

= Patrik Berger =

Patrik Berger (Czech pronunciation : [ˈpatr̩k ˈbɛr̩r̩] ; born 10 November 1973) is a retired Czech footballer . He started his career in his own country with Slavia Prague and spent a season in Germany playing for Borussia Dortmund . He moved to England in 1996 , where he spent seven years with Liverpool , winning six trophies in his time there . This was followed by spells at Portsmouth , Aston Villa and Stoke City . He spent the last two years of his career back in his native Czech Republic playing for Sparta Prague .

Internationally , Berger played in two major tournaments for the Czech Republic . He played an important part in his nation 's Euro 1996 campaign , scoring in the final as the Czech Republic finished runners @-@ up to Germany . He took a 17 @-@ month break from the national team between 1997 and 1998 after a dispute with manager Duřan Uhrin , returning to the setup following Uhrin 's departure from the post . His second and final major tournament was Euro 2000 , but due to suspension and his country 's early exit , he only played one game . He retired from the national team in 2002 at the age of 28 with a total of 44 senior international caps and 18 goals .

Capable of occupying midfield and forward positions , Berger became noted for his powerful strikes , surging runs , and strong left foot . Berger was beset with injuries throughout his career and received specialist treatment in the United States . He retired on 6 January 2010 due to knee injuries .

= = Personal life = =

Berger was born in Prague , Czechoslovakia . His uncle is the Czech footballer Jan Berger . He married wife Jaroslava , and has two children , son Patrik and daughter Valentýnka . He gained a British passport in 2001 after having spent five years playing club football in England . This enabled him to play without needing a work permit , which he had previously required due to the Premier League 's rules on non @-@ EU players .

= = Club career = =

= = = Prague and Dortmund = = =

He began his footballing career as a youth player at Sparta Prague in 1989 , securing a professional contract two years later with rivals Slavia Prague . Establishing himself as a senior regular , Berger competed in Europe and earned selection for Czechoslovakia and , following its establishment , the Czech Republic .

After 90 league games and 24 goals , Berger was purchased by Ottmar Hitzfeld 's Borussia Dortmund in 1995 for a reported £ 500 @, @ 000 . In August 1995 he played in the DFL @-@ Supercup , as Dortmund beat Borussia Mönchengladbach to win the title . While Dortmund went on to win the Bundesliga title in the 1995 ? 96 season , Berger was frequently used as a substitute , making 12 of his 25 league appearances from the bench . Hitzfeld preferred to employ Berger as a defensive midfielder as he considered him to be most suited to the role .

Liverpool 's interest in Berger was stimulated by the performances of the Czech Republic during Euro 1996 , organised in England , where he scored a penalty in the final . The club approached both Berger and Karel Poborský , who elected to transfer to Manchester United after the competition 's conclusion . Berger did accept Liverpool 's contract offer and completed his transfer in August 1996 for £ 3 @. @ 25 million .

= = = Liverpool = = =

Berger and his family settled in Southport , Merseyside , where they resided near retired players Kenny Dalglish and Alan Hansen . Debuting as a substitute in a 2 ? 1 home win against

Southampton on 7 September 1996 , Berger performed well in his first month with the club , endearing him to supporters and earning praise from colleagues . In his second match , he replaced Stan Collymore as half time substitute , going on to score two goals in a 3 ? 0 win against Leicester City . A second double was registered against Chelsea in the latter 's 5 ? 1 defeat at Anfield , which he followed with a fifth goal in four games in a Cup Winners ' Cup match against MYPA . The series of displays were recognised in October 1996 with the FA 's Player of the Month award for September .

First @-@ team opportunities became limited in Berger 's second season . Despite scoring a hat @-@ trick against Chelsea in October 1997 , he often found himself named as a substitute . His dissatisfaction at manager Roy Evans placed his Liverpool career in jeopardy . Evans criticised Berger 's perceived indifference to teamwork and publicly expressed a willingness to sell after he refused to be used as a substitute against Bolton Wanderers in March 1998 . Berger was linked with a move away from Liverpool in May 1998 , with Italian club A.S. Roma , the manager of which was his countryman Zden?k Zeman , and Portuguese club Benfica both mentioned as possible destinations . The appointment of Gérard Houllier as co @-@ manager before the 1998 ? 99 season and subsequent departure of Evans proved to be pivotal in Berger 's decision to remain with the club .

Playing regularly in his first season under Houllier 's reign , Berger scored nine goals and improved as a player . An injury sustained in a 4 ? 3 defeat to Leeds United in November 2000 rendered Berger unavailable for much of the 2000 ? 01 season and required specialist treatment in the United States from knee surgeon Richard Steadman . By March 2001 , Berger had recovered and he went on to feature in the final of both the UEFA Cup and the FA Cup , with Liverpool winning both trophies . In the 2001 FA Cup Final he provided the assist for Michael Owen to score the deciding goal against Arsenal .

He appeared in the 2001 FA Charity Shield , coming on as a substitute as Liverpool won the competition . He then underwent knee surgery in August 2001 , ruling him out of the 2001 UEFA Super Cup .

Recurring injuries between 2001 and 2003 continued to disrupt Berger 's career and deprived him of a presence in the first team , resulting in his decision to leave Liverpool after the expiration of his contract following the conclusion of the 2002 ? 03 season . Berger had been confined to the bench for the duration of his final season when selected , limiting him to four appearances . He left Liverpool , having scored 35 goals during his seven seasons with the club .

= = = Portsmouth = = =

Newly promoted to the Premier League , Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp signed Berger on a free transfer . Redknapp said of the deal : " Patrik 's [sic] a quality player , free - and the type of player who 'll bring good experience to Portsmouth . I had a bit of competition for him but he 's looked round the area and is very happy to join us . " Berger made his first appearance for Portsmouth on the opening day against Aston Villa ; he scored the club 's second goal . Berger scored the winning goal in Portsmouth 's victory over his former club Liverpool in October 2003 . A month later , he set up the first and fourth Portsmouth goals and scored the fifth in Portsmouth 's 6 ? 1 win against Leeds United . On Boxing Day 2003 , Berger helped Portsmouth to a 2 ? 0 win against Tottenham , scoring both goals of the game from free kicks , the first of which was scored from 35 yards (32 m) . Berger underwent an operation upon his knee in February 2004 , forcing him to miss the remainder of the season .

Berger started the 2004 ? 05 season with note , scoring August 's contender for Goal of the Season against Charlton Athletic . His second goal of the campaign came in a 3 ? 1 win away to Crystal Palace , striking from 25 yards (23 m) . October 2004 saw his final league goal for Portsmouth in a 2 ? 2 away draw at Norwich , scoring a 25 @-@ yard free kick .

The club endured a difficult end to the season , winning just once in a period of 12 matches , which prompted the appointment of Alain Perrin as Portsmouth 's new manager . Berger was one of a number of players including Steve Stone and Shaka Hislop whose contracts were due to expire in

the summer . Portsmouth successfully avoided relegation close to the end of the season , following a 2 ? 0 loss away at Manchester City on 30 April . In spite of Portsmouth having retained their Premier League status , Berger then joined Aston Villa on a two @-@ year @-@ deal , citing manager David O 'Leary as the main reason for choosing Villa .

= = = Aston Villa = = =

Berger was hampered by injury during his early Villa career , making few league appearances . During the first part of his second season , he only played two matches under new manager Martin O 'Neill . In November 2006 he was sent to Championship side Stoke City on loan until 4 January 2007 , following a fine of two weeks ' wages for refusing to play in a reserve game . During his time at Stoke , he started just one match and took part in a further six as a substitute . Following his return from Stoke , Berger was commended by O 'Neill on his fitness and on 7 April 2007 , Berger started his first game for Villa since October 2005 . He marked this occasion by scoring a goal in a 2 ? 1 victory against Blackburn Rovers . Berger scored again on 5 May 2007 in the penultimate game of the season against Sheffield United . On 28 May 2007 , Berger agreed to sign a one @-@ year contract extension with Aston Villa .

Berger was injured in the pre @-@ season of the 2007 ? 08 Premier League , keeping him out of league matches until October 2007 . He then suffered a recurrence of the same injury and was ruled out for a further period of time . On 6 May 2008 , Berger was told he had played his last game for Aston Villa after urging captain Gareth Barry to move to Liverpool . This came just days after manager Martin O 'Neill claimed he was " desperate " to keep Barry following interest from Premier League rivals Chelsea and Liverpool . At the end of his contract Berger was released by the club , having appeared in just 29 league matches in three seasons .

= = = Return to Prague = = =

On 29 May 2008 , Berger returned to Prague as a free agent , signing a two @-@ year contract with boyhood club Sparta Prague , also becoming captain of the club for the 2008 ? 09 Gambrinus liga . In November 2008 , Berger scored a hat @-@ trick against SK Kladno in a 5 ? 0 Sparta victory . Sparta went on to finish the season in second place , thus ensuring qualification for the following season 's UEFA Champions League tournament . Berger was the club 's top league goalscorer with six goals .

During the 2009 ? 10 season , Berger played just two league matches before undergoing more knee surgery . On 6 January 2010 he announced his retirement after failing to recover from a ligament injury .

= = = Post @-@ professional career = = =

Berger continued playing football on an amateur basis in August 2010 for sixth @-@ tier Czech Republic side Dolní Chabry . At the age of 40 he was still playing for the side .

= = International career = =

Berger represented the youth teams of Czechoslovakia from the under @-@ 15 level , working his way up through under @-@ 16 , under @-@ 17 and under @-@ 18 between 1988 and 1991 . For these junior teams he had a record of a total of six goals in 49 appearances . During this time he won the 1990 UEFA European Under @-@ 16 Football Championship with the under @-@ 16 side , scoring in the final against Yugoslavia .

Berger made his senior international debut on 23 March 1993 in a FIFA World Cup qualifier for Czechoslovakia against Cyprus , which ended 1 ? 1 . In October 1995 he scored the second goal in a must @-@ win qualification match for Euro 1996 against Belarus , which the Czechs won 2 ? 0 . In his first 12 international appearances , Berger totalled eight goals .

Berger was part of the Czech Republic team who took part in Euro 1996 , being singled out as the only player in the squad with the potential to become a " major international star " . In spite of this , Martin Frýdek was preferred to Berger in the starting lineup for the first match against Germany . Berger went on to play in all of his nation 's matches in the tournament , famously scoring in the final from the penalty spot to give the Czech Republic a 1 ? 0 lead against Germany . However , the Czech Republic ultimately lost on the golden goal rule in extra time .

Between 1997 and 1998 , Berger boycotted the Czech national team due to a conflict with head coach Duřan Uhrin . He returned to the national set @-@ up after a 17 @-@ month absence following the appointment of Jozef Chovanec as Uhrin 's replacement . He made a notable return to the national team , scoring two goals from free kicks in a qualification match against Estonia .

The next major international tournament Berger took part in was Euro 2000 . Having been suspended for his nation 's first two matches after being sent off in a qualifier against the Faroe Islands , Berger played just one match . Berger announced his retirement from international football in March 2002 at the age of 28 . He finished his career having made a total of 44 appearances for national teams , including 42 for the Czech Republic and 2 for Czechoslovakia . He scored a total of 18 international goals , all for the Czech Republic .

= = Style of play = =

Berger played mainly as an attacking midfielder , also being known as a winger . He became noted for his powerful strikes , surging runs , and strong left foot . Team @-@ mate at Liverpool Steven Gerrard said of Berger that " he was the best left @-@ footed striker of a ball I have seen " .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Club = = =

= = = International = = =

= = = = International goals = = = =

Scores and results list Czech Republic 's goal tally first .

= = Honours = =

= = = Player = = =

Borussia Dortmund

Bundesliga : 1995 ? 96

DFL @-@ Supercup : 1995

Liverpool

FA Cup : 2000 ? 01

League Cup : 2000 ? 01 , 2002 ? 03

FA Charity Shield : 2001

UEFA Cup : 2000 ? 01

UEFA Super Cup : 2001

= = = Individual = = =

Czech Footballer of the Year : 1996 (shared with Karel Poborský)
Golden Ball : 1999