto 18-yard box before a final pass was made to the Sporting CP striker who struck the ball beautifully first time, smashing it past Augustin Marchesin.