

The Vision of Os Lobos

Posted on [@June 20, 2018 8:51 PM](#) by [Yazdan Basir](#)

After their abysmal 15th place finish in the Championship under Paul Lambert, Wolverhampton Wanderers knew it was time to say goodbye. With what is claimed by many to be dubious business on the part of Jorge Mendes, Gestifute, and Fosun, the Molineux Stadium welcomed Nuno Espírito Santo to the helm for the following season and Nuno in turn, welcomed Diego Jota, Rúben Vinagre, Roderick Miranda, and Rúben Neves to the club to join the already present Hélder Costa and Ivan Calveiro.

Nuno and these players weren't just necessary signings, however. They all had something in common: they're Portuguese.

This was the beginning of a revolution.

This was the end of a 6-year absence from the Premier League.

Nuno's philosophy was well-planned out, immediately implemented, and most importantly, uncompromisable. He had been around, in the footballing-sense, from Spain to Russia to Portugal and no matter where he was, in a manner similar to Guardiola's unshakable principles, his ideology was to remain unchanged.

"Football is the game. It is always the same. There are specific situations and characteristics of the Championship, yes. But it is a competition. There are good teams, there are good players. What matters most is your idea."

His biggest influences are Jose Mourinho and Jesualdo Ferreira, alongside his experience from the time he spent playing and sitting on the bench (an equal amount at both according to Nuno) in Russia and Spain. He's allowed himself to learn wherever he was and aimed to understand the game by thinking about it whenever he could.

At Wolves, in a move surprising to many, he decided to use a 3-4-3 to allow his teams the shape and structure to get out of press and directly counter-attack. The

heart of his team and two of the most essential pieces of his puzzle were Jota and Neves. Neves dictated the play in the midfield, made tackle after tackle, pass after pass, and scored banger after banger (6 screamers in total for a CDM) in a Gerrard/Busquets-esque manner while Jota adapted beautifully to his role as an inside-forward dribbling, creating, and scoring all season long. Both of them made over 40 starts this past season under Nuno and of the 6-man Portuguese contingent Nuno has available, 4 are regular players and crucial instruments to his philosophy.

This Portuguese project is a visionary move from Wolves and Nuno altogether. Wolves just signed the national team's #1 Rui Patrício and are consistently being linked to the Portuguese talents of Renato Sanches, André Gomes, João Cancelo, and Valencia's very own Cristiano Ronaldo, Gonçalo Guedes. For José Mourinho, fans of the Portuguese national team, and the Portuguese in general, this is an incredible project in which several major Portuguese talents are playing together, consistently, and under a class manager in Nuno – who was a player himself in the 2004 UCL winning Porto team under Mourinho.

“It's your players. It's your team. If you love the game, you will feel it everywhere. Everywhere. Minor divisions, top moments. It's the same feeling.”

The benefits that could be reaped from this Wolves team are endless. The team is essentially a training ground for the national team's talents and is doing wonders for their footballing sense, ability, and chemistry for when the time to play regularly for Portugal inevitably comes. The average age of Wolves' squad was 24-25 years this season and the addition of more talents to Portugal's current crop of gifted youngsters – Silva, Fernandes, and Martins – is a frightening prospect for opposition nations. What adds value to the whole package is that not only has Nuno assembled a Portugal-heavy squad that is well-oiled, disciplined, and playing attractive football but also a team that has qualified for the Premier League and won the Championship title in the process. Nuno's work is the amalgamation of quality and results and he's eager to add more Portuguese players to the side everyone will be looking forward to watching more regularly in the Premier League next season.

Wolves' victory against Birmingham City, their 29th of the season, secured their Premier League spot and Sporting Director Thelwell's words aptly sum up a phenomenal season:

“There's 101 reasons why we have got promoted but the main reason is Nuno.”

Here's a video of every goal Neves scored for Wolves this season. Spoiler: all 6 are breathtaking.