

= 1999 ? 2000 S.L. Benfica season =

The 1999 ? 2000 season was Sport Lisboa e Benfica 's 96th season in existence and the club 's 66th consecutive season in the top flight of Portuguese football . It ran from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000 . Benfica competed domestically in the Primeira Liga and the Taça de Portugal . The club also participated in the UEFA Cup , by virtue of finishing third in that tournament the previous season .

After sacking Scottish coach Graeme Souness , Benfica appointed UEFA Champions League @-@ winning manager Jupp Heynckes . Limited by ongoing financial difficulties , the club signings consisted of players either on the books , free transfers or loans , such as with the Spaniards Chano and Tote , the former on a free deal , and the latter on loan . Tote arrived to replace Rushfeldt , who signed and practised with the team , before being recalled back by Rosenborg with disagreements over his transfer . Benfica started their campaign with a six @-@ game winning streak in their first seven league games , topping the league until December ; when a record @-@ setting loss to Celta de Vigo , the greatest in its history , negatively affected the team mentality , causing them to drop to third place in Matchday 19 , which would become their final position , finishing eight points behind Sporting , but securing a position in the upcoming season 's UEFA Cup .

In total Benfica won 21 league matches , drew 6 and lost 7 . Nuno Gomes was the season topscorer with 20 goals , of which 18 occurred in the Primeira Liga .

= = Summary = =

= = = Pre @-@ season = = =

After a season which saw Graeme Souness sacked , the club looked for more experience and chose Jupp Heynckes on 30 May . During a 20 @-@ year career , the German manager had won titles for Bayern Munich and Real Madrid and was the first manager in 32 years to clinch a European title for Madrid the previous year .

The pre @-@ season , which began in early July , included nine preparation matches in Portugal and abroad . From 18 to 31 July , the team played six matches against German teams . Their first game in Lisbon was against Bayern Munich on 10 August , and four days later they participated in the Trofeo Memorial Nereo Rocco against AC Milan .

Heynckes immediately requested signings in all three positions : defence , midfield and attack . Although the club scouted Hanuch (signed by Sporting) and Claudio Husaín for the midfield , the only players to join the team were Maniche and Marco Freitas (both on the club payroll and returning from one @-@ year loans to Alverca) . For attack Benfica considered Barcelona player Giovanni (who said , " It would be an honour for me to work with Heynckes ") but ultimately signed Chano , a 34 @-@ year @-@ old Spanish player from CD Tenerife .

The club was involved in a transfer saga over Norwegian striker Rushfeldt . He signed and practised with the team but left after Rosenborg claimed there were financial issues related to his transfer . He was replaced by Tote , on loan from Real Madrid , with the club president saying that " Tote was always the first choice " and Rushfeldt " did not have the personality or mental strength to play for Benfica " .

Goalkeeper Michel Preud 'homme retired at age 39 . Arriving in 1994 , he made nearly 200 appearances over five seasons and became a fan favourite . Benfica hired two replacements : Argentine Carlos Bossio and German Robert Enke . Heynckes described Bossio as the " more experienced " goalkeeper , with " a great talent " , but also defining Enke as a " good , young goalkeeper ; a promise " . The Argentine had appearances on his national team and was the first choice at Estudiantes , while the German had its breakthrough at Borussia Mönchengladbach only a few months earlier . However , in a pre @-@ season game against Bayern Munich Bossio conceded two goals : " I am calm , although we lost the game and my performance led to some ' scolding ' . " Enke confidently stepped into the position : " If I do not make mistakes , there will be no reason to change goalkeepers . "

= = = August and September = = =

Benfica visited Vila do Conde for their opening Primeira Liga game on 22 August . Although Sérgio Nunes scored in the ninth minute , Hugo Henrique of the home team equalised it minutes later for a 1 ? 1 draw . During the last week of August the Eagles hosted Salgueiros , scoring one goal and missing a number of opportunities to increase their lead . Record entitled its article " If the Spaniard was a goalscorer it would have been a slaughter " .

On 12 September Benfica visited Azores and beat Santa Clara 3 ? 0 to move to top of the league table , tied with five other teams . Four days later the club started their European campaign , facing Dinamo Bucuresti at home . They lost 1 ? 0 , when a shot by Nastase slipped through Enke 's legs . In the title race , the Eagles led the table after defeating Vitória Setúbal . Newspaper Record portrayed the game as easy win for the club , writing , " Nothing better to raise morale than to win comfortably , without rush , without pushing , without any problem whatsoever . "

Before their European game , the team travelled to Faro to defend their lead . They won their fourth consecutive match , with Nuno Gomes scoring his fourth goal in five games . At the end of September , Benfica travelled to Romania to play Dinamo Bucuresti . After a first @-@ half goal by Maniche , Chano scored in the 71st minute to send Benfica into second round .

= = = October and November = = =

The club 's momentum continued into October , when they defeated Estrela da Amadora with two second @-@ half goals ; Record summarized that the goals , " Finished the game off when it was most needed " . On 16 October Benfica visited Barcelos , and increased their lead to four points over second @-@ place FC Porto . In Europe , the club defeated P.A.O.K. in Greece , taking an advantage back to Portugal for the second leg .

In their eighth Primeira Liga match Benfica hosted Boavista F.C. , settling for a draw after Wheliton scored in the 80th minute . It was the first time since late August that Benfica dropped points . For their last October game , they visited Alverca to face the local team , F.C. Alverca . Benfica lost their first league match ; with a display that Record characterized as being under a Halloween spell ; that resulted in " their worst performance of the season , and seeing Porto close in on the top of the table . "

On 4 November , Benfica hosted P.A.O.K. for the second leg of their European qualifier . They lost 2 ? 1 in normal time , requiring extra time and a penalty shootout to decide the match . The Lisbon side converted all their shots , progressing into to the next round . Four days later , the club defeated S.C. Braga by one goal in a league match to open a three @-@ point lead .

After a one @-@ week break for the Taça de Portugal , Benfica visited Estádio das Antas for the Clássico against Porto . They lost 2 ? 0 with goals from Capucho and Jardel , and the title @-@ holders reduced Benfica 's league lead to one point . In João Marcelino view , " The game between Porto and Benfica had to forcibly answer some questions ? and it did not disappoint expectations . The easy win by Fernando Santos ' team clearly showed who still is , almost six years later , the best team in domestic football ; and the way that Jupp Heynckes accepted defeat could be used as evidence that he has been pushing his players to their current limit . "

The following Thursday , Benfica visited Vigo for the third round of the UEFA Cup . Benfica made club history in the match ; at half @-@ time they were already losing 4 ? 0 , and three more goals in the second half broke the record for goals conceded , in their worst defeat ever . At their next training session hundreds of fans booed the team , and the club president compelled his players to apologize for their performance . Team captain João Pinto read a statement : " To Benfica , and to their supporters ; aware of the abnormality of the result from the match in Vigo ; the players , represented by the captain and vice @-@ captain , publicly acknowledge that they didn 't perform to club standards . We promise to redouble our commitment , towards dignifying this club . To them and to the millions of fans , we formally apologize . " November 's final game , a 2 ? 0 victory over Campomaiorense , retained Benfica 's league lead .

= = = December and January = = =

Benfica began December with a draw against Belenenses , with Porto 's victory ensuring they surpassed Benfica in the league table . The team performance was at such a level that it allowed Record to claim , " The goalscoring chances could be counted on the fingers of a hand . " In the second leg of the UEFA Cup against Celta de Vigo , the Spaniards and Heynckes fielded lineups almost entirely composed of reserves and the match ended in a one @-@ all draw . On Matchday 14 , Benfica beat U.D. Leiria by 3 ? 2 with " two freak goals ensuring a win . " , as Record put it . The final game of the year was a visit to Guimarães . Benfica scored first but allowed Vitória S.C. to come back , losing a third league match . They had not won outside Estádio da Luz since 16 October (when they led by four points) , and began the New Year four points behind the leader in third place .

The year started with a Derby de Lisboa at home . After a scoreless tie , Sporting CP benefited from the points @-@ share and Benfica fell to six points behind Porto . On 12 January the club hosted Amora for the Portuguese Cup , scoring seven goals against the third @-@ tier team . Three days later , Benfica visited Funchal and nearly lost ; Record labelled Enke 's performance as crucial for Benfica , illustrating , " In the key moment of the game , when Enke defended a penalty in the 10th minute , he saved Benfica from leaving Funchal with a defeat . In a sluggish performance , only new signings Uribe and Machairidis showed good form . "

On Matchday 18 , Benfica hosted Rio Ave , winning their first league game in a month . Four days later , Benfica again played Sporting for the Portuguese Cup . Losing 3 ? 1 , the team were eliminated in their own stadium for the fourth time in club history ; the first three were by Sporting in 1962 ? 63 , Braga in 1965 ? 66 and Boavista in 1991 ? 92 . Benfica ended January with three points away from home for the first time since October , after defeating Salgueiros 2 ? 1 in the Vidal Pinheiro .

= = = February and March = = =

Now focused on the league , Benfica continued their momentum and defeated Santa Clara at home . Chano was decisive in unlocking the game in the perspective of Record : " He was the vitamin that gave imagination and clarity to Benfica 's midfield " . They won a fourth consecutive time , beating Vitória de Setúbal in Estádio do Bonfim and gaining ground on Porto and Sporting (both of whom lost points) . On 22 February , the Eagles hosted Farense knowing that a win would put them one point behind the joint Primeira Liga leaders .

Benfica were surprised by the Faro side 's opposition . José Manuel Delgado wrote in his match report for Record : " Heynckes ' defence show [ed] inexplicable passivity , and Quinzinho was a loose threat that no one could stop . With an impressive performance , Farense made one , two and nearly three goals " . Shortly after the 15 @-@ minute mark the Angolan striker was injured and Farense threats stopped , allowing Benfica to turn the match around : " After his substitution Benfica started to settle in the midfield , better supporting the attack ... until Maniche put the threats in practise and scored in the 23rd and 38th minutes , with Nuno Gomes leaving Benfica in the lead before halftime " . For their last February match , Benfica visited Estádio José Gomes to face the local team , Estrela da Amadora . Two goals by Gáucho and another by Kenedy gave them their first league loss since 19 December , with Porto and Sporting regaining a four @-@ point lead .

The Lisbon side rebounded with a home win against Gil Vicente F.C. ; José Manuel Delgado called the victory " convincing , with moments of good football " . The second game in March was at Estádio do Bessa . The match report in Record depicted Benfica 's performance as good to begin with (" [Benfica] was better in the first half , scored first and stopped the Boavista press in the beginning of the second half ") , until they conceded to Boavista before the final whistle : " [Benfica] receded , receded , until suffering a last @-@ minute goal by Litos with Boavista reduced to ten men . " On Matchday 26 Benfica hosted Alverca , defeating them with a late goal by João Tomás and avenging October 's loss . The team ended March with a visit to Braga , undefeated by the

Eagles since 1995 ? 96 . Although Benfica led the game early , another late goal and their subsequent loss allowed both rivals to increase their lead .

= = = April and May = = =

On 1 April Benfica faced Porto in the second Clássico of the season , and a second @-@ half goal by Sabry helped the club defeat their historic rivals . Gomes Ferreira commented : " The game was perfect for a nil @-@ nil draw , when in the 67th minute a moment of genius decided the game : a great , meaningful goal from Saby , launching Benfica into the title race and hampering Porto " . Benfica maintained their momentum on a trip to the Portalegre team , Campomaiorense . An early dismissal of José Soares helped them win easily , with Sabry scoring in a fourth consecutive game .

On 16 April Benfica hosted Lisbon rivals Belenenses , losing 3 @-@ 2 and dampening any championship hopes . A week later the team lost their second straight match (their seventh defeat of the season) to União de Leiria 2 ? 1 , despite scoring first . On 30 April Benfica returned to top form , and in Miguel Costa Nunes opinion , defeated a " debilitated and riddled with internal conflicts " Vitória de Guimarães 3 ? 0 .

In the penultimate game of the season , Benfica faced Sporting for the third time ; in their previous meetings , the club had tied once and lost once . Sporting , the league leader , was three points away from ending an 18 @-@ year drought dating to 1981 ? 82 . A late goal by Sabry dashed their hopes , preventing them from winning the title from Benfica . In the aftermath of the game , Record reported in their headline : " Till the end : A late goal from Sabry completely froze the thousands of Sporting fans waiting to celebrate the title " , while O Jogo header read " Sabry causes short @-@ circuit in Alvalade " . Benfica ended the season with a third consecutive win , beating Madeira side Marítimo 2 ? 1 . However , in José Ribeiro 's piece for Record , he wrote that Benfica " missed out on a thrashing that the fans and Marítimo deserved " . The club finished four points from a Champions League berth and eight behind Sporting , who won their long @-@ awaited title .

= = Competitions = =

Win Draw Loss Postponed

= = = Overall record = = =

= = = Primeira Liga = = =

= = = = League table = = = =