



Benfica pulls out of 2020/2021 UEFA Champions League Third Qualifying Round

Sep 16, 2020

NIGERIA: EUROPE -

Former European Cup winners, Benfica pulled out of the 2020/2021 UEFA Champions League third qualifying round on Tuesday after a surprising 2-1 defeat at PAOK Salonika.

Just a week after leaving them, Serbia winger, Andrija Zivkovic scored against his former club Benfica.

Dynamo Kiev also advanced to the play-off round with a 2-0 home win over Dutch side AZ Alkmaar, same way Belgians Gent did after they beat visitors Rapid Vienna 2-1.

PAOK'S reward is a two-legged play-off against Russians Krasnodar, while Dynamo Kiev face Gent for berths in the money-spinning group stage featuring 32 teams.

Benfica, who won Europe's premier club competition in 1961 and 1962, saw last season's experienced woes this term as this was made possible as Zivkovic, who endured four difficult seasons in Portugal, rubbed salt on their injuries.

Having seen the domestic league and Cup double go to Porto last term, Benfica missed a series of chances against

PAOK in a one-sided first half as they enjoyed 72 percent of possession.

They were made to suffer after the break as Dimitrios Giannoulis poked in the opener from close range in the 63rd minute after a one-two with Chuba Akpom, and substitute Zivkovic made it 2-0 in the 75th with a sweet shot inside the near post.

Rafa Silva had pulled one back with a wildcat strike time header but it came too late to avoid an embarrassing defeat.

This however will pile pressure on manager Jorge Jesus, who returned to Benfica during the close season for a second spell in charge.