

LEGENDS 71

Chapter 71 Europa League round of 32 first leg

The Porto players had been doing their training on one half of the field while the Bayer Leverkusen players were also having a pre-match training session on another side of the field.

They had been training for almost thirty minutes when their team captain and head manager arrived to join them with Pepe joining the team in warming up directly while Sergio Conceicao was watching over the training while glancing at the Bayer Leverkusen players training every so often.

After doing various passing and agility drills that weren't too intensive for another hour, the Porto team players were called back into the locker room for the starting line-up selection and tactical meeting. The players filed into the locker room and began to sit on the bench while waiting for the tactical meeting to start.

The rapidly increasing noise coming from above them told of the stadium that was being filled with fans as every minute passed. Sergio Conceicao ignored all that and quickly began the tactical meeting, "I'll start with our starting line-up and formation before we get into anything else,"

"We'll be using the 4-4-2 formation flat formation that will transition into the 4-4-2 diamond whenever we are on the attack,"

"For the starting line-up, our goalkeeper will be Augustin Marchesin," "Pepe and Ivan Marcano will be starting in the center-back positions, and Alex Telles and Wilson Manafa will be starting in the left-back and right-back positions respectively,"

"Danilo Pereira will be playing as a CDM in the left-center side of the mid-field, while Mattheus Uribe will play as right a CM in the right-center side of the midfield,"

"Luiz Diaz is our left winger, Jesus Corona will be the right winger, and we'll have a striking partnership between Tiquinhio Soares and Moussa Marega upfront," "Needless to say, the rest of you are on the bench," Sergio Conceicao very quickly informed the players of the starters and the bench players before moving on the the tactics.

"Our opponents will be playing the 3-4-3 diamond formation and we'll have a lot to do if we want to keep them from scoring, as they are very used to this formation,"

"Additionally they are very good at quickly and fluidly changing their positions on the field so that would make defending against them even harder, so there are three specific players I want you to put your full focus on defending against,"

"The first person is their center forward, Volland, he has a knack for moving towards the right wing, thereby leaving the center part of the field occupied, but this is a ruse as the right winger, Alario is always watching and ready to burst into the center whenever there is an opportunity which makes him the true danger and is usually the final point of their attacks,"

"Then there is that kid Kai Havertz that's playing as the central attacking midfielder, he seems to have been given the right to roam the field freely and because of his vision and positioning, he's quite good at finding space in the defense, and getting in behind to score,"

"Those are the three main players I want you to watch as once either of them is moving and heading for our goal, it means they have something set and it's your job to stop it and it's my job to tell you how,"

"Danilo, I want you on Kai Havertz every minute of the game, don't make him make inside runs, don't let him get away, don't let him breathe, hell, even if he's substituted, keep guarding him from the bench," the head manager instructed very seriously, causing a small burst of laughter among the players.

"You guys may laugh, but Danilo, that's what I need from you," Sergio Conceicao reiterated.

"Since Volland will frequently move to the right, make sure to press whenever he gets the ball, but I want Pepe and Ivan specifically looking to intercept any passes that seem to be making their way to Alario on the right,"

"Now on the attacking front, I don't need to say this, but our objective is to hit them with lightning-fast counterattacks to get behind their center-backs before sending the ball infield for our strikers to finish," Sergio finally explained the basic set-up of their tactics for the game before spending the rest of time reiterating his words and explaining further on the tactics.

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"For the other players, we shall use zonal marking to try to keep them restricted while doing our best to drive them to the wings where they can't cause any waves,"

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Jason paid extra attention during the tactical meeting as for some reason he had a pressing feeling that he would probably end up playing in the match, despite how unlikely it seemed, but it never hurt to do what you were going to do anyway, right?

At fifteen minutes to eight, the players in the starting line-up were lining up in the tunnel, awaiting their cue to start marching out onto the field.

The line-up for both teams was being shown on the huge display screen in the stadium and the line-up and formation of the Bayer Leverkusen team was the first to be shown.

{The Bayer Leverkusen team has set themselves up in the 3-4-3 diamond formation} The commentator quickly began doing his duties.

{In goal, they have Lukas Hradecky, their no. 1 goalie}

{The three center-backs who will be in charge of the team's defensive line are Jonathan Tah, Aleksandar Dragovic and Sven Bender}

{In center midfield we have Lars Bender, the team's captain who would be leading from behind as usual, in the wide midfield areas, we have Charles Aranguiz, and Karem Demirbay playing on the left and right sides of the midfield respectively}

{Kai Havertz as a lone central attacking midfield will be looking to link up well with the three forwards, Leon Bailey, Kevin Volland, and Lucas Alario} The commentator skillfully listed the players in the line-up and explained the home team's formation. The commentator then went on to talk about the away team, but at this point, most of the fans were awaiting the match's kick-off and were no longer listening as they had already seen the line-ups previously anyway.

From then on the pre-match formalities didn't take long and soon the players were waiting around for kick-off by the Porto team that had won the coin toss.

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At exactly 8:00 pm the referee's whistle blew to signify kick-off and Tiquinho Soares didn't waste any time in sending the ball back to Matheus Uribe who sent the ball towards the left wing where Luiz Diaz was awaiting the pass.

Just like that the first leg of the Europa League round of 32 kicked off.

The Porto side despite being away from home and only having the support of about two thousand traveling played like they were right in their own backyard... at least for the first few minutes.

Following the head manager's instructions, they managed to shut out most of the Bayer Leverkusen attacking options, limiting them to only two shots for the first ten minutes of the game and neither of those two shots were on target.

When they were not defending, they were skillfully passing the ball around in the midfield with enough confidence that one would think the Bayer Leverkusen players were naught but training dummies.

Unfortunately despite their defensive efforts, their attacking attempts didn't bear as much fruition as their main attacking tactic for the game was a counter-attacking tactic thus with them doing well enough to prevent the opposing team's attempts, they were also blocking their own chances to launch a counter-attack.

This had caused the match to be stuck in a deadlock.