# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Route to Madrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Profile: Jürgen Klopp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Squad of the Season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Talking Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Analysis: Goalscoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Goals of the Season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Analysis: Set Plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Analysis: Pressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Analysis: Goalkeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Analysis: Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Analysis: Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Team Profiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Roll of Honour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This review of the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League season serves as a record of a campaign that spanned 125 matches between the start of the group stage last September and the final in Madrid on 1 June.

The 20th UEFA Champions League technical report of its kind, it aims to provide a meaningful analysis of the action via the input of UEFA’s Technical Observers’ Group.

There was a member of this group at every fixture played in the knockout rounds and their insights provide the basis for the trends and talking points covered in the report, as well as informing the reflections on the playing styles of the top 16 clubs that feature in the team profiles section.

UEFA’s team of technical observers for 2018/19 comprised Cristian Chivu (Romania), Roberto Martínez (Spain), Ginés Meléndez (Spain), David Moyes (Scotland), Michael O’Neill (Northern Ireland), Mixu Paatelainen (Finland), Peter Rudbaek (Denmark), Thomas Schaaf (Germany) and Gareth Southgate (England). Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland) joined the group for the final at the Estadio Metropolitano.

The report is backed by statistical analysis and with the tendencies identified in the following pages, UEFA aims to provide a meaningful tool for coaches across the continent. It will be made available to members of the coaching family and, hopefully, will help development coaches stay aware of the prevailing styles and strategies, as well as the qualities required, at the elite end of the club game.
THE ROUTE TO MADRID

SHOCK RESULTS AND STUNNING COMEBACKS WERE IN EVIDENCE IN THIS SEASON’S UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE AS TWO ENGLISH CLUBS NAVIGATED THRILLING PATHS TO THE ESTADIO METROPOLITANO.
GROUP STAGE

A season that would be defined by nights of heart-pounding drama and barely conceivable comebacks began with some small hints of the paths its eventual protagonist teams would take. Liverpool's first two games of the group stage featured 90th-minute winning strikes — one in their favour against Paris Saint-Germain, the other bringing defeat in Naples. In an up-and-down autumn, they would lose all three Group C away games, including a 2-0 reverse at Crvena zvezda.

Yet while Liverpool did not reproduce their attacking menace of the previous campaign — scoring nine group stage goals compared with 23 — they now had a goalkeeper exuding assurance in Alisson Becker and they earned the three points required from their must-win final fixture against Napoli at Anfield thanks to the Brazilian's last-gasp stop from Arkadiusz Milik. It left the teams tied on nine points, with Carlo Ancelotti's men eliminated with 23 – they now had a goalkeeper exuding assurance in Alisson Becker and they earned the three points required from their must-win final fixture against Napoli at Anfield thanks to the Brazilian's last-gasp stop from Arkadiusz Milik. It left the teams tied on nine points, with Carlo Ancelotti's men eliminated — two set-piece goals overturning Ronaldo's goal of the season strike. While United managed just one home goal, their neighbours Manchester City hit six in one match-alone against Shakhtar Donetsk. Pep Guardiola’s men had slipped up 2-1 at home to Lyon in their first Group F fixture but ended as group winners with an unsurpassed 16–goal tally. Lyon did not win again after matchday 1 but still followed City through after five straight draws.

In the same section, finally, Hoffenheim finished winners on their UEFA Champions League group stage debut — a fate shared with PSV, AEK Athens and a Monaco side guided for their last four matches by Thierry Henry. Hoffenheim's fellow newcomers, Young Boys, posted their first win on matchday 6 against already qualified Juventus. As for, Crvena zvezda, new to the UEFA Champions League group stage, if not a competition they collector's item by the season's end.

PSV Eindhoven. Last-minute losers at Inter on matchday 1, Spurs had just one point after three games yet then came through several tests of nerve: after Wembley wins over PSV and Inter via goals in the last ten minutes, Lucas Moura's 85th-minute equaliser at Barcelona squeezed them into the last 16 with 23 – they now had a goalkeeper exuding assurance in Alisson Becker and they earned the three points required from their must-win final fixture against Napoli at Anfield thanks to the Brazilian's last-gasp stop from Arkadiusz Milik. It left the teams tied on nine points, with Carlo Ancelotti's men eliminated — two set-piece goals overturning Ronaldo's goal of the season strike. While United managed just one home goal, their neighbours Manchester City hit six in one match-alone against Shakhtar Donetsk. Pep Guardiola’s men had slipped up 2-1 at home to Lyon in their first Group F fixture but ended as group winners with an unsurpassed 16–goal tally. Lyon did not win again after matchday 1 but still followed City through after five straight draws.

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Across the Spanish capital, defending champions Real Madrid entered 2018/19 champions were the eventual competition winners with an unsurpassed 16–goal tally. Lyon did not win again after matchday 1 but still followed City through after five straight draws.

For the third consecutive year the eventual champions were group runners-up — two set-piece goals overturning Ronaldo's goal of the season strike. While United managed just one home goal, their neighbours Manchester City hit six in one match-alone against Shakhtar Donetsk. Pep Guardiola’s men had slipped up 2-1 at home to Lyon in their first Group F fixture but ended as group winners with an unsurpassed 16–goal tally. Lyon did not win again after matchday 1 but still followed City through after five straight draws.

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ROUND OF 16

There were just as many victories recorded away as at home in the round of 16 (seven apiece) and none was as dramatic as Manchester United’s at Paris Saint-Germain.

United, by now, were being led by Ole Gunnar Solskjær, who as a player at Old Trafford had scored the goal that completed a stunning, stoppage-time turnaround in the 1999 UEFA Champions League final. Twenty years on, they shredded another script, becoming the first team in European Cup history to win a tie after losing the first leg at home by two goals or more.

Their 3-1 success in Paris came without the suspended Paul Pogba, sent off in a 2-0 first-leg loss. United completed 226 passes to their hosts’ 695 but after Romelu Lukaku’s two first-half goals, they got the third required when Marcus Rashford converted a 94th-minute penalty awarded for handball against Presnel Kimpembe after consultation with VAR.

Ajax achieved their own famous fightback by eliminating holders Real Madrid with a 4-1 triumph at the Santiago Bernabéu. Beaten 2-1 in the home first leg, Erik ten Hag’s team attacked Madrid with a block of four forwards (their formation morphing from 4-3-3 to 4-2-4 as they flew upfield) and no one illustrated their attacking brilliance better than Dušan Tadić. Scorer of one goal and provider of two others, he memorably escaped Casemiro with a roulette turn before supplying David Neres for his goal – and earned himself a rare 10/10 rating from France’s L’Equipe newspaper in the process.

It was Madrid’s earliest elimination since 2010 and their neighbours Atlético suffered their own stumble, letting a 2-0 first-leg advantage over Juventus slip through their fingers in Turin. The architect of their demise was Ronaldo, an old nemesis from Madrid derbies. His eighth UEFA Champions League hat-trick included two headers, showcasing his remarkable ability to jump early and hang in the air.

Along with two Spanish casualties, the round of 16 marked the end of the road for the remaining three Bundesliga clubs – ensuring no German representation in the quarter-finals for the first time since 2006. All three fell to Premier League opposition.

Bayern München’s defensive organisation frustrated Liverpool in a goalless draw at Anfield, but they missed the suspended Joshua Kimmich in the return and Jürgen Klopp’s men prevailed with goals from Sadio Mané (2) and Virgil van Dijk. Missing Harry Kane and Dele Alli for their tie with Borussia Dortmund, meanwhile, Tottenham found a different source of inspiration in Jan Vertonghen, who, switched to a wing-back role, scored one goal and made another in a 3-0 home success that set up a 4-0 overall scoreline.

There was an even greater margin of victory in the other Anglo-German duel between Manchester City and Schalke. While it took a 90th-minute Raheem Sterling breakaway strike – the through ball delivered by his goalkeeper, Ederson – to secure ten-man City’s 3-2 victory in Gelsenkirchen, the second leg was an entirely one-sided affair: 7-0 to City. In his last match as Schalke coach, Domenico Tedesco saw his team’s five-man back line hold out for 35 minutes before the floodgates opened, the visitors exposed repeatedly by longer passes behind their defence for City’s quick forwards to sprint on to.

As for Barcelona, they finished 5-1 aggregate victors against Lyon after the first leg in France ended goalless. In the Camp Nou return, the scoreboard read 2-1 with 15 minutes remaining before Lionel Messi netted his second and then teed up two more goals on the counter.

While Barcelona were bound for a 12th consecutive quarter-final, the team who beat them at that stage the year before, Roma, fell short. Nineteen-year-old Nicolò Zaniolo’s two goals in a 2-1 win against Porto at the Stadio Olimpico – the first UEFA Champions League double by an Italian teenager – had raised Roman hopes, but Sérgio Conceição’s side responded at home, prevailing 3-1 after extra time. Another tie turned on its head.
“Football can be crazy sometimes,” So said Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Hugo Lloris at the conclusion of a remarkable quarter-final with Manchester City, a seven-goal contest in England’s northwest that went the way of the less-fancied team – though only after the Tottenham players had, literally, picked themselves up off the floor after a VAR ruling annulled Raheem Sterling’s riotously celebrated, stoppage-time ‘winner’ for offside.

The all-Premier League contest had begun with City aiming to overturn a 1-0 deficit from a first leg at Spurs’ new stadium where Pep Guardiola had set out with a rare sense of caution, fielding two holding midfielders and keeping Kevin De Bruyne on the bench until the 89th minute. With Guardiola perhaps mindful of the previous season’s quarter-final first-leg defeat at Liverpool, this was City with the safety catch on. After Lloris had saved Sergio Agüero’s first-half penalty, they ended up succumbing to Heung-Min Son’s 78th-minute strike following a Fabian Delph defensive lapse.

De Bruyne did start the return and teed up a Sterling strike after four minutes. Somehow, by the 21st minute City had three goals but Spurs had two. Starting with a midfield diamond, Mauricio Pochettino’s side had sought to attack City through the middle, sensing an opportunity for their quick front players against City’s centre-backs, and it paid off during an astonishing first quarter as they profited from uncustomary slips by Aymeric Laporte to score twice through Son, shining in Kane’s ongoing absence. This gave them the edge on away goals – and they held on to it after Agüero and Fernando Llorente traded second-half strikes. City would end the season with a domestic treble, but with European glory once again out of reach.

If Spurs’ progress was not anticipated, the same applied to Ajax, who had begun their campaign in the second qualifying round but now overcame Juventus to reach their first UEFA Champions League semi-final since 1997. They did so with another exceptional away display. As in their 1-1 first-leg draw in Amsterdam, they shrugged off the setback of a Cristiano Ronaldo goal and responded swiftly through Donny van de Beek. His intelligent forward runs in support of the front three were a strong feature of Ajax’s play and he was in the right place to steer in a close-range equaliser before Matthijs de Ligt capped a dominant display by leaping to power in a header from Lasse Schöne’s corner for the winning goal.

The two other quarter-finals provided more easily predicted outcomes with victories for Barcelona and Liverpool. In Barcelona’s case they profited from an early own goal to win at Manchester United and then, after a first-minute reprieve when Marcus Rashford clipped the crossbar, ran out ultimately convincing 3-0 winners at the Camp Nou where Lionel Messi punished uncertain defending with two goals and Philippe Coutinho added a third. Liverpool, for their part, ended up with the same five-goal victory margin against Porto that they had earned in the clubs’ last-16 meeting in 2018, though this contest was closer than the scoreboard would suggest. Porto, despite missing suspended skipper Héctor Herrera, matched their hosts for attempts on target at Anfield but conceded to Naby Keïta’s deflected shot and Roberto Firmino while seeing Moussa Marega foiled by the foot of Alisson Becker. At the Estádio do Dragão, where Liverpool had won 5-0 a year earlier, the Reds showed resilience in the face of an early storm, and then the clinical touch that Porto were lacking as each of their front three found the net before Virgil van Dijk’s second set-piece header of the campaign sealed a 4-1 triumph.
33 Years since a team last overturned a 3-0 European Cup semi-final deficit (Barcelona v IFK Göteborg)

16 Open-play crosses by Liverpool at home against Barcelona

2 min 57 secs The total time that Tottenham held the aggregate advantage against Ajax

SEMI-FINALS

In the 64-year history of the European Cup, it is doubtful there have ever been two back-to-back semi-final nights quite like it. After all, if one footballing miracle is something to savour, then the second week of May 2019 presented two in a row as Liverpool demolished a three-goal deficit against Barcelona and then, on the very next evening, Tottenham Hotspur did the same in the space of 41 second-half minutes away at Ajax.

For Liverpool, theirs was a recovery to rival the famous 2005 final triumph against AC Milan in Istanbul. When Lionel Messi hit a majestic 30-metre free kick to put Ernesto Valverde’s men 3-0 up in the first leg, the tie looked over; indeed it probably would have been had Ousmane Dembélé not fluffed the night’s very last kick in front of Alisson Becker. Yet Liverpool had played well: they had 52% of possession, created chances (with Mohamed Salah hitting a post), and saw Barcelona misplace 88 passes in the face of the visitors’ disorienting high tempo. Indeed, at 1-0, it had taken a defensive switch by Valverde, sending on Nélson Semedo for Philippe Coutinho, to counter the threat of Andy Robertson and stem the flow.

Back on Merseyside, Liverpool were missing Salah and Roberto Firmino but gained an early foothold through Divock Origi’s goal and Anfield, where past Lazarus acts ensure hope is never far away, believed once more. Save for a spell of control before half-time, which led to openings for Messi, Coutinho and Jordi Alba, Barcelona struggled to build attacks owing to Liverpool’s energy and intense pressing, which brought 11 interceptions and left Messi and Luis Suárez as peripheral figures. And they had no answer to Liverpool’s crossing either, which yielded the two Georginio Wijnaldum strikes that brought the tie level early in the second period, before Trent Alexander-Arnold’s quickly taken corner caught Barcelona napping — and Origi applied the killer touch.

A night to “remember forever” is how Jürgen Klopp described it, and just 24 hours later, we had another. Ajax were by now in a strong position to advance to the final following a 1-0 first-leg win in London. Donny van de Beek had delivered the only goal during an opening half of Freibie de Jong-inspired supremacy, with David Neres later striking a post. Yet while Spurs had improved in the first leg after a tactical switch — from a back three to a four with a midfield diamond — they found the going no easier over in Amsterdam. By the 35-minute mark Ajax’s aggregate advantage stood at 3-0, thanks to a Matthijs de Ligt header and Hakim Ziyech’s fiercely curled finish.

Then came Mauricio Pochettino’s half-time introduction of Fernando Llorente, a target striker to put Ajax’s centre-backs under pressure and create space for Lucas Moura. Suddenly, with the Brazilian’s two goals in quick succession, Tottenham needed just one more to advance on the away-goals rule. Ziyech hit the goalframe at the other end, yet ultimately Ajax wilted. Llorente beat De Ligt to a high ball, Dele Alli touched it on and Lucas’s low shot rolled into the bottom corner. There were 95 minutes and one second on the clock, and Spurs were in the final.
If the knockout phase of the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League had resembled a road of unexpected twists, the final followed a course that was set inside two minutes. Or 107 seconds to be precise.

That, after all, was all the time it took for Mohamed Salah to convert the penalty kick awarded by Damir Skomina, the Slovenian referee, for a handball offence against Moussa Sissoko. In the collective view of UEFA’s technical observers it proved the defining moment. As one of them commented: ‘Practically everything changed after 30 seconds.’

Indeed, just 21 seconds had passed when Sadio Mané checked back on himself on the left-hand corner of the Tottenham Hotspur box and chipped over the first cross of the night, with Sissoko standing barely two metres away, right arm extended to signal to a team-mate. The ball struck his underarm and Liverpool had their penalty.

Salah, whose participation in the previous year’s final against Real Madrid had ended with an early injury and teary departure, had the chance to make amends and his finish was fierce, the ball rising over Hugo Lloris as Tottenham’s goalkeeper dived to his left. Salah kneeled and kissed the turf and, if a personal demon had been exorcised, the impact on the psychology of the entire final was even more significant.

As Mauricio Pochettino, Tottenham’s manager, later noted, it was “mentally tough” to concede so early in their first UEFA Champions League final. Only Paolo Maldini, for AC Milan in 2005, had struck an earlier final goal.
goal and where that Istanbul contest featured an astonishing Liverpool fightback, this goal left the Reds with something to defend. For a team who had last lost their last two European finals – and a manager, Jürgen Klopp, seeking to avoid a third UEFA Champions League final defeat and earn his first trophy with Liverpool – it seemed to prompt a shift in strategy. The Estadio Metropolitano witnessed few of the forward runs by full-backs and midfielders that usually pepper Liverpool's play. Instead we saw a safety-first, sit-deep approach, illustrated by the Reds' eventual statistic of 39% possession, and 189 passes completed to Spurs' 428.

Amid all the colour the two sets of supporters had transported to the eastern edge of Madrid – with their respective 'home' ends each awash with flags before kick-off – one of the largest Liverpool banners was arresting in its simplicity: a silver European Cup and five stars against a red backcloth. Liverpool had come for a sixth and their response to the early goal underlined this was all that mattered. For the neutral, it meant this second all-English UEFA Champions League final had little of the intensity and end-to-end thrills of Premier League football, and if the Madrid heat was a mitigating factor, there was also the impact of a three-week break since the domestic season's end.

At the halfway line they had less success. For UEFA's technical observers, Tottenham deserved praise for the way they built up past the first line of Liverpool's press, the two centre-backs linking with midfielders Sissoko and Winks to work the ball out to the full-backs, yet beyond the halfway line they had less success. The tireless Rose earned a roar of appreciation when pulling a ball down to earth and bursting away from Jordan Henderson yet, in keeping with the overall tone, he spoiled his good work with a pass behind Son and into touch. Indeed, not until the final moments of the half did a Tottenham player get a clear sight of goal, and even then Christian Eriksen's effort from the edge of the 'D' flew high into the bank of red behind Alisson Becker. It did not help, of course, that their captain and centre-forward, Harry Kane, was struggling to impose himself against Liverpool's centre-backs on his first appearance since sustaining ankle ligament damage in the quarter-final first leg. When Diego Simeone gambled on Diego Costa's fitness ahead of the 2014 final, the Atlético de Madrid forward lasted only nine minutes. Pochettino had put his faith in his captain but only Roberto Firmino touched the ball as little as Kane did in the first period (11 times each).

That said, Tottenham had not led at half-time in a single fixture en route to Madrid, yet kept finding ways to win. And their start to the second period, attacking the end where their fans were congregated, was purposeful, even if the end product remained absent.

Son and Kieran Tripper worked a crossing opportunity down the right but Dele Alli failed to connect with the ball at the back post. "Oh when the Spurs go marching in" came the cry of encouragement from their supporters but when Sissoko marched through Liverpool's midfield line to give his team a four against three, Winks lost his one-on-one duel with Robertson – one of 10 recoveries by the left-back.

Collectively Liverpool's defenders had the bit between their teeth, their organisation commendable. Alexander Arnold blocked a Tottenham shot after the midfielder had brought down Trippier's lofted pass. Then Joel Matip muscled aside Kane to clear the loose ball.
While taking no risks, Klopp’s men knew one long pass to Salah offered not just an outlet, but the promise of a second goal. Georgino Wijnaldum’s ball gave the Egyptian a run at goal and, stepping on to his left foot, he sought to bend a shot around Jan Vertonghen but the Spurs man could shoot—a show of the authority that would bring Liverpool’s imperious centre-back the UEFA observers’ man of the match award.

As for Pochettino, his first substitution was a great call, replacing Winks with Spurs’ semi-final hero Harry Winks. He made his first change when replacing him with Dele, who threatened first, following fine work by Mané. Carrying the ball from his own half, the Senegalese escaped Aurier’s marking. Son then headed for goal himself, surging past Vertonghen to his left to curl a shot into the far corner. Origi, Liverpool’s match winner, had his first European Cup, Liverpool their sixth.

With Firmino struggling for fitness, Klopp, whose impact on this final could not have been more different than that of his predecessor, made his first change when replacing him with Divock Origi after 58 minutes. It would prove a decisive switch, thought it was James Milner, his next substitute, who threatened first, following fine work by Mané. Carrying the ball from his own half, the Senegalese escaped Aurier’s marking. Son then headed for goal himself, surging past Vertonghen to his left to curl a shot into the far corner. Origi, Liverpool’s match winner, had his first European Cup, Liverpool their sixth.

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For a man who has described himself as the “reserve tank” for his Liverpool players, ever-ready to provide a shot of motivation from the sidelines, there was something serene, almost subdued, about Jürgen Klopp in the initial moment or two of his hour of triumph. The camera that followed his movements before and after referee Damir Skomina blew the final whistle on the 2019 UEFA Champions League final showed him respond with a rare calm. Before Skomina’s last blast, he had already made his way towards Mauricio Pochettino to offer an embrace to his Tottenham Hotspur counterpart. As pandemonium erupted around him, Klopp shook the hand of the fourth official, then looked up to his family in the stand, putting two hands to his mouth to send up a kiss to his wife Ulla. There were hugs with members of Liverpool’s backroom staff but not until he had helped Jan Vertonghen, the Spurs centre-back, rise from the turf did the big white grin appear on his face as he looked back up to his family and began seeking out his own players.

This was the moment Klopp had long waited for, following previous UEFA Champions League final losses with Borussia Dortmund in 2013 and Liverpool in 2018. Before this third final he had summoned the German equivalent of third time lucky (“All the best things come in threes”) when recalling his 2004 success in leading Mainz into the Bundesliga following two consecutive near-misses in the pursuit of promotion from the second division. The hope too was to avoid a third final reverse in UEFA competitions since arriving at Anfield. He has yet to lose a home European tie as Liverpool manager but had suffered defeat in the UEFA Europa League decider at the end of his first season, as well as the Kyiv heartache of 2018. Indeed, overall Klopp had lost six straight finals, as Dortmund and Liverpool manager, prior to the night of 1 June.

There was a business-like approach to this year’s final. Where 12 months earlier, Liverpool had flown into Kyiv on the Thursday for the Saturday evening match,
"THIS IS ABOUT HEART AND SOUL AND A FANTASTIC EMPATHY THAT HE CREATES WITH HIS PLAYERS"
# RESULTS

## GROUP STAGE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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## ROUND OF 16

<table>
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| 12 February–13 March | Manchester United vs Paris
Roma vs Porto
Tottenham Hotspur vs Borussia Dortmund
Ajax vs Real Madrid
Lyon vs Barcelona
Liverpool vs Bayern München
Schalke vs Manchester City
Atletico Madrid vs Juventus |

## QUARTER-FINALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| 9–17 April | Benfica vs Ajax
Ajax vs Dynamo Kyiv
PSV vs Lyon |

## SEMI-FINALS

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| 30 April–8 May | Liverpool vs Manchester United
Barcelona vs Ajax |

## FINAL

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<td>1 June</td>
<td>Tottenham vs Liverpool</td>
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## PLAY-OFFS – LEAGUE PATH

- Benfica 5-2 PAOK
- Ajax 3-1 Dynamo Kyiv
- PSV 0-2 Lyon

## PLAY-OFFS – CHAMPIONS PATH

- Liverpool 6-1 Ajax
- Manchester United 0-4 Barcelona
For the UEFA technical observers, meeting the morning after Liverpool’s final triumph, the task of selecting their UEFA Champions League squad of the season was the cause of considerable debate.

In the end, their 20-man selection contained individuals from seven different clubs, with winners Liverpool represented by half a dozen players – starting with their two key men in the final, goalkeeper Alisson Becker and defensive leader Virgil van Dijk. Runners-up Tottenham Hotspur were represented by three players, including Lucas Moura, who did not start the final but had scripted one of the season’s most remarkable stories with his semi-final hat-trick in Amsterdam.

Not surprisingly given their outstanding contribution to the campaign, there was room for five players from semi-finalists Ajax, including three essential pieces of the team’s spine in Matthijs de Ligt, Frenkie de Jong and Dušan Tadić. If Ajax’s De Ligt, at 19, was the youngest player to feature, Lyon were another club showcasing fresh talent in their dynamic 22-year-old midfielder Tanguy Ndombélé.

Overall, this was a squad that recognised not just consistency over a full campaign but big impacts on big matches – such as Cristiano Ronaldo’s round of 16 hat-trick for Juventus against Atlético de Madrid and Kevin De Bruyne’s trio of assists for Manchester City in their home quarter-final against Tottenham.

Of course, Lionel Messi ticks both of those boxes and the tournament’s top scorer featured as one of two Barcelona players, together with goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen.

Inevitably, given the plethora of elite individuals to choose from, other noteworthy performers narrowly missed out – including Messi’s Blaugrana team-mate Gerard Piqué and the influential Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva.

The UEFA Champions League technical report 2018/19

Champions Liverpool filled six of the 20 places in the technical observers’ All-Star selection.
MID

GEORGINIO WIJNALDUM
Versatile and assured in possession, the unsung midfielder snatched the spotlight with a semi-final double v Barcelona.

LIVERPOOL
2018/19 | 12 APPS | 2 GOALS
OVER 10.7km COVERED IN SIX OF EIGHT FULL APPEARANCES
9 BIG CHANCES CREATED (ranked first)
4 ASSISTS IN 247 MINUTES PLAYED
92% PASSING ACCURACY IN SEMI-FINAL

TANGUY NDOMBÉLÉ
Influential midfielder with intelligence to solve tactical problems; excelled in group stage games v Manchester City.

LYON
2018/19 | 8 APPS | 2 GOALS
387 PASSES ATTEMPTED
341 COMPLETED (88%)

GEORGINIO WIJNALDUM
Versatile and assured in possession, the unsung midfielder snatched the spotlight with a semi-final double v Barcelona.

LIVERPOOL
2018/19 | 12 APPS | 2 GOALS
OVER 10.7km COVERED IN SIX OF EIGHT FULL APPEARANCES
9 BIG CHANCES CREATED (ranked first)
4 ASSISTS IN 247 MINUTES PLAYED
92% PASSING ACCURACY IN SEMI-FINAL

RAHEEM STERLING
Leverkusen’s most effective forward in 2019/20 with his speed, direct running and 1v1 threat.

MANCHESTER CITY
2018/19 | 13 APPS | 4 GOALS
1 SPRINT EVERY 1.59 MINUTES
1150 MOST MINUTES PLAYED BY AN OUTIDER

LUCAS MOURA
Scored the Camp Nou equaliser that propelled Spurs into the last 16 – and an unforgettable semi-final treble.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
2018/19 | 12 APPS | 5 GOALS
32.8 KM/H (Spurs’ quickest sprinter)
37 CHANCES CREATED
33 KEY PASSES (both ranked first)

HAKEM ZIYECH
Left-footed wide man shone with his vision and penetrating runs, connecting superbly with Tadić.

AJAX
2018/19 | 11 APPS | 3 GOALS
9 BIG CHANCES CREATED (ranked first)
67 TAKE-OFFS

FRENKIE DE JONG
Pivotal in defensive midfield role, controlling the tempo with a rare composure under pressure.

AJAX
2018/19 | 12 APPS | 2 GOALS
82 DRIBBLES
24 KEY PASSES (ranked third)

SADIO MANÉ
Liverpool’s most effective forward in 2019/20 with his speed, direct running and 1v1 threat.

LIVERPOOL
2018/19 | 13 APPS | 4 GOALS
1 SPRINT EVERY 1.59 MINUTES
1150 MOST MINUTES PLAYED BY AN OUTIDER

CRISTIANO RONALDO
Hit the observers’ goal of the season as well as a match-winning hat-trick v Atlético de Madrid.

JUVENTUS
2018/19 | 9 APPS | 6 GOALS
WAS INVOLVED IN 8 OF JUVENTUS’ 16 GOALS

DUŠAN TADIĆ
Key figure in Ajax attack, holding ball up and orchestrating moves from ‘false nine’ position.

AJAX
2018/19 | 11 APPS | 3 GOALS
9 BIG CHANCES CREATED (ranked first)
67 TAKE-OFFS

DAVID NERES
Skilful winger shone in Ajax front four; struck important goals v Real Madrid and Juventus.

AJAX
2018/19 | 11 APPS | 2 GOALS
92% PASSING ACCURACY IN SEMI-FINAL
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32.8 KM/H (Spurs’ quickest sprinter)
TALKING POINTS

TECHNICAL OBSERVERS IN MADRID

FOUR WERE ALL HOT TOPICS FOR UEFA’S ENGLISH GAME AND AJAX’S RUN TO THE LAST FOUR WERE ALL HOT TOPICS FOR UEFA’S TECHNICAL OBSERVERS IN MADRID

TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY, THE INTENSITY OF THE ENGLISH GAME AND AJAX’S RUN TO THE LAST FOUR WERE ALL HOT TOPICS FOR UEFA’S TECHNICAL OBSERVERS IN MADRID

FLEXIBILITY EXCEEDS PHILOSOPHY

If every coach has their own idea of how they like to see football played, one striking feature of UEFA Champions League football in 2018/19 was the number of times the men in the technical area shifted their approach throughout matches, making tweaks here and there to nullify their opponents’ strengths or exploit their weaknesses. In the words of one close observer of Tottenham Hotspur’s progress to the final, Mauricio Pochettino, for instance, “always has a plan B and a plan C”. Spurs’ flexibility means regular changes of formation – and Pochettino does not delay in making decisions. In the semi-final home leg against Ajax, for example, the Argentinian set his team up with a back three, but by the midway point of the first half had switched to a back four with midfield diamond (1-4-1-2-1-2) in an attempt to gain some control. He admitted after the match that his starting shape had been “maybe a mistake but he had acted quickly to remedy it.

Some might see the elite coach as a chess player, moving their pieces amid a flurry of arm movements from the touchline. The observer’s report of Manchester City’s visit to Schalke noted a series of tweaks by Pep Guardiola: 1-4-1-2-3 to start; then 1-4-2-1-3 in the face of a temporary loss of control; then 1-4-1-2-3 once more; then 1-4-2-2-1 after Nicolás Otamendi’s red card. Guardiola offered another example when City hosted Tottenham in the quarter-final. The visitors’ early success, with two goals for Heung-Min Son, brought a swift switch: Spurs’ starting shape had been “maybe a mistake” but he had acted quickly to remedy it.

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One question that arose in the post-final discussion between UEFA’s technical observers was whether we are seeing a new age of pragmatism with regards to coaches’ strategies. Liverpool offered an example in the final where they played a low-risk game in a departure from the high-speed, high-intensity football that had swept aside Barcelona and so many others. Jürgen Klopp’s approach paid off on the night, although had the game gone against Liverpool, would there have been questions asked of Klopp’s cautious approach? After all, win the way Guardiola’s choice of two holding midfielders for the quarter-final defeat at Tottenham dominated the post-match.

Coaches walk a fine line in a sport where little details can determine the biggest of matches – and act as the crude arbiter of whether a decision was ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Roberto Martínez, the Belgium coach and UEFA technical observer, praised the bravery of Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde, when he made a defensive-looking switch with his side leading 1-0 at home to Liverpool by withdrawing Philippe Coutinho in favour of Nelson Semedo; in reality it helped to address the threat Andy Robertson was posing down Liverpool’s left and restore Barcelona’s balance. In the technical observers’ discussion of broader questions of flexibility, there were varying views expressed: one coach commented that young players today grow up playing different positions and therefore have the adaptability to cope with tactical changes. Another, playing devil’s advocate, asked whether we might be seeing too much flexibility – and too many different demands on players.

To return to Pochettino, finally, one last point centred on his second-half introduction of Fernando Llorente to spark Tottenham’s second-half fightback at Ajax. The fact it wreaked such havoc in the Ajax defence, where Llorente dominated centre-backs Daley Blind and Matthijs de Ligt, raised the question of whether the overriding tendency for very structured build-up play means that teams can no longer handle the lesser-seen, old-fashioned threat of high balls up to a big target man. Given Barcelona’s similar struggles with Liverpool’s stream of crosses in the other semi-final (like Ajax the next night, they faced 14 from open play), it can be affirmed that to win this competition, the capability to cope with different challenges is a vital asset.
COMEBACKS BY THREE GOALS OR MORE SINCE 2017

**2018/19 SEMI-FINAL**

- **Liverpool 4-3 Barcelona**
  - (0-3, 4-0)
- **Roma 4-4 Barcelona**
  - (1-4, 3-0, away goals)
- **Barcelona 6-5 Paris**
  - (0-4, b, 1) 2016/17 ROUND OF 16

**2018/19 QUARTER-FINAL**

- **Deportivo 5-4 Milan**
  - (1-4, 11) 2003/04 QUARTER-FINAL
- **Werder Bremen 5-5 Dynamo Berlin**
  - (0-5, 5-0)
- **Galatasaray 5-5 Neuchâtel Xamax**
  - (0-3, 5-0)

**1988/89 SECOND ROUND**

- **Werder Bremen 5-3 Galatasaray**
  - (0-3, 5-0)

**2016/17 ROUND OF 16**

- **Barcelona 5-4 Deportivo**
  - (1-3, 0)
- **Dynamo Berlin 5-4 Werder Bremen**
  - (0-0, 5-4)
- **Neuchâtel Xamax 5-4 Galatasaray**
  - (0-3, 5-0)

**1987/88 THIRD ROUND**

- **Deportivo 5-3 Galatasaray**
  - (1-3, 0)
- **Dynamo Berlin 5-3 Werder Bremen**
  - (0-0, 5-3)
- **Galatasaray 5-3 Deportivo**
  - (0-3, 5-0)

**1987/88 SECOND ROUND**

- **Barcelona 6-5 Neuchâtel Xamax**
  - (0-3, 4-0)
- **Deportivo 5-4 Barcelona**
  - (0-1, 5-0)
- **Galatasaray 5-4 Dynamo Berlin**
  - (0-3, 2-0)

**1987/87 FIRST ROUND**

- **Neuchâtel Xamax 5-4 Galatasaray**
  - (0-3, 2-0)
- **Galatasaray 5-4 Deportivo**
  - (0-3, 5-0)
- **Deportivo 5-4 Dynamo Berlin**
  - (0-2, 3-0)

TALKING POINTS

If the all-English UEFA Champions League final proved anti-climactic, the manner in which Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur advanced to Madrid had the whole of Europe talking about the power of Premier League football. There were different factors cited, including the collective economic might of England’s top division and the influence of the outstanding coaches and players recruited from around the world who have raised the tactical and technical demands. But top of the list was the intensity of the English game. This means both on-field tempo and the intense demands of a division where the high level of competition means teams cannot let their standards drop.

That Liverpool lost just one match in the 2018/19 Premier League yet still did not capture the title reinforces the argument of one UEFA observer that “every game mentally and physically is at a different level to any other league in Europe”. Though some would dispute this, it seems reasonable to suggest the English calendar offers stern tests more regularly – in terms of high intensity, high tempo games – than Ajax, for example, face in the Eredivisie.

Similarly those clubs who win their national leagues with large points margins may suffer in the UEFA Champions League owing to the absence of a serious threat that keeps their competitive levels sky-high week in, week out.

As a consequence, the mental and physical resilience of the English participants stood out to the point where Jürgen Klopp was describing his players as “mentality giants”.

Even before one extraordinary week in May, we saw Manchester United recover from their 2-0 home defeat to out Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16. And then for something even more remarkable as Liverpool and Tottenham joined them in the same way. In both instances, they had no answer to the speed and power and intensity of their hosts, and one UEFA observer suggested that the limited defensive contributions of Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez did not help in the away tie: “You have to defend with 11 players.”

Of course, there was also the Anfield factor at work. As the same observer said, this is a club with a deep-rooted belief in their powers of recovery, gained from so many past triumphs, and a crowd who respond to the high energy of their team, which, in turn, energizes their players further. A virtuous circle.

2017 – yet it was the memory of their defeat at Roma in 2018 that seemed to flash back at them once Liverpool had scored their first goal at Anfield. In Rome they had lost 4-1 lead in a 3-0 second leg defeat. On Merseyside, they collapsed in the same way. In both instances, they had no answer to the speed and power and intensity of their hosts, and one UEFA observer suggested that the limited defensive contributions of Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez did not help in the away tie: “You have to defend with 11 players.”

**NEVER SAY DIE**

Since 2017, there have been as many recoveries after losing the first leg by at least three goals as there were in the 20 seasons between 1987 and 2016.

**KEEPING AHEAD OF THE REST**

One of the abiding images created by a goalkeeper in the 2018/19 was that of Ederson, the Manchester City custodian, collecting a ball on the “D” of his penalty box during the visit to Schalke, stepping forward five metres and launching a long, diagonal ball that landed at Raheem Sterling’s feet just outside the opposition area. Sterling’s marker lost his balance, and with one touch from the forward the ball was in the net. Goal: Sterling; 80-metre assist: Ederson. And an emphatic illustration of the accuracy that today’s elite goalkeepers can achieve with their feet.

It is not just their accuracy but their ability to influence the flow of a match too. UEFA’s technical observers cited Gianluigi Buffon’s contribution to Paris Saint-Germain’s victory at Manchester United as a case in point. After seeing his team struggle with United’s high press in the opening period of the game, the experienced Italian took the decision to push his team-mates up and start playing long – and thereby dilute United’s threat.

This ability to read a game and play both short and long, seeing space higher up the pitch, is imperative and few do it better than Barcelona’s Marc-André ter Stegen, who draws comparison to an American football quarter-back for his range of passing, be it picking out a full-back pushed on high or knocking a ball back for his range of passing, be it picking out a full-back pushed on high or knocking a ball up to Lionel Messi as the Argentinian maestro dropped into midfield.

Another who excels with his feet is Liverpool’s two-footed Alisson Becker, one discussion point that arose in the post-final meeting was the difference between him and Tottenham Hotspur’s Hugo Lloris. Ten of Alisson’s 27 attempted passes in the final went into the opposition half and the view of the UEFA observers was that he showed greater confidence in his long-range accuracy – and ability to mix it up – than the predominantly left-footed Lloris who played 4-2 of his 54 attempted passes within his own half.

Former Republic of Ireland goalkeeper and UEFA technical advisor Packie Bonner led the reflection on goalkeeping in which a variety of opinions were aired. One view was that as well as focusing on developing two good feet, it was essential for young goalkeepers to have two good hands first and foremost – and that there was a danger of this being overlooked.

The need for goalkeepers to work on their positioning – their recovery after stepping out to build play – was another matter; the modern netminder has a tendency to stray into ‘riskier’ positions, and for this Bonner stressed the need for goalkeepers to have a good understanding of the game and an effective collaboration with the head coaches on team tactics.
APPLAUSE FOR AJAX

Referring to the “innovative” “A big plus for the tournament,” these were some of the UEFA observers’ views on the imprint that Dutch champions Ajax left on the tournament this year—views doubtless shared by neutrals far and wide. The efforts of Erik ten Hag’s team in reaching the semi-final, and coming within seconds of a first UEFA Champions League final since 1997, were all the more impressive for their youthful composition. Six of the side that started the stunning 4–1 win at Real Madrid—a result that ended Madrid’s 1,011–day reign as European champions—were aged 22 or under. Four of them were products of Ajax’s academy while a fifth, Andrés Onana, had made his professional debut with the club. Only four, moreover, had had the experience of Ajax’s UEFA Europa League final appearance two years earlier.

What is more, they had got to the semi-final the hard way, coming through three qualifying rounds last summer, before going on to become the first team in 24 years to reach the last four from outside Europe’s five biggest leagues. They did so playing the Ajax way too— with exceptional levels of belief and control, freedom and composure, as they won in successive rounds at Madrid, Juventus and Tottenham Hotspur. Over the season only Liverpool created more big chances than their 28; only Tottenham managed more key passes than their 124.

UEFA’s technical observers were unanimous in their admiration of Ajax’s efforts with particular praise for Barcelona-bound midfielder Frenkie de Jong’s ability to find the right pass at the right time. Dušan Tadić’s embracing of the UEFA Champions League challenge at the age of 30, meanwhile, was one of the season’s feelgood stories. Although Ten Hag had a more conventional alternative for the centre-forward slot in Kasper Dolberg, it was the Serbian who stole the limelight as a false nine, holding the ball up and combining to spectacular effect with the quick, younger talents around him. The concentration of wealth among certain leagues and clubs during the quarter-century since Ajax’s fourth and last European Cup triumph has made it harder than ever for a team from a smaller nation like the Netherlands to travel so far into the competition. Economic forces would prompt the departure of key players in the months that followed, but Ajax certainly made their fans dream. Even Tottenham’s Christian Eriksen could not hide his sympathy for his old club when that dream was finally extinguished in the final moments of their semi-final. “Over the two games they played the better football,” he said. “In the end we were just lucky we scored.”

A SQUAD GAME

Fifty years after the first substitutions in a European Cup final, the 2019 showpiece in Madrid highlighted the extent to which football has become a squad game. It was not just for the fact Dries Mertens’s strike for Liverpool provided the fifth goal by a substitute in the last six finals but also for the impression made by two different images—one before the match, the other afterwards. Before kick-off the customary team photos featured not just the starting XI but each team’s substitutes too—a message of inclusivity, that “we’re all in this together.” Afterwards, meanwhile, the forest of bodies on the platform where Liverpool received their trophy—an assembly of first-team regulars, fringe squad members and Jürgen Klopp’s support staff numbering more than 50—underlined in bold the scale of the enterprise within today’s elite clubs. As Gareth Southgate, the England manager and UEFA technical observer, reflected, the modern coach has the challenge of leading not just a large squad of players but a complex and broad staff too. It is a challenge that both Klopp and his Tottenham Hotspur counterpart Mauricio Pochettino have embraced, excelling in their leadership of these groups, with their ability to empathise, to connect and to persuade players to buy into their vision.

THE AWAY GOAL, 50 YEARS ON

It is also 50 years since the away-goals rule first settled a European Cup tie. That was in the second round of the 1968/69 competition, as Danish forward Jan Børneygaard’s strike at the Santiago Bernabéu edged Rapid Wien past Real Madrid despite a 2–1 loss in Spain (aggregate score: 2–3). The topic of away goal was discussed at the UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum in September 2018 with top European coaches asking for a review of the away-goals rule in European competitions.

The away goals question came up during the UEFA technical observers’ meeting in Madrid too, where there were various views expressed. For one coach, the rule brings a welcome element of jeopardy—and with it the accompanying tension and excitement witnessed in the Paris–Man United, Man City–Tottenham and Ajax–Tottenham matches. Another argued the rule was unfair. A third coach speculated about the possibility of playing extra time in ties that ended with the aggregate scores level.

It is interesting to note that in that inaugural season of away goals in the European Cup, visiting sides failed to score in 46% of the matches played across the round of 16, quarter-finals and semi-finals. The season before that, the percentage figure was even higher at 57%. The equivalent percentage for 2018/19 was 95%, indicating that today—when away trips hold far fewer surprises and playing conditions are increasingly uniform—an away goal is a less precious currency.

VAR’S SUDDEN IMPACT

Nobody who was at Manchester City’s stadium on 17 April 2019 will forget the eruption of noise that greeted the sight of Raheem Sterling’s shot rolling into the net off Hugo Lloris’s left boot two minutes and 22 seconds into added time. Nor will they forget the pushing of the stop button on those City celebrations when, little over a minute later, referee Cüneyt Çakır signalled the goal’s annulment after a VAR review had showed an offside offence against Sergio Agüero in the build-up. After that release of emotion, City did not have their fifth goal and it was Tottenham Hotspur heading for the last four.

If the 2018 FIFA World Cup was the first high-profile international tournament to feature VAR, the new technology made its first appearance in the UEFA Champions League from the round of 16 of the 2018/19 competition onwards following successful technological testing and the training of referees. At every stadium, a VAR team—a video assistant referee, an assistant video assistant referee, and three video operators—was in place to support the referee and help him take correct decisions in four match-changing situations: goals, penalty decisions, direct red cards and incidents and mistaken identity.

Prior to the round of 16, representatives of the clubs—coaches, coaching staff and club delegates—received a presentation from Roberto Rosetti, UEFA’s chief refereeing officer, on the workings of the system. Come the final on 1 June, VAR was used to confirm the handball decision made by referee Damir Skomina against Tottenham’s Moussa Sissoko for Liverpool’s penalty—an award made in keeping with the current interpretation of the handball rule. This stricter interpretation was explained by Rosetti after the knock-out stage when he said: “When the arm is totally out of the body above the shoulder it should be penalised. If the defender is making the body bigger in order to block the ball it is not fair.” In March, FAB subsequently confirmed the changed handball rules for 2019/20, with an offence committed if a player makes his body bigger with his arm, or if the arm is above shoulder height.
PUTTING THE BALL IN THE NET

WHILE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GOALS DROPPED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE YEARS, THE SCORING RATE REMAINED RELATIVELY HIGH COMPARED TO PREVIOUS SEASONS

A total of 366 goals were scored in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League, rattled in at a rate of 2.93 per match. This marked a fall from the previous two years – 401 was the record figure posted in 2017/18, 380 the year before – but it was still the fourth-highest total since the current format was established in 2003.

The second halves of matches produced more goals than the first – 206 to 159 – with the latter stages proving especially productive as games opened up due to teams chasing a result and players beginning to tire. If we add the 76–90 minute period to the goals struck in added time, the combined total for goals scored from 76 minutes onwards was 88 – virtually a quarter of the overall number (24%).

Quarter-finalists Manchester City finished as the top scorers with 30 strikes from their ten matches, while Paris Saint-Germain recorded the second-highest goals-per-game ratio (2.5), having hit 20 in eight matches before elimination. As for Liverpool, the eventual champions ended the season with 24 goals – 17 fewer than when finishing runners-up in 2018, albeit with four fewer in the goals-against column too.

366 Goals scored in the 2018/19 competition

7 Number of 0-0 draws

3 Goals-per-game ratio of top scorers Manchester City

40% Tottenham hit eight of their 20 goals after the 75th minute

21 Matches won with goals after the 75-minute mark

GOAL TIMES

FULL SEASON

KNOCKOUT STAGE
ANALYSIS: GOALSCORING

GOALS PER SEASON
(in current 125-match format)

HOW THE GOALS WERE SCORED

Just over a quarter (25.64%) of the total of 366 goals scored in 2018/19 came from crosses and cut-backs, underlining once more the importance of good wing play.

The second biggest source of goals was combinations, a broad category that included everything from the 20-pass Barcelona move leading to Lionel Messi’s hat-trick strike against PSV Eindhoven to the first UEFA Champions League goal by German club Hoffenheim – scored via a lovely chip by Florian Grillitsch following a high-class give-and-go with Leonardo Bittencourt.

THE ADVANTAGE OF SCORING FIRST

For all of the headlines generated by dazzling comebacks in two-legged ties during the 2018/19 campaign, the statistics show that the teams who claimed the opening goal in UEFA Champions League games this season avoided defeat in 92% of cases.

Moreover, while recent technical reports have highlighted a steady rise in comeback victories – from five in 2014/15 to 20 in 2017/18 – the average length of time in possession before scoring was 7.81 seconds, with an average of 2.51 passes. This speed served them well – as witnessed, for instance, on their quarter-final trip to Porto, where they required just three passes to transport the ball from the edge of their own box to the back of Iker Casillas’s net for Mohamed Salah’s breakthrough goal.

It has been well documented in recent technical reports how teams’ high pressing allows them to strike fast following regains in opposition territory. In 2017/18, the average length of time in possession before scoring was 7.81 seconds – with this being the second biggest source of goals scored.

SPEED OF SCORING

The average time taken to score a goal in the 2018/19 season was 12.50 seconds – with just 3.89 seconds required. Not all matches took quite so long, though, with Liverpool offering a noteworthy example thanks to their pace and directness when attacking the opposition. For Jürgen Klopp’s men, the average length of time in possession before scoring was 7.81 seconds, with an average of 2.51 passes.

The forensic attention to detail found in today’s elite game is one possible explanation for the fewer goals scored from solo runs compared with decades past. Nevertheless, the 2018/19 season featured some fine examples, such as Barcelona’s Ousmane Dembélé breaking from his own half to score in eye-catching fashion against Tottenham Hotspur. Meanwhile, Messi left two Lyon defenders heading for a different postcode as he twisted into the box before scoring against the French club – and Neymar had the same effect on Crewe zweda goalkeeper Milan Borjan after cutting in from the left to strike in Belgrade.

2018/19 COMEBACKS

Seven of the season’s 12 comebacks featured a winning goal scored after 60 minutes — evidence of how the competition can test teams’ stamina and concentration levels until the last kick.

309 331 309 330 326 320 365 368 362 361 367 340 366

GROUP STAGE

INTERNAZIONALE 2-1 TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

WINNING GOAL TIME: 60+1 mins

OPEN PLAY

CATEGORIES ACTION GROUP STAGE KNOCKOUT TOTAL

Corners 28 14 42
Free-kicks (direct) 8 3 11
Free-kicks (indirect) 11 1 12
Penalties 25 9 34
Through-balls 0 1 1

Combinations 50 9 59
Crosses/cutbacks 8/9 25 94
Through-balls 29 11 40
Long passes 6 5 11
Individual action/solo runs 8 2 10
 Shots from outside box 20 3 23
Defensive errors 18 6 24
Own goals 3 2 5

Total 275 91 366

SOLO ARTISTS

The forensic attention to detail found in today’s elite game is one possible explanation for the fewer goals scored from solo runs compared with decades past. Nevertheless, the 2018/19 season featured some fine examples, such as Barcelona’s Ousmane Dembélé breaking from his own half to score in eye-catching fashion against Tottenham Hotspur. Meanwhile, Messi left two Lyon defenders heading for a different postcode as he twisted into the box before scoring against the French club – and Neymar had the same effect on Crewe zweda goalkeeper Milan Borjan after cutting in from the left to strike in Belgrade.

Raheem Sterling and David Neres also capped exciting runs with memorable individual strikes, though arguably the best old-fashioned dribble came from Bayern München veteran Arjen Robben who, in his final campaign, evaded four Benfica defenders before finding the top corner of the net in a 5-1 group stage victory.

In the case of Sterling and Robben, both cut inside on to their stronger foot before scoring into the far corner – and this is one of the more common open play goals according to UEFA technical adviser and former goalkeeper Paddy Bonner. For him, the movement today’s forwards can summon when striking the ball makes these shots extremely difficult for goalkeepers (illustrated by a review of the competition’s 25 goals from outside the box). Whereas in the past defenders sought to force their opponents inside and into traffic, now – unless a team has two holding midfielders – there can be more space to exploit there.
RISKY BUSINESS

Another tendency noted by more than one UEFA observer concern goals conceded by teams following mistakes made when trying to play out from the back in the face of high-pressing opponents. It was not just the lower-placed teams either; for, while there were noteworthy examples involving Crvena zvezda, Galatasaray, Hoffenheim and Lokomotiv Moskva, Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur were just as culpable against more than one opponent. In the case of City, they leaked goals against Lyon and Spurs after errors; Spurs against PSV Eindhoven and Barcelona.

Overall, 36 goals came from loose opposition passes, and 50.6% of all goals came from regains in the final third. Even in Neymar’s case both converted two apiece, Leroy Sané each in 2017/18. Lionel Messi, Neymar and Suárez each brought a Bayern goal in Amsterdam. Lionel Messi’s team-mate Luis Suárez found the net just 69 minutes after a lapse in their own half by each of AEK Athens, Real Madrid and Juventus. To end on a positive note, it is worth highlighting once more the quality of the forward play produced in the UEFA Champions League – and not just from those sides who journeyed deep into the competition. Consider this snapshot from the group fixture between Napoli and Crvena zvezda, two clubs eliminated early. At one end Marek Hamšík, from the Napoli side of the centre circle, releases Dries Mertens to score with a classic, defence-splitting ball 35 metres down the middle. Then, five minutes later at the other end, Marko Marin plays a slick reverse pass to release El Fardou Ben Nabouhane behind his marker to strike for the Serbian team. Football to applaud.

TOP SCORERS

Players (5 or more goals) Goals xG Shots Shots on target Start conversion Messi per goal
Lionel Messi 12 6.47 54 26 22.2% 69.8
Robert Lewandowski 8 6.90 26 17 30.8% 89.1
Cristiano Ronaldo 6 4.91 48 13 12.5% 124.8
Sergio Agüero 6 5.59 30 16 20% 84.8
Moussa Marega 6 5.69 26 15 23.1% 140
Dusan Tadić 6 4.79 21 10 28.6% 180
Andrey Yarmolenko 5 2.35 18 8 27.8% 96.2
Paulo Dybala 5 3.66 21 10 23.8% 103.2
Neymar 5 3.44 24 16 20.8% 106.4
Mohamed Salah 5 7.08 52 15 9.6% 211.6
Harry Kane 5 3.20 32 15 15.8% 155.4
Lucas Moura 5 3.44 26 10 19.2% 145
Raheem Sterling 5 3.01 23 10 21.7% 174.2
Edin Džeko 5 3.51 29 14 17.2% 114

92.6% Lionel Messi’s goal attempts with his left foot.

56 Hakim Ziyech had the most shots

3 Cristiano Ronaldo scored four of his six goals with his head, facilitated by a Juventus side which registered the most open-play crosses (155).

Liverpool’s Divock Origi scored with each of his three shots in the competition. Also in the ’100% club’ with two goals against were Barcelona’s Gerard Piqué and Crvena zvezda’s Milan Pavkov, who hit a double v Liverpool.
RONALDO STRIKES AGAIN

FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, UEFA’S TECHNICAL OBSERVERS PICKED A CRISTIANO RONALDO GOAL AS THE BEST OF THE SEASON

At their meeting the morning after the final in Madrid, the UEFA Technical Observers’ Group had the task of selecting the best goals of the campaign – not easy given the high standard of so many on the 50 strong ‘short’ list drawn from the 366 scored overall.

The first-choice goal, in the end, came from a familiar source: Cristiano Ronaldo, supplying the season’s best strike for the third time in a familiar source: Cristiano Ronaldo, supplying from the 366 scored overall.

Arguably the best worked team goal on the list was Kylian Mbappé’s for Paris Saint-Germain in the round of 16 against United. Winning the ball midway inside their own half, the visitors worked forward in a seven-man sequence culminating with Juan Bernat’s turn and forward pass to Angel Di María, whose play of springing forward whenever Paris regarded possession now gained its reward. The Argentinian squared a superbly placed cross past the first defender and into the path of Mbappé, whose electric surge between United’s two centre-backs was followed by an ice-cool finish.

Joining Mbappé in the top ten were two other speed merchants: Man City’s Raheem Sterling for the dribble and cutting finish from the edge of the box against Shaktar Donetsk, and Ousmane Dembélé, whose group stage goal for Barcelona against Tottenham began with winning the ball inside his own half, continued with a 40-metre dash upfield and concluded with the young Frenchman displaying the composure to apply the brakes, wrong-foot Harry Winks and sweep the ball home.

Finally, another Barcelona forward, Luis Suárez, showcased a different speed of thought – with the last goal on the list, against his old club Liverpool. The Uruguayan’s movement and anticipation paid off as he timed perfectly his run between the two centre-backs to meet Jordi Alba’s cross with a sliding touch and open the scoring in the semi-final first leg at the Camp Nou.
The number of goals scored from dead-ball situations continues to fall. Of the 366 goals scored in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League, 66 of them – or 18% – came from set plays. This marked a fall in set-piece goals for the second season running, even if for some teams they remained an important source of goals – Bayern München and Porto scored six apiece from set plays, while Divock Origi struck for Liverpool in both the semi-final and final following corners.

Bayern München scored the joint-highest number of goals from corners during the tournament. Almost a third of Bayern’s goals came from corners. The highest xG from corners per 90 minutes was provided by Robert Lewandowski’s goals from set plays. He also had the highest xG (2.25).

Another play that generated comment was that of defending dead balls – particularly from wide positions – with an unusually high line. Ajax offered a notable example of this tactic in their semi-final first leg against Tottenham, taking up a defensive line approximately ten metres beyond the edge of their own box.

On the motives for this strategy, Roberto Martínez, one of UEFA’s technical observers, explained that teams with less aerial power might prefer to try playing offside in these positions, as this allows their goalkeeper more space to attack as the ball comes in. It was also observed that when defending set plays, they kept two wide players slightly ahead of their colleagues, ready for the counterattack. As this second example from Internazionale shows, not every team defended wide set plays with a high line. On the group fixture against Tottenham, the Italian club’s players took up a position right on the edge of their box – approximately seven metres deeper than Ajax. It was also observed that when defending set plays, they kept two wide players slightly ahead of their colleagues, ready for the counterattack.

Statistics do not include penalties or direct free-kicks.

DATA FROM UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2018/19
Robert Lewandowski’s 50th UEFA Champions League goal in Bayern’s group stage win over Benfica raised two points about defending from corners. As noted by UEFA’s technical observers, there is an increased tendency towards zonal defending today, yet in this instance, the short Bayern corner, with Arjen Robben feeding Joshua Kimmich, served to bring a Benfica man out of his zone. Additionally when Lewandowski’s subsequent header went in off the far post, the visitors’ zonal strategy meant there was no Benfica player there protecting it, as was prevalent in the past.

**Corners-To-Shots-Conceded Ratio**

Benfica had mixed fortunes from set plays. They conceded an opportunity from every 3.4 corners – an above-average ratio – and were also the club most likely to leak a goal from a corner, shipping one goal for every nine opposition deliveries. At the other end of the pitch, they had the best corners-to-shots ratio yet did not score from a single one.

**Corners-To-Goals-Conceded Ratio**

Benfica had the highest corners-to-goals-conceded ratio, conceding a goal every 9 corners (but one of the lowest corners-to-shots-conceded ratios).

**Corners-To-Goals Ratio**

Porto scored the joint-highest number of goals from corners.

**Corners-To-Shots Conceded Ratio**

Porto had the highest corners-to-shots-conceded ratio.

**Inswinger Corners**

Atlético de Madrid had the lowest corners-to-shots-conceded ratio, conceding a shot every 4.4 corners.

**Outswinger Corners**

Atlético did not concede a single goal from a corner (33 faced).

**Corners-To-Shots Ratio**

Porto scored the joint-highest number of goals from corners.
In their analysis of set plays in the competition, UEFA’s technical observers noted that teams were evidently working on ways to block opposition players as deliveries came into the box, as a means of allowing team-mates a free run at the ball. One such example was Cristiano Ronaldo’s headed goal for Juventus against Ajax in the quarter-finals. As Miralem Pjanić prepared to take the corner, Ronaldo’s starting position was beyond the back post but his marker, Matthijs de Ligt, could not keep close to him as he sped around the thicket of bodies in the middle of the area to meet the ball with a strong header. De Ligt himself was the beneficiary for his opening goal of the semi-final second leg against Tottenham. As Lasse Schöne lined up his corner, Spurs centre-back Jan Vertonghen had an eye on De Ligt to try to anticipate his movement, but he was unable to follow him because of Donny van de Beek backing into him to bar his path – a coming-together that left him on the floor as the Ajax defender soared to score.

Liverpool’s attacking set plays was also noteworthy. The Egyptian was positioned on the edge of the penalty area and carried a threat from there, having five shots on goal when latching on to balls cleared to the perimeter of the box. With his speed, Salah could also help out defensively when the opposition countered, for instance, when Porto sprung forward quickly following a Liverpool corner in the quarter-final at Anfield, Salah sprinted back and dispossessed Otávio right on the edge of his own penalty box. Before the season began, Jürgen Klopp and his players and coaching staff took a decision to spend more time practising set plays. Their attention to detail paid off throughout the season – and never more so than in their semi-final comeback against Barcelona. Another part of their strategy was to keep the ball moving quickly, to help sustain the pressure on opponents, and with Klopp’s match analysts having observed how Barcelona players became distracted when a decision went against them, there was even an instruction passed on to the club’s ball boys prior to the Blaugrana’s visit that they should return the ball as swiftly as possible to help the team maintain the intensity. And so it was that Trent Alexander-Arnold was able to send over the quick corner that caught Barcelona unprepared as Origi scored his team’s fourth.

**INSWINGING v OUTSWINGING CORNERS**

Virgil van Dijk’s goal at Porto was a header following Sadio Mané’s near-post flick-on of an inswinging corner. The big Dutchman also headed a goal at Bayern from an outswinging delivery from the other side. Liverpool’s varied threat was evident again early in the final when Hugo Lloris, struggled to deal with two inswinging corners with five Liverpool players crowding the space around him. In the end, it was a second-phase goal from a corner that brought Divock Origi’s clinching goal in Madrid and the Reds were not alone in profiting in this way. Overall there were eight goals from the second phase at corners – and one argument is that defending teams are vulnerable in these situations because of their focus on springing quick counterattacks.

The position of Mohamed Salah for Liverpool’s attacking set plays was also noteworthy. The Egyptian was positioned on the edge of the penalty area and carried a threat from there, having five shots on goal when latching on to balls cleared to the perimeter of the box. With his speed, Salah could also help out defensively when the opposition countered, for instance, when Porto sprung forward quickly following a Liverpool corner in the quarter-final at Anfield, Salah sprinted back and dispossessed Otávio right on the edge of his own penalty box. Before the season began, Jürgen Klopp and his players and coaching staff took a decision to spend more time practising set plays. Their attention to detail paid off throughout the season – and never more so than in their semi-final comeback against Barcelona. Another part of their strategy was to keep the ball moving quickly, to help sustain the pressure on opponents, and with Klopp’s match analysts having observed how Barcelona players became distracted when a decision went against them, there was even an instruction passed on to the club’s ball boys prior to the Blaugrana’s visit that they should return the ball as swiftly as possible to help the team maintain the intensity. And so it was that Trent Alexander-Arnold was able to send over the quick corner that caught Barcelona unprepared as Origi scored his team’s fourth.

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Teams playing at high intensity find that the pressing game pays dividends.

**TOTTENHAM v LIVERPOOL: TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

**FINAL**

Of all their 13 matches in the 2018/19 competition, Tottenham Hotspur’s lowest number of pressures in a match (64) came in the final. The fact they had a large share of possession might be cited as a factor yet they had also had more of the ball in the semi-final second leg at Ajax, when they posted more than double the total of pressures managed in Madrid – many of them higher up the pitch.

Liverpool pressed high as would be expected, with – as the screenshot highlights – their front three stationed close to the edge of the Spurs box when Mauricio Pochettino’s men sought to play out from the back. To be fair to Tottenham, they got past this first line of the Liverpool press quite effectively though the heat map shows the pressure that was then exerted on their full-backs by Reds players.

Salah was the final’s highest-pressing player (34 times)

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**LIVERPOOL v BARCELONA: THE RED STORM**

**SEMI-FINAL, SECOND LEG**

Liverpool played with extraordinary intensity both in and out of possession at Anfield. They pressed high up the pitch and responded instantly and with high intensity whenever they lost the ball. The energy and organisation of their pressing game made it very difficult for Barcelona to build from the back in their preferred style.

Barcelona failed to press with the usual vigour when they lost the ball instead they defended from a mid-block and did this, more often than not, with eight men because they allowed Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez to stay up the pitch and wait for the ball to be regained. As the scoreline indicated, they were unable to cope with Liverpool’s intensity and barrage of crosses.

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**HEAT MAP KEY**

Low Intensity

High Intensity

*Pressures: the numbers of times a player pressures an opposition player per 90*

*Data provided by Statsbomb*
The heat map highlights Spurs' efforts in a fixture where they pressed high up the pitch, particularly in a second half where full-backs Kieran Trippier and Danny Rose drove upfield at every opportunity as Mauricio Pochettino's men went for broke.

Ajax applied such high pressure that they were able to recover many balls in the opposition half, creating many problems for Madrid with their aggression and determination – and indeed scoring after left-back Nicolás Tagliafico had harassed Lucas Vázquez into losing the ball in his own half (below).

At the Santiago Bernabéu, Ajax recorded the most pressures in a single game across their UEFA Champions League campaign this season (333). They applied pressure across the pitch, particularly in wide areas in their own half, with three of their goals coming from quick breaks after they had won the ball back. The front four of Dušan Tadić, David Neres, Hakim Ziyech and Donny van de Beek showed admirable discipline in defending every ball that was lost – and doing it immediately and high up the pitch. In the process, they denied Madrid the space to build up play, forcing them to look long.

At Wembley against Dortmund, Spurs had a 1-3-4-1-2 shape out of possession and this meant the onus was on wing-backs Serge Aurier and Jan Vertonghen to press high up the pitch. Once they won the ball (Aurier registered 25 pressures and Vertonghen 18), they were instrumental in possession: the Belgian crossing for Heung-Min Son's goal (right) and then scoring himself from an Aurier centre.

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In a team known for its attacking prowess, Alisson ensured Liverpool's success was built from the back. Here we look at the key goalkeeping statistics from the 2018/19 campaign.

### Goalkeeping Analysis: Goalkeeping

**Alisson Becker**
- GOALS CONCEDED: 12 (AVE 0.9)
- GOAL CONCEDED: 10 (AVE 1.25)
- CLEAN SHEETS: 6 (AVE 0.46)
- TARGET FACED: 57 (AVE 4.75)
- SHOTS ON TARGET FACED: 40 (AVE 3.33)
- SAVES: 46 (AVE 3.83)
- SAVE PERCENTAGE: 78%

**André Onana**
- GOALS CONCEDED: 13 (AVE 1.08)
- GOAL CONCEDED: 13 (AVE 1.56)
- CLEAN SHEETS: 4 (AVE 0.33)
- TARGET FACED: 54 (AVE 4.5)
- SHOTS ON TARGET FACED: 40 (AVE 3.33)
- SAVES: 40 (AVE 3.33)
- SAVE PERCENTAGE: 76%

**Hugo Lloris**
- GOALS CONCEDED: 15 (AVE 1.3)
- GOAL CONCEDED: 15 (AVE 1.27)
- CLEAN SHEETS: 4 (AVE 0.33)
- TARGET FACED: 65 (AVE 5.42)
- SHOTS ON TARGET FACED: 54 (AVE 4.5)
- SAVES: 50 (AVE 4.17)
- SAVE PERCENTAGE: 76%

**Marc-André ter Stegen**
- GOALS CONCEDED: 9 (AVE 0.8)
- GOAL CONCEDED: 14 (AVE 1.03)
- CLEAN SHEETS: 6 (AVE 0.54)
- TARGET FACED: 37 (AVE 3.08)
- SHOTS ON TARGET FACED: 27 (AVE 2.23)
- SAVES: 27 (AVE 2.23)
- SAVE PERCENTAGE: 76%

---

Goals prevented measures xG on target (xGOT) conceded compared with actual goals conceded, across all games played.
Ederson ranked top for pass completion among keepers (89%) in 2018/19 and also posted the shortest average pass length (35m). At the other end of the scale, Jan Oblak had the longest average pass length (55m) and the lowest pass completion rate (53%), owing to Atlético’s style of play.

Of goalkeepers from the last 16 clubs, David de Gea and Robin Olsen ranked highest for pressured pass completion (75%). Thibaut Courtois was the second most pressured goalkeeper of all 32 in the competition (15.8% of his passes being made under pressure) and completed 32% of his passes.

Looking at the goalkeepers overall, Monaco’s Diego Benaglio was joint-top for pressured pass completion (75%) and second for pass completion (83%).
FITNESS

While a centre-back led the way for top speed, full-backs and midfielders featured prominently in the other fitness categories.

SPEED

The rising speed of the 21st century game was underlined by the fact the 2018/19 campaign featured 460 sprints in excess of 30km/h. Wide players or forwards recorded most of the top speeds, though it was a centre-back, Liverpool’s Virgil van Dijk, who registered the fastest sprint of the season, in the semi-final first leg at Barcelona.

FASTEST SPRINTS (KM/H)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virgil van Dijk</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy Sané</td>
<td>Man City</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle Walker</td>
<td>Man City</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gareth Bale</td>
<td>Real Madrid</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brel Embolo</td>
<td>Schalke</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafa Silva</td>
<td>Benfica</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy Sané</td>
<td>Man City</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taison</td>
<td>Shakhtar</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loris Benito</td>
<td>Young Boys</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Fassnacht</td>
<td>Young Boys</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garry Rodrigues</td>
<td>Galatasaray</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Cuadrado</td>
<td>Juventus</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxwell Cornet</td>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Éder Militão</td>
<td>Porto</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romelu Lukaku</td>
<td>Man United</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergio Busquets</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While a centre-back led the way for top speed, full-backs and midfielders featured prominently in the other fitness categories.

MOST SPRINTS – AVERAGE PER MATCH (PLAYED SIX MATCHES OR MORE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dušan Tadić</td>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>62.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Callejón</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>55.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadio Mané</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>54.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dele Alli</td>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>53.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Perišić</td>
<td>Inter</td>
<td>53.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raheem Sterling</td>
<td>Man City</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo Insigne</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>49.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mário Rui</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>49.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordi Alba</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>48.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denzel Dumfries</td>
<td>PSV</td>
<td>48.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dušan Tadić’s importance as the link man in the Ajax attack is highlighted by his place at the top of this ranking. While it is no surprise to see other prominent forward players like Sadio Mané featured, the presence of three full-backs in this top ten reflects the up-and-down attacking brief they are asked to fulfil.

LONG DISTANCE

The proportion of midfielders among those players who covered the most ground on average in 2018/19 highlights the need for stamina and mobility among footballers operating in that area of the pitch. It is testimony to the enduring fitness levels of Liverpool’s James Milner that, at 33, he features in the top five.

AVERAGE DISTANCE COVERED (METRES PER MIN – PLAYED SIX MATCHES OR MORE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcelo Brozović</td>
<td>Internazionale</td>
<td>137.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matías Vecino</td>
<td>Internazionale</td>
<td>137.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marek Hamsik</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>136.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Eriksen</td>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>135.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Milner</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>135.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maycon</td>
<td>Shakhtar</td>
<td>134.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miralem Pjanic</td>
<td>Juventus</td>
<td>133.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koke</td>
<td>Atlético Madrid</td>
<td>133.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibril Sow</td>
<td>Young Boys</td>
<td>132.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dele Alli</td>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>132.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donny van de Beek</td>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>132.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Man United</td>
<td>131.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabián Ruiz</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>130.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dušan Tadić</td>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>129.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo Insigne</td>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>129.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POSSSESSION

Results are not always determined by teams dominating the ball.

Possession may be regarded as nine-tenths of the law, but not in UEFA Champions League football. Of the 26 matches in the knockout rounds that produced a victory, there were 12 wins posted by teams with the lesser share of possession, only one less than the 13 by teams with the lion’s share (with one match ending with a 50-50 split).

Champions Liverpool underlined that domination of the ball is not the only strategy for winning football matches, posting four of their five knockout-stage victories in games where they had less of it – while losing 3-0 at Barcelona in a match where they actually had more possession than their hosts.

Across the thirds of the pitch, Atlético de Madrid and Real Madrid were the sides who had most possession in the attacking third (25% each). Borussia Dortmund and Manchester City had most in the middle third (56% each), and Crvena zvezda in the defensive third (42%).

AVERAGE POSSESSION (TOP 16 TEAMS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Average Possession</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manchester City</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Madrid</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borussia Dortmund</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Saint-Germain</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayern München</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juventus</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoli</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porto</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlético de Madrid</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man United</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AVERAGE POSSESSION IN ATTACKING THIRD (TOP TEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Average Possession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlético de Madrid</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Madrid</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokomotiv Moskva</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester City</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSKA Moscow</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POSSSESSION ACROSS THE THIRDS

56%
Manchester City and Dortmund had the highest average possession in the middle third of the pitch of all 32 competing clubs. In their home group fixture against Club Brugge, Dortmund had 70% of their possession in the central third; City had 64% in that area in the 7-0 win over Schalke.

20%
Atlético de Madrid had the least possession overall in the defensive third; Man City had the second-least (22%).

17%
Bayern München had the third-least possession in the attacking third, with only AEK and Crvena zvezda recording less.
**AEK Athens FC**

**Squad**

- **Goals**: 12
- **Attemps**: 18
- **On Target**: 3
- **Expected Goals (xG)**: 0.8

**Player Statistics**

- **Goals**: 22
- **Attemps**: 185
- **On Target**: 70
- **Expected Goals (xG)**: 22.6

**Coach**: Marinis Ouzounidis

**European Club Competition Results**

- **UCL**: 26th
- **EUROPEAN TROPHIES WON**: 0

**Key Features**

- Basic 1-4-2-3-1 formation;
- Defensive full-backs;
- Fundamental defensive principles;
- Deep and narrow, standard 1v1;
- Tentative provisional, eye-watching, keeping back;...
**Club Atlético de Madrid**

**Squad**

- **Goalkeepers:**
  - Jan Oblak (8 games, 720 min)
  - 13 Jan Oblak
  - 5 Gerard Piqué
  - 3 Gerard Piqué

- **Defenders:**
  - 2 Diego Godín (6 games, 540 min)
  - 3 José María Giménez
  - 25 Lucas Hernández
  - 13 Jan Oblak (8 games, 720 min)

- **Midfielders:**
  - 6 Atlético<br> 21 Lucas Hernández
  - 5 Ivan Ramiro Siqueira
  - 7 Atlético<br> 16 Roberto

- **Forwards:**
  - 9 Luis Suárez (10 games, 900 min)
  - 10 Ángel Correa (8 games, 353 min)
  - 11 Ousmane Dembélé (8 games, 417 min)
  - 8 Álvaro Morata (2 games, 122 min)

**Player Statistics**

- **Goals:**
  - 11 goals (2 per match; UCL rank: 14)
  - 26 Carles Aleñá (3 games, 92 min)
  - 22 Arturo Vidal (11 games, 356 min)

- **Assists:**
  - 26 Carles Aleñá (3 games, 92 min)
  - 22 Arturo Vidal (11 games, 356 min)

**Key Features**

- **Goals:**
  - 1-4-2-1-2: switching to 1-4-4-2-1 when defending
  - Experienced goalkeeper Oblak with outstanding shot-stopping
  - Drop-deep out of possession, with narrow back four
  - Good organisation and discipline, with players functioning well as whole team
  - Compact midfield shape, width from overlapping full-backs (Filipe Luis)
  - Rely more on counter-attack, with fast passes forward and wide players space
  - Mobility of Griezmann pivotal to attacking game

**Averages**

- **Possession:**
  - 59% (including qualifying)
  - 60% (Group stage to final)

- **Pass Distance:**
  - 54% (Group stage to final)
  - 58% (including qualifying)

**Portions of the Pitch**

- **Final third:** 25%
  - Min. 102,803m v Monaco (a)
  - Max. 111,647m v Club Brugge (h)

- **Middle third:** 55%
  - Min. 48% v Liverpool (h)
  - Max. 58% v Porto (a)

- **First third:** 28%
  - Min. 21% v Dortmund (h)
  - Max. 22% v Club Brugge (h)

**Chance Creation**

- **A** (9):
  - Lucas Hernández
  - 22 Arturo Vidal (11 games, 356 min)

**Defending**

- **B** (blocks, tackles, clearances, interceptions):
  - Against Atlético Club Brugge (2-0)
  - Against Manchester City (1-2)

**Expected Goals (xG):**

- **1.38 per match; UCL rank: 14**
  - Against FC Porto (2-1)
  - Against Barcelona (1-4)

**On Target:**

- **10.9 per match; UCL rank: 27**
  - Against Manchester City (1-2)
  - Against Real Madrid (1-2)

**Woodwork:**

- **21.8 per match; UCL rank: 21**
  - Against Manchester City (1-2)
  - Against Real Madrid (1-2)

**Wides:**

- **23 per match; UCL rank: 3**
  - Against Manchester City (1-2)
  - Against Real Madrid (1-2)

**Against:**

- **5-0 v Liverpool:**
  - 21% Expected goals (xG)
  - 13% On target

- **3-1 v Club Brugge:**
  - 19% Expected goals (xG)
  - 10% On target

**Corner kicks:**

- **11.5 per match; UCL rank: 3**
  - Against Manchester City (1-2)
  - Against Real Madrid (1-2)

**Key Features**

- Messi playing inside width of penalty box;
  - Suárez stretching defenders to make space
  - Balanced midfield with Busquets sitting deep

---

**FC Barcelona**

**Squad**

- **Goalkeepers:**
  - 10 Marc-André ter Stegen (11 games, 910 min)
  - 11 Jasper Cillessen (30 min)

- **Defenders:**
  - 14 Gerard Piqué (11 games, 990 min)
  - 18 Jordi Alba (11 games, 945 min)
  - 2 Samuel Umtiti
  - 23 Thomas Vermaelen
  - 21 Ivan Rakitic

- **Midfielders:**
  - 26 Carles Aleñá (3 games, 92 min)
  - 8 Arthur (9 games, 566 min)

- **Forwards:**
  - 9 Luis Suárez (10 games, 900 min)
  - 11 Ousmane Dembélé (8 games, 417 min)
  - 22 Álvaro Morata (2 games, 122 min)

**Player Statistics**

- **Goals:**
  - 199 goals (11-2-1 per match; UCL rank: 5)
  - 77 goals (6-0-1 per match; UCL rank: 3)

**Key Features**

- 1-3-4-2-1: 1-4-4-2-1 when defending
  - Building play from goalkeeper Ter Stegen, via short anchoring passes
  - Balazard with pace and finishing
  - Suárez stretching defenders to make space
  - Good movement and pressing

---

**Club Atlético de Madrid**

**Goalkeepers:**

- 13 Jan Oblak

**Defenders:**

- 2 Diego Godín

**Midfielders:**

- 6 Atlético<br> 25 Lucas Hernández

**Forwards:**

- 9 Luis Suárez

---

**FC Barcelona**

**Goalkeepers:**

- 10 Marc-André ter Stegen

**Defenders:**

- 18 Jordi Alba

**Midfielders:**

- 8 Arthur

**Forwards:**

- 9 Luis Suárez
### AVERAGES

**Possession**

- Example: 50% means the team has control of the ball 50% of the time.

**Possession Position**

- Example: in possession means the team is in possession of the ball.

**Pass Distance**

- Example: Long 76 (13% of total) UCL rank: 3

**Distance Covered**

- Example: 112,222m UCL rank: 6

**Bypassed**

- Total: Average

**PASS ACCURACY**

- Example: Min. 108,687m v AEK (a)

**Expected goals (xG)**

- Example: 0.9

### SHAPES & AVERAGES

**Squad**

- Example: App Min G A

**Goals**

- Example: 112

**Cards**

- Example: 1

### KEY FEATURES

- Variations of 1-4-2-3-1

- Calm distribution from Neuer, feeding ball to central defenders or midfield pivot

- Variations of 1-4-2-3-1 in opposition half

- Calm distribution from Neuer, feeding ball to central defenders or midfield pivot

- Variations of 1-4-2-3-1

### PLAYER STATISTICS

**PASSES**

- Example: 273

**Defending**

- Example: 273

**Goals**

- Example: 22

**Change Creation**

- Example: A KP

### COACH

- Example: NIKO KOVAC

**BORN:** 31/01/1971, BIH (Croatia)

**HEAD COACH:** 03/01/2018 - UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

**Total Appearances:** 0

**Goals:** 0

**Assists:** 0

**App Min G A**

- Example: 84

**W L D**

- Example: 8-4-2

**Cards:**

- Example: 1

**COACH**

- Example: RUI VITÒRIA

**BORN:** 15/06/1972, Aveiro (Portugal)

**HEAD COACH:** 05/03/2019 - UEFA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

**Total Appearances:** 0

**Goals:** 0

**Assists:** 0

**App Min G A**

- Example: 84

**W L D**

- Example: 8-4-2

**Cards:**

- Example: 1

### MUNICH

- Example: FCBAYERN

### BENFICA

- Example: SLBENFICA

### UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

- Example: 05/03/2019 - UEFA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

### Player Names

- Example: David Alaba

### Squad List

- Example: 2 Mats Hummels

### Note

- Example: 3 Alex Grimaldo

### Statistics

- Example: 273

---

### Footnotes

[1] = Total: Average

[2] = Number of passes to the player and passes made to other players outside the penalty area.

[3] = Number of successful tackles and interceptions per 90 minutes.

[4] = Expected goals (xG) give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

---

### Rankings

- Example: 7

### European club competition

- Example: UEFA Champions League
**ATTEMPTS**

### GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>OT</th>
<th>xG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hans Vanaken</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruud Vormer</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rezaei Kaveh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jelle Vossen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<td>Milan Pavkov</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>Matej Mitrović</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arnaut Groeneveld</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Daniele Verde</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>Dejan Joveljić</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brandon Mechele</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>Matheus Pereira</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>Benoit Poulain</td>
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<td>Sofyan Amrabat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marco van Ginkel</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</table>

### PRECISION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Attempts</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>% Completed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Han Kik</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wesley</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruud Vormer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>81.8</td>
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<td>Filip Stojković</td>
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<td>Milan Pavkov</td>
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### WIDE

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<td>Hans Vanaken</td>
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<td>Marko Marin</td>
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<td>Slavoljub Srnić</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matej Mitrović</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### OG

- **Goalkeeper**: 2
- **Defender/Back**: 10
- **Midfielder**: 15
- **Forward**: 18

### PLAYER STATISTICS

- **Minutes played**: 1229.4
- **Appearances**: 17
- **Goals**: 26
- **Assists**: 9
- **Key passes**: 42

### SHAPE

- **First third**: 42% (25 appearances)
- **Middle third**: 46% (29 appearances)
- **Last third**: 12% (7 appearances)

---

**OKAZIJA**

- **Assists**: 11
- **Key passes**: 37
- **On target**: 37
- **Total**: 27

---

**EXPECTED GOALS (xG)**

- **Expected goals**: 12
- **Actual goals**: 16
- **Difference**: 12

---

**CARDS**

- **Yellow**: 8
- **Red**: 1

---

**AVG 26.4 cards per match**
**PFC CSKA MOSKVA**

**DEFENDING BR TW I**

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Goal (A)</th>
<th>OT</th>
<th>xG</th>
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<tr>
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<td>24</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirill Nababkin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nikita Chernov</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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**ATTEMPTS**

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<th>xG</th>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>70%</td>
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**SHAPE AVERAGES SQUAD**

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<th>Shape</th>
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<tr>
<td>MIDFIELD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **Goals**: 12.3 per match; UCL rank: 1
- **Attempts**: 19 per match; UCL rank: 1
- **On Target**: 7.1 per match; UCL rank: 1

**SHAPE AVERAGES SQUAD**

- **Goals (A)**: 1.2 per match; UCL rank: 21
- **On Target**: 0.6 per match; UCL rank: 15
- **Attempts**: 29 per match; UCL rank: 11

**EXAMPLE**

- **Expected goals (xG)**: give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

**ATTEMPTS**

- **Goal**: 1.3 per match; UCL rank: 15
- **Attempt**: 12 per match; UCL rank: 15
- **On Target**: 7 per match; UCL rank: 15

**SHAPE AVERAGES SQUAD**

- **Goals (A)**: 0.8 per match; UCL rank: 26
- **On Target**: 0.1 per match; UCL rank: 26
- **Attempts**: 20 per match; UCL rank: 26

**EXAMPLE**

- **Expected goals (xG)**: give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

**COACH**

- **Name**: Viktor Goncharenko
- **Age**: 40
- **Position**: Defender
- **Nationality**: Ukraine
- **Years**: 2001-2005, Atalanta (Italy); 2005-2008, Sampdoria (Italy); 2008-2012, Dnipro (Ukraine); 2012-2014, Dynamo Kyiv (Ukraine)

**AWARDS**

- **UEFA Super Cup**: 2008

**EUROPEAN TROPHIES WON**


**SQUAD**

- **Total**: 18 players
- **Nationality**: 11
- **Position**: 4 forwards, 10 midfielders, 4 defenders

**LOW SCORING**

- **Goals (A)**: 1.2 per match; UCL rank: 21
- **On Target**: 0.6 per match; UCL rank: 15
- **Attempts**: 29 per match; UCL rank: 11

**EXAMPLE**

- **Expected goals (xG)**: give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

**COACH**

- **Name**: Lucien Favre
- **Age**: 52
- **Position**: Head Coach
- **Nationality**: Switzerland
- **Years**: 2017-2018, Borussia Dortmund (Germany)

**AWARDS**

- **UEFA Super Cup**: 2008

**EUROPEAN TROPHIES WON**


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**EXAMPLE**

- **Expected goals (xG)**: give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.
ATTEMPTS

Player statistics

Where total is equal, rank is decided by next value

PASS DISTANCE

Example: v Porto (a)

Final third 19%

Min. 297 v Porto (a)

Max. 103,332m v Porto (a)

1.7 per match; UCL rank: 14

3.7 per match; UCL rank: 22

ATTEMPTS

GOALS

AVERAGE

CARDS

Atletico Madrid

5 GOALS

25 Kevin Akpoguma 2 180

3 Florian Grillitsch 26 5 11

37 Robin Hack 1 5

22 Kevin Vogt 4 360

28 Ádám Szalai 5 272

2 Andrej Kramarić 1 8

28 James Pearce 2 135

2 Joshua Brenet 2 135

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Kevin Akpoguma 2 180

1 Kerm稱 Demirbay 5 370 2

10 Kerem Demirbay 5 370 2

10 Constantin Grunwald 9 415 1

15 Roberto Hilbert 1 5

15 Kasim Adams Nuhu 2 141

15 Ryan Donk 6 473

15 Nico Schulz 5 445 1

14 Martin Linnes 5 403

14 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

14 Nadiem Amiri 1 27

13 Yuto Nagatomo 5 442

13 Serdar Aziz 250 229 92

13 László Kleinheisler 7 43 1

13 Tijan Djo

12 Benjamin Hübner 1 26

12 Łukasz Piszczek 2 160

12 Dennis Geiger 1 63

12 Robert Huth 1 5

12 Mergim Vrioni 1 5

11 Florian Grillitsch 6 415 1

11 Dennis Geiger 1 63

11 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

11 Eren Derdiyok 2 15 8 3 2.5

11 Jofre Guillem 1 5

11 Julian Nagelsmann

11 Yuto Nagatomo 5 442

10 Eren Derdiyok 2 15 8 3 2.5

10 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

10 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

9 Reiss Nelson 5 113

9 Reiss Nelson 5 113

9 Zlatko Junuzovic 9 481 5 1

8 Dennis Geiger 1 63

8 Dennis Geiger 1 63

8 Dennis Geiger 1 63

7 Joshua Brenet 2 135

7 Flavio Leite 1 5

7 Kerm稱 Demirbay 5 370 2

7 Serdar Aziz 250 229 92

7 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

7 Tijan Djo

6 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

6 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

6 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

5 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

5 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

5 Constantino Grunwald 9 415 1

5 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

5 Tijan Djo

4 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

4 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

4 Constantin Grunwald 9 415 1

4 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

4 Tijan Djo

3 Florian Grillitsch 26 5 11

3 Florian Grillitsch 26 5 11

3 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

3 Håvard Nordtveit 3 185 1

3 Constantin Grunwald 9 415 1

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2 Tijan Djo

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

1 Tijan Djo

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

1 Tijan Djo

PLAYER STATISTICS

When total is equal, rank is decided by next value

GOALS

AVERAGE

CARDS

Atletico Madrid

5 GOALS

25 Kevin Akpoguma 2 180

3 Florian Grillitsch 26 5 11

37 Robin Hack 1 5

22 Kevin Vogt 4 360

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2 Andrej Kramarić 1 8

28 James Pearce 2 135

2 Joshua Brenet 2 135

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

1 Tijan Djo

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Kevin Vogt 38 1 3

1 Sofiane Feghouli 1 6

1 Tijan Djo

Defensive

Defending

Defending

Defending

Defending
### FC Internazionale Milano

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**Defenders**

- **Defenders**
  - 3 Kwadwo Asamoah
  - 2 Marcelo Brozović

**Pass Distance**

- **Short** (25%): 124 (25%)
- **Long** (15%): 72 (13%)

**PASS ACCURACY**

- **Min.** 77% v Barcelona (a)
- **Max.** 87% v MU (a), (h), ATL (a)

**GOALS**

- **6**
- **1.5 per match; UCL rank: 17**

**Expected Goals (xG)**

- **15.3 per match; UCL rank: 7**

**DISTANCE COVERED**

- **Min.** 104,061m v Valencia (a)
- **Max.** 116,257m v Barcelona (h)

**Passes Attempted**

- **488**

**Attempts**

- **6**

**On Target**

- **1**

**Expected Goals (sO)**

- **6**

**AVERAGE**

- **28.1 matches**

**Key Features**

- Desire, winning mentality and scoring threat

### Juventus

**SQUAD**

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Defenders**

- **Defenders**
  - 3 Kwadwo Asamoah
  - 2 Marcelo Brozović

**Pass Distance**

- **Short** (24%): 128 (24%)
- **Long** (13%): 72 (13%)

**PASS ACCURACY**

- **Min.** 77% v Barcelona (a)
- **Max.** 87% v MU (a), (h), ATL (a)

**GOALS**

- **6**
- **1.9 per match; UCL rank: 8**

**Expected Goals (xG)**

- **12**

**DISTANCE COVERED**

- **Min.** 109,763m v Barcelona (h)
- **Max.** 116,257m v Barcelona (h)

**Passes Attempted**

- **540**

**Attempts**

- **12**

**On Target**

- **4**

**Expected Goals (sO)**

- **6**

**AVERAGE**

- **28.5 matches**

**Key Features**

- 1-4-3-3 in possession; out of it, 1-4-4-2
- Solid goalkeeper saves as an able replacement for departed Buffon
- Compact defensive block, deep opposition space between lines
- High tempo, direct passing, and aggression in fightback v Atlético
- Lots of crosses from attacking full-backs, notably Alex Sandro (right)
- On regain, look for quick pass to striker or wide players, then play in behind
- Aerial power in opposition box from Ronaldo, Marchisio
- Desire, winning mentality and scoring threat of Ronaldo
### LIVERPOOL FC

#### COACH
**Jürgen Klopp**

**Born:** 16/08/1969, Geling (Germany)
**Head Coach** (Liverpool FC, 18/01/2016)


#### PLAYER STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>App</th>
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#### ATTEMPTS

- 1-3-5-3
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Good organization of possession; coordinated effort to regain ball in opposition areas.
- Quick counterattacks, with longer passes exploiting speed of three forwards.
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Good organization of possession; coordinated effort to regain ball in opposition areas.
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.

#### PASSING

- BR = Balls recovered; TW = Tackles won; I = Interceptions
- A = Attempted; C = Completed

#### SHAPE

- Example: N = Porto (2018)

#### DISTANCE COVERED

- Min. = 106,467m v Napoli (2018)
- Max. = 118,767m v Napoli (2018)

#### EUCLESIANS

- 12-3-2 (Total Average)
- UCL rank: 6

#### PASS DISTANCE

- UCL rank: 1

#### Pass Accuracy

- 77%

#### Goals

- 77
- 1-4-3-3
- Exploiting speed of three forwards
- 2-1-3 forming a channel for the full-backs
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.

#### Key Features

- 1-3-5-3
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
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#### Player of the Match

- Mohamed Salah

### FC LOKOMOTIV MOSKVA

#### COACH
**Yuri Semin**

**Born:** 13/03/1954, Dnepropetrovsk (USSR)
**Head Coach** (FC Lokomotiv Moscow, 20/03/2010)


#### PLAYER STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>OT</th>
<th>xG</th>
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#### ATTEMPTS

- 1-3-4-3
- Exploiting speed of three forwards
- 2-1-3 forming a channel for the full-backs

#### Key Features

- 1-3-5-3
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Good organization of possession; coordinated effort to regain ball in opposition areas.
- Quick counterattacks, with longer passes exploiting speed of three forwards.
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Good organization of possession; coordinated effort to regain ball in opposition areas.
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.

#### Pass Accuracy

- 81%

#### Goals

- 14
- 1-4-3-3
- Exploiting speed of three forwards
- 2-1-3 forming a channel for the full-backs
- Attacking threat from full-backs, well-timed runs, and finishing.
- Dynamic, high-energy football fueled by resilience, dynamism and belief.
- Defensive leadership of Van Dijk, composed and strong in defending.

#### Player of the Match

- Grigoriy Krychlov

---

**Rankings on this page may be based on figures before they are rounded up or down.**

---

**Coaches:**

- Jürgen Klopp (LIVERPOOL FC)
- Yuri Semin (FC LOKOMOTIV MOSKVA)

---

**Countries:**

- ENG (England)
- RUS (Russia)
**SHAPES**

**OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS**

- Example: "Barcelona (4-3-3)"

**MANCHESTER CITY FC**

- Example: "Hoffenheim (4-2-3-1)"

---

**ATTEMPTS**

13 GOALS
41 ON TARGET
12.6 EXPECTED GOALS (xG)

---

**ATTEMPTS STATISTICS**

PLAYER: "Nabil Fekir"

- Goals: 3
- Attempts: 4
- On target: 3
- xG: 0.8

---

**COACH**

**BRUNO GENESIO**

- Nationality: French
- Born: 1966, Lyon (FRA)

**JOSEPE GUARDIOLA**

- Nationality: Spanish
- Born: 1971, Santpedor (ESP)

---

**PLAYERS**

- "Nabil Fekir"
  - Goals: 2
  - Attempts: 3
  - On target: 2
  - xG: 0.5

---

**PASSING**

- "Kyle Walker"
  - Passes attempted: 57
  - Completed: 30
  -成功率: 52.6%
Number of players closer to their own goal than the ball before and after a successful pass is made and received.

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **POSSESSION**
  - Possession Position
  - Possession %

- **POSSSESSION POSITION**
  - Medium: 274 (59%) UCL rank: 21
  - Long: 56 (12% of total) UCL rank: 28

- **DISTANCE COVERED**
  - Min.: 282 v Paris (a)
  - Max.: 112,306m v Paris (a)

- **Expected goals (xG) give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken**

**SHAPE AVERAGES SQUAD**

- **ATTEMPTS**
  - 10
  - 118
  - ON TARGET
  - 32
  - EXPECTED GOALS (xG)
    - 10.5

- **GOALS**
  - 1 Marcus Rashford
  - 2 Paul Pogba

- **AGE**
  - 26

- **CARDS**
  - 11

**KEY FEATURES**

- 1-3-5-3 also deployed three centre-backs in Paris and Barcelona
- Use of overlapping wingers in Paris, compact shape with little space for opponents
- Attacking wing-backs provide supply of crosses (Young)
- Having good technical ability of midfielders Pogba, Mc Tominay
- Speed on transitions, strong counterattacking threats with Rashford, Lingard
- Impressive resilience in away wins at Madrid, Roma
- Danger in 1v1 situations due to quick, talented forwards

**COACH**

**MANCHESTER UNITED FC**

- **COACH**: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer
- **Rankings on this page may be based on figures before they are rounded up or down**

**AS MONACO FC**

- **COACH**: Thierry Henry
- **Rankings on this page may be based on figures before they are rounded up or down**

**EUROPEAN TROPHIES WON**

**BYPASSED**

- Total:
  - 468
- Average:
  - 32

**PASS DISTANCE**

- Min.: 112,306m v Paris (a)
- Max.: 80% v Paris (a)

**PASS ACCURACY**

- Min.: 99,559m v Valencia (h)
- Max.: 112,306m v Paris (a)

**EXPECTED GOALS (xG)**

- 1 per match; UCL rank: 20=

**ATTEMPTS**

- 1 Marcus Rashford 2 31 10 3.0
- 3 Fred 38 7 5

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **GOALS**
  - 1 Marcus Rashford 2 31 10 3.0
  - 2 Paul Pogba 9 10 3.0

- **AGE**
  - 26

- **CARDS**
  - 11

**SHAPE**

- **ATTEMPTS**
  - 2

- **EXPECTED GOALS (xG)
  - 10.5

**DEFENDERS**

- 2 Victor Lindelof
- 2 Paul Pogba
- 3 Fred

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **PASS DISTANCE**
  - Min.: 282 v Paris (a)
  - Max.: 112,306m v Paris (a)

- **PASS ACCURACY**
  - Min.: 80% v Paris (a)
  - Max.: 88% v Atlético (a)

- **EXPECTED GOALS (xG)**
  - 1 per match; UCL rank: 20=

**ATTEMPTS**

- 1 Marcus Rashford 2 31 10 3.0

**PASSES ATTEMPTED**

- 474

**POSSSESSION POSITION**

- Possession
  - Medium: 274 (59%) UCL rank: 21
  - Long: 56 (12% of total) UCL rank: 28

**DISTANCE COVERED**

- Min.: 282 v Paris (a)
- Max.: 112,306m v Paris (a)

**EXPECTED GOALS (xG)**

- 1 per match; UCL rank: 20=

**ATTEMPTS**

- 2

**EXPECTED GOALS (xG)**

- 10.5

**CARDS**

- 11
### SSC Napoli

#### Defending

**Position**
- **1** Kalidou Koulibaly
- **2** Elseid Hysaj
- **3** Faouzi Ghoulam
- **5** Faouzi Ghoulam

**Out of possession**
- **2** Allan
- **3** Raúl Albiol
- **1** Kalidou Koulibaly

**Attemps**
- 2855
- 476

**Opponents**
- **UCL rank**: 2

**Defenders**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Passes attempted**
- **Min. 65% v Crvena zvezda (a)**
- **Max. 75% v Man. United (h)**

**Pass accuracy**
- **Min. 417 v Liverpool (h)**
- **Max. 759 v Man. United (h)**

**Min. 85% v Liverpool (h)**
- **Max. 92% v Man. United (h)**

**Expected goals (xG)**
- **14.6 per match; UCL rank: 11**

**Attemps**
- **2.5 per match; UCL rank: 2**

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

**7 Goals**

### Paris Saint-Germain

#### Defending

**Position**
- **1** Gianluigi Buffon
- **2** Adrien Rabiot
- **13** Dani Alves

**Out of possession**
- **1** Marco Verratti
- **3=** Thomas Meunier
- **2** Ángel Di María

**Attemps**
- 117

**Opponents**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Defenders**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Passes attempted**
- **Min. 101,287m v Liverpool (a)**
- **Max. 112,607m v Napoli (h)**

**Pass accuracy**
- **Min. 101,287m v Liverpool (a)**
- **Max. 112,607m v Napoli (h)**

**Min. 85% v Liverpool (h)**
- **Max. 92% v Man. United (h)**

**Expected goals (xG)**
- **14.6 per match; UCL rank: 11**

**Attemps**
- **2.5 per match; UCL rank: 2**

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

### Key Features
- **1-2-3-1, morphing to 1-3-4-3 when in possession.**
- **1-4-2-3-1, morphing to 1-3-4-3 when midfield dictates tempo.**
- **Tactically aware, switching formations.**
- **Power of Di María and Mbappé in midfield dictates tempo.**

### Coach

**Carlo Ancelotti**
- **Born**: 1958-05-27, Reggio (ITA)
- **Nationality**: Italian
- **First Match**: 2014-08-14, UEFA Champions League (GROUP stage)
- **Last Match**: 2015-05-07, UEFA Champions League (Final)

**Thomas Tuchel**
- **Born**: 1976-05-17, Külsheim (DEU)
- **Nationality**: German
- **First Match**: 2016-08-17, UEFA Champions League (GROUP stage)
- **Last Match**: 2020-02-18, UEFA Champions League (Quarter-final)

### Squad

#### Napoli

**1-2-3-1**

**Position**
- **1** Kalidou Koulibaly
- **2** Elseid Hysaj
- **3** Faouzi Ghoulam
- **5** Faouzi Ghoulam

**Out of possession**
- **2** Allan
- **3** Raúl Albiol
- **1** Kalidou Koulibaly

**Attemps**
- 2855
- 476

**Opponents**
- **UCL rank**: 2

**Defenders**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Passes attempted**
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**Expected goals (xG)**
- **14.6 per match; UCL rank: 11**

**Attemps**
- **2.5 per match; UCL rank: 2**

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

### Player Statistics

**When in an equal, 1-2 or decided by result.**

**Defending**
- **A**: 98.0%
- **B**: 75.0%

**Defending**
- **A**: 98.0%
- **B**: 75.0%

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

### Squad

#### Paris Saint-Germain

**1-2-3-1**

**Position**
- **1** Gianluigi Buffon
- **2** Adrien Rabiot
- **13** Dani Alves

**Out of possession**
- **1** Marco Verratti
- **3=** Thomas Meunier
- **2** Ángel Di María

**Attemps**
- 117

**Opponents**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Defenders**
- **UCL rank**: 1

**Passes attempted**
- **Min. 101,287m v Liverpool (a)**
- **Max. 112,607m v Napoli (h)**

**Pass accuracy**
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**Expected goals (xG)**
- **14.6 per match; UCL rank: 11**

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### Player Statistics

**When in an equal, 1-2 or decided by result.**

**Defending**
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**Defending**
- **A**: 98.0%
- **B**: 75.0%

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

---

**RANKINGS**

**Defending**
- **Tactical awareness, switching formations.**
- **Power of Di María and Mbappé in midfield dictates tempo.**

**Attemps**
- **Min. 85% v Liverpool (h)**
- **Max. 92% v Man. United (h)**

**Goals**
- **2.2 per match; UCL rank: 3**

---

**Rankings** on this page may be based on figures before they are rounded up or down.
PLAYER STATISTICS

**ATTEMPTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>ATTEMPTS</th>
<th>ON TARGET</th>
<th>EXPECTED GOALS (xG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **Goals**: 7 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **Attemps**: 68 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **On Target**: 21 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **Expected Goals (xG)**: 8.6 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

- **Goals**: 7 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **Attemps**: 68 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **On Target**: 21 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)
- **Expected Goals (xG)**: 8.6 (13 total attempts, UCL rank: 10=)

**GOALKEEPERS**

- **Iker Casillas**: 10
- **Mauro Sávio**: 1
- **Pepe**: 1

**DEFENDERS**

- **Maxi Pereira**: 8
- **Fabio Coentrao**: 8

**MIDFIELDERS**

- **Mário Rui**: 8
- **Nacho**: 8

**FORWARDS**

- **Eden Hazard**: 8
- **Antonio Rüdiger**: 8

**KEY FEATURES**

- 1-2-3-2 with fluid diamond, morphing to 1-4-2-2 when attacking
- Aggressive, intense, high-pressing game (hemmed, compact defensive line)
- Striking attacking full-backs (A. Silva)
- 1x 1st XI, average win rate per game (1), occasional use of 4-3-3
- Fluid approach, lots of movement
- Interchanging of positions in opposition half
- Wide forwards stay narrow, combining well with full-backs for flow of crosses
- Influential individuals with skill, intelligence (Bakayoko, Hazard)
- Speed and powerful movement of Hazard in attack, offering option of going deep
**PSV EINDHOVEN**

- **SQUAD**
  - **App**
  - **Min**
  - **G**
  - **A**
  - **Total**
- **GOALS**
  - **Final third**
  - **Middle third**
  - **First third**
- **ATTEMPTS**
  - **Final third**
  - **Middle third**
  - **First third**
- **PASS ACCURACY**
  - **Total**
  - **Min.**
  - **Max.**
- **DISTANCE COVERED**
  - **Total**
  - **Min.**
  - **Max.**

---

**REAL MADRID CF**

- **SQUAD**
  - **App**
  - **Min**
  - **G**
  - **A**
  - **Total**
- **GOALS**
  - **Final third**
  - **Middle third**
  - **First third**
- **ATTEMPTS**
  - **Final third**
  - **Middle third**
  - **First third**
- **PASS ACCURACY**
  - **Total**
  - **Min.**
  - **Max.**
- **DISTANCE COVERED**
  - **Total**
  - **Min.**
  - **Max.**

---

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

**PERIOD**

**ATTEMPTS**

**PASSES**

**CHANCE CREATION**

**GOALS**

**DEFENDING**

**COACH**

**AWARDS**

**EUPOL EDE**

*Includes decisions made during head-up matches*.

---

**REAL MADRID CF**

- **SQUAD**
  - **App**
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**PLAYER STATISTICS**

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---

**PLAYER STATISTICS**

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**PLAYER STATISTICS**

**PERIOD**

**ATTEMPTS**

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**PLAYER STATISTICS**

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**EUPOL EDE**

*Includes decisions made during head-up matches*.
**PLAYER STATISTICS**

Where match data is equal, a rank is decided by goals scored, then assists taken.

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**CHANCE CREATION**

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### VALENCIA CF

#### SHAPE

Example: 4-2-3-1
- **App**: Appearance
- **Min**: Minutes played
- **G**: Goals
- **A**: Assists

#### PASSING

**Goals (xG)**: Expected goals (xG) give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

#### OFFENSIVE STATISTICS

**GOALS**: 6

**ACTIONS**: 71

**ATTEMPTS**: 117 (24%)

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 111,510m

**PASS ACCURACY**: 81%

**GOALS**: 3

**ACTIONS**: 12

**ATTEMPTS**: 13

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 51,210m

**PASS ACCURACY**: 77%

#### DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

**GOALS**: 3

**ACTIONS**: 17

**ATTEMPTS**: 57 (12%)

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 117,570m

**PASS ACCURACY**: 77%

### BSC YOUNG BOYS

#### SHAPE

Example: 4-2-3-1
- **App**: Appearance
- **Min**: Minutes played
- **G**: Goals
- **A**: Assists

#### PASSING

**Goals (xG)**: Expected goals (xG) give an indication of how many goals a player or team should have scored on average, given the shots they have taken.

#### OFFENSIVE STATISTICS

**GOALS**: 4

**ACTIONS**: 17

**ATTEMPTS**: 117 (24%)

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 111,510m

**PASS ACCURACY**: 81%

**GOALS**: 1

**ACTIONS**: 4

**ATTEMPTS**: 6

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 51,210m

**PASS ACCURACY**: 77%

#### DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

**GOALS**: 3

**ACTIONS**: 17

**ATTEMPTS**: 57 (12%)

**DISTANCE COVERED**: 117,570m

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