

By Bradley Cates

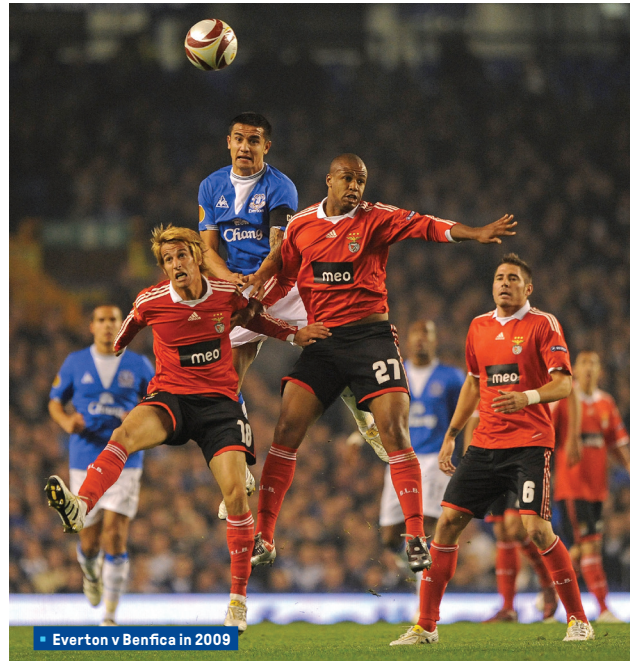
EVERTON AGAINST PORTUGUESE OPPOSITION

Tonight's game against Sporting CP is the ninth time that Everton have faced Portuguese opposition in either friendly or competitive fixtures.

The first occasion was against Belenenses in a third-place match in the Ciudad de Marbella Trophy in 1980. Everton lost their semi-final to Real Madrid's reserve team Castilla and Belenenses lost theirs to Sevilla. After a goalless first half, Gary Megson, George Telfer, Eamonn O'Keefe and Joe McBride gave Everton a comfortable 4-0 lead and Joao Cepeda scored a consolation goal for Belenenses.

Seven years later, Everton returned to Spain to play in the Trofeo Teresa Herrera – a pre-season tournament hosted annually by Deportivo La Coruña since 1946. Their semi-final opponents were Portuguese champions Benfica. No goals in 90 minutes meant the match was decided by a penalty shootout. Benfica were 4-3 up when Paul Power pulled his kick wide and Diamantino beat Bobby Mimms to secure the victory.

In 2009, Everton faced Benfica in the group stage of the Europa League. The first leg at the Estadio da Luz was won 5-0 by the hosts, with braces from Javier Saviola and Oscar Cardozo and a goal by Luisão. Although one positive from the game for Everton was that it was Seamus Coleman's debut, playing as a left-back. The return meeting at Goodison ended in a 2-0 win for the visitors, Saviola and Cardozo both scoring again. The match was attended by Eusebio, who scored six goals at Goodison Park during the 1966 World Cup. Eusebio had fond memories of our home, saying, "This stadium for me is the best stadium in my playing life."



Everton v Benfica in 2009

Despite those two defeats, Everton qualified from the group stage and their Round of 32 opponents were Sporting CP. In the first leg at Goodison, the Blues scored first through Steven Pienaar before Sylvain Distin doubled the lead early in the second half. Sporting grabbed an important away goal near the end of the game when Distin failed to control an awkward pass by Jack Rodwell and fouled Liedson in the area, Miguel Veloso converting the penalty.

The second leg in Lisbon was a night to forget for the Blues. After a goalless first half the tie was still in Everton's hands but Veloso, Pedro Mendes and Matias Fernandez each found a way past Tim Howard after the break.

The two most recent meetings against Portuguese opposition were both against Porto, the first of which was Leon Osman's Testimonial at Goodison in 2014. Steven Naismith gave Everton a half-time lead, but Jackson Martinez equalised before the hour mark.

Four years later, we met at the Algarve Cup in 2018 – Porto's Moussa Marega scoring the only goal of the game.



Leon Osman's testimonial against Porto in 2014