



# CELTIC v RANGERS

TOMORROW, CELTIC PARK, 12PM

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**AN absolutely massive week of sport lies ahead, starting with an absolute cracker, a tasty Old Firm Derby!**

Celtic go into this game top of the table, winning the previous three encounters between the teams. But Rangers are coming into the game in a good run of form, after thumping Hamilton in the Scottish Cup last week.

All in all, this sets us up for a belter on Sunday and to help build up the excitement we have teamed up with Paddy Power to give you a FREE £2 bet.

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**FRESH BLOOD**  
Caixinha with Sanina, left

**PEDRO CAIXINHA** had just graduated from university and was a young coach with a grand plan.

A friend of his father's stepped in to offer him a job coaching local schoolkids – and the rest is history. Carlos Sanina is beaming with pride his proteges hard work and determination has paid off after he accepted his biggest challenge yet – to restore Rangers' fortunes. Sanina was president of CD Beja, Caixinha's hometown club, when the new Ibrox boss returned home in 1999 after earning his degree in physical education at Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro University in Vila Real, in the north of Portugal. Sanina quickly realised they had a coach of potential when he took his group of 12 and 13-year-olds on an unbeaten run of more than 20 matches.

» His four years at our club were an eye-opener, revolutionary and helped set standard

CARLOS SANINA

In the end, the minnow club were only pipped for the national title by the mighty Benfica but Caixinha's work had been noticed throughout Portugal. Sanina said: "I played in the same team at CD Beja with Joao, Pedro's father, but I had little contact with his boy, who had graduated and returned home to be offered the post of professor at the local University of Evora. "The youth football department of CD Beja was run by a group of men called 'The Dads' and they decided to bring in a young coach with fresh blood and ideas to coach their youngsters."

Pedro's references were the best we'd seen and I was mandated by the group to interview him before inviting him to take over the team. Pedro was exceptional. He accepted our offer immediately. "CD Beja was seen as a club with a poor youth structure but in his first year they achieved the unprecedented feat of going 24 games without defeat in the national youth championships. "In the end, we only lost out on the title to Benfica. Pedro was an individual with an above-average reputation among coaches in the



# Director OF football

Kids were ready for a cartoon – but Pedro showed them films of games



**FIRST STEPS**  
Caixinha and his father, left, and with the CD Beja squad, below



» **GARY RALSTON EXCLUSIVE**  
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region, even then. I still remember Pedro filmed the games against Benfica and after they lost he told the kids – remember they were only 12 and 13-years-old – they were going to watch a movie. "Everyone thought it would be an animated film or some family adventure. "Instead he did something unprecedented at that time and for this level, of showing the action from the games and explaining some of the mistakes they had made against Benfica. The players were open-mouthed. "The training was something very different and important for our players. It contributed a lot to the sporting, cultural and emotional evolution of our kids. "The four years he spent at the club were an eye-opener, revolutionary, and also helped to set the standards for the coach Pedro has become today. "It is a pleasure to know that wherever he goes, he represents the dignity of our city, the history of our club and the greater region of Alentejo." Caixinha, like many coaches in the modern game, was a modest player, a goalkeeper who moved

at the age of 18 to play with SC Portimonense in Portugal's Second Division. He stayed at the club for six years and in 1994 he moved to CD Beja, retiring at 28 to focus on his studies. After his role with the youth side of his former club he moved, in 2003, to Vasco da Gama for a season. His work caught the eye of Sporting Lisbon boss Jose Pezeiro and he invited Caixinha in 2004 to become assistant, responsible for observation and analysis. They finished runners-up in the UEFA Cup the following year, losing the final 3-1 to CSKA Moscow in Lisbon, before stints in Saudia Arabia, Greece and Romania followed. He became his own boss in 2010

at UD Leiria then moved to Madeira and Mexico before pitching up in Qatar two years ago with Al-Gharafa. Caixinha is no stranger to Scotland – he completed his UEFA A Licence at Largs in 2007 and returned three years later to work on his UEFA Pro Licence, which he completed in Lisbon in 2011. Sanina said: "Pedro took a UEFA course in Scotland. Carlos Queiroz was also involved and I know that they had an excellent opinion of him in Scotland. "Coaching such an important team as Rangers can open the door to the English leagues for Pedro."

## HE'S A BEST-KEPT SECRET

**» IAN ORR** and an assistant manager before becoming taking charge at unfashionable Uniao Leiria and Nacional. It was with Santos Laguna in Mexico and Al-Gharafa in Qatar that the 46-year-old earned his spurs in the last few years. Celtic gaffer Rodgers said he had "never heard of him" when asked about Caixinha's arrival at Ibrox. But Moutinho said: "I understand the point that Rodgers is making because even the common fan in Portugal may not know him. If you ask my dad 'Who is Caixinha?' he wouldn't know. "People who know him say he's a good guy, works hard, is very knowledgeable and well prepared. "What he's done so far shows that he's adaptable. Everybody around football says he's sharp. "There's a lot of positive things about him."



ON THE UP Moutinho backs Caixinha

» **SPORTSVIEW SATURDAY**

## Gavin Berry

## Gunners' woe could be key to revival at Ibrox

RANGERS fans are praying Pedro Caixinha brings them better fortunes when he finally touches down in Scotland. The Portuguese will be unveiled as the Ibrox club's 16th boss but it could take a managerial change across the city before they can think about closing the massive gap on Celtic. And events in north London over the next few months could be their best hope with Arsene Wenger coming under huge pressure after Arsenal's calamitous 10-2 aggregate Champions League defeat to Bayern Munich. Fed-up Gunners supporters want the Frenchman, who joined the club in 1996, out of the Emirates Stadium with the 67-year-old undecided on whether to sign his two-year extension offer. But if Wenger decides it is time to move on then Celtic boss Brendan Rodgers will surely be high on the list of potential replacements for Wenger. It would take a lot to tempt Rodgers away from Parkhead and a job at one of England's top four is one of the few positions that might sway him. Celtic pulled off a massive coup in landing the Northern Irishman who was just a Steven Gerrard slip away from winning Liverpool their first English title in 24 years. The 44-year-old is now fulfilling a boyhood dream at the Parkhead helm but will still feel he has unfinished business south of the border with the emotional tie to Celtic only able to motivate him for so long. Old Firm gaffers are rarely afforded the luxury of being able to dictate when they leave but Rodgers will be an exception as he is likely to rule the roost for the duration of his stay. Even if Caixinha is a gamble that works out for Rangers his budget compared to that of Celtic's and the huge gulf in the state of the current squads means it will take a miracle for him to overtake the Hoops. And the Light Blues supporters will be desperate to see him leave with the chances of the champions finding a blue-chip boss in the same calibre a real tough ask for Dermot Desmond and Peter Lawwell. Former Celtic striker and Sky Sports pundit Andy Walker said this week he thinks Rodgers will be on Arsenal's radar if Wenger decides to step down but, if the Gunners don't come calling, then this time next season will be crucial. Walker said: "Brendan will stay for next season. He's happy to be here for that. Then it will just depend on what happens down south to some of the bigger clubs. "He could certainly handle a club of Arsenal's size and if Spurs, or that type of club, were to make a change for

» **Emotional tie to Celtic will only be able to motivate Rodgers for so long**

whatever reason then he could do something with them as well because he is very talented. "He's at a level now where he can pick and choose. He will go back to the Premier League, there's no doubt about that. "Even if Brendan was to go in the next year or two, Celtic's model should be to get someone in who is as good as he is and continue to try and get not just Champions League football but to make their mark. "That will be easier said than done. Celtic pushed the boat out for Rodgers and it has paid off big style. He can enjoy top dog status for as long as he sticks around.

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