

## Braga - The Lowdown

Written by Daniel Gillespie  
Friday, 16 July 2010 18:15 -

---



Given Celtic's recent luck in draws in Europe, you would think Peter Lawwell had shut down a charity for pure enjoyment. And financial reasons too, obviously.

AC Milan, Barcelona and Arsenal are some of the names that we've unfortunately been drawn with over the years, possibly the hardest possible scenario imaginable (Milan won the competition that year). Even as recent as last year threw us Dinamo Moscow; another rich club from the Russian capital that can throw away money for fun – obviously they were paired with Celtic at the 3<sup>rd</sup> qualifying round.

Then we have Braga: The team that finished only second to free-scoring Benfica last season, they build their success on their mean defence and excellent home record. But when you compare this draw to previous years, you can't help but think 'That wasn't bad'.

## Braga - The Lowdown

Written by Daniel Gillespie  
Friday, 16 July 2010 18:15 -

---

In today's draw, Celtic's potential opponents were: Ajax, the team that scored 106 goals last season and had a goal difference of +86, Dynamo Kiev, the team that had Barcelona and eventual champions Inter Milan in their Champions League group, Fenerbache, the Turkish outfit finished second to Bursaspor by a solitary point last season and finally Zenit St Petersburg, the mega-rich club who scraped into 3<sup>rd</sup> position via goal difference to get 3<sup>rd</sup> position.

So, is Braga still a decent draw for Celtic?

On paper then you would say yes, they are. For a team that finished above Porto and Sporting Lisbon last season, they only managed to score 48 goals in 30 games last season, conceding only 20. Furthermore, when you scan through their squad, now that goalkeeper Eduardo has left for Genoa, not one player really stands out. This, if anything, tells of a strong team mentality with an 'All for one and one for all' attitude.

Unsurprisingly, Braga deploy a 4-3-3/4-5-1 formation. With an impressive defensive record such as theirs, it's only natural that they would use such a formation and be incredibly hard to break down.

When they played Benfica (away) back in March, ultimately the title decider, they lined up:

-----Eduardo-----  
Filipe Oliveira---Moises--Rodriguez-Evaldo  
Andres Madrid---Hugo Viana---Mossoro  
Alan-----Paulo Cesar-----Renteria

This was without main striker, Albert Meyong, who was their top scorer last season with 11 goals. Now, they're without Viana and instead have Luis Aguiar who pulls the strings for them in

## Braga - The Lowdown

Written by Daniel Gillespie  
Friday, 16 July 2010 18:15 -

---

central midfield.

Their attack hardly inspires confidence; Albert Meyong, their main striker, has scored only 18 goals in 47 games for them, and a lowly four in 24 games for his country, Cameroon. Even their second striker, Paulo César, has scored only 11 goals in 46 games and is an aging Brazilian journeyman striker.

When the two teams do meet, it's essential that Celtic don't get over run in midfield and ultimately lose control of the game. This has happened all too many times in the past and it's key that Lennon gets someone like Scott Brown to cover Uruguayan Luis Aguiar, who will most likely be the man from midfield who will make things happen. If you cut him off in the central and make it difficult for him to pass the ball about, then Braga won't be able to flow at all.

This, however, is far easier saying than actually doing. In their entire campaign last season, they won an incredible 14 games out of 15 at home and drew the other one. This included victories against the likes of Benfica, Porto and Sporting Lisbon. So despite the lack of talent, they still can beat the bigger teams and make life difficult for practically anyone.

Their away record, though, is somewhat different. In their 15 games, they only won just over half with eight, drew four of them and lost all three of their games away from home.

The proof is there; we *can* beat them over two legs, but the tie is essentially decided in the first leg. If we can basically do what Braga are best at and flood the midfield and make it difficult for their midfield to function, particularly Luis Aguiar, then we can take it back to Celtic Park and with the crowd behind us, finish them off there.

This is all hypothetical, of course, if Celtic doesn't get their act together and play like the Celtic of old. We have been our own worst enemy in recent years when it comes to European games, particularly away games, and shown that any man and their dog can give us a beating in their back yard. You don't need me to tell you how bad the likes of Aalborg and Hapoel were...

Braga are nowhere near as bad as Aalborg, Rapid Vienna or Hapoel Tel-Aviv, but unless we do

## Braga - The Lowdown

Written by Daniel Gillespie  
Friday, 16 July 2010 18:15 -

---

our homework and go three men in central midfield, then Fernando Couto's men will be laughing their way to Glasgow for yet another meaningless European fixture at Parkhead.