Matthijs de Ligt (right) takes on Marouane Fellaini during the final in Stockholm.
Food for thought

UEFA’s Technical Observers Group discuss the trends, tactics and talking points from the 2016/17 season to provide insight and inspire debate among Europe’s coaches.

This review of the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League season offers a record of a campaign that spanned 205 matches from the start of the group stage in September to the final at the Friends Arena on 24 May. It is a report providing useful factual and statistical information on the eighth season of the UEFA Europa League in its present format but which, moreover, seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the action on the field through the analysis and interpretations of the Technical Observers Group. This small group of coaches gave their input on every match played from the round of 16 onwards, providing a platform on which UEFA’s technical team could build their discussions when they met together in Stockholm on the morning after the final between AFC Ajax and Manchester United FC.

Ioan Lupescu, UEFA’s Technical Director, chaired this review panel as they reflected on the tactical approaches and trends witnessed and there were fascinating insights from some impressive coaching figures. Sir Alex Ferguson drew on his vast knowledge and experience of European club competition – and, of course, of this season’s UEFA Europa League winners, United. Cristian Chivu, meanwhile, shed light on the workings of his former club Ajax and – together with UEFA football development adviser Dejan Stanković – provided some reflections on winning coach José Mourinho, with whom they both worked at FC Internazionale Milano.

There were also important contributions from Miut Poatana, the former Finland national coach, and Stefan Majewski, Sport Director of the Polish FA. The end product is a report that will hopefully provide coaches across the continent with food for thought and fuel further debate. It will be made available to members of the coaching family throughout Europe and, hopefully, will help development coaches stay aware of the evolving styles and approaches at the elite end of the club game.
Zlatan Ibrahimović became the third player after Adrian Mutu and John Carew to have scored for seven clubs in UEFA competition with United’s winner against Zorya Luhansk.

Road to Stockholm

Two of European football’s most famous and successful sides emerged from a field of 56 clubs across 24 countries to reach the final.

Group stage

Whilst Manchester United began their campaign with a stumble, falling 1-0 at Feyenoord, their fellow finalists Ajax negotiated the group stage in more untroubled fashion as one of four unbeaten teams along with Roma, Saint-Étienne and Shakhtar Donetsk. It was Shakhtar who led the way, winning all six games and amassing 21 goals in Group H with the help of back-to-back 5-0 and 5-3 victories over Giant.

The group phase had begun with a bang for Shakhtar’s previous coach, Mircea Lucescu, now in charge of Zenit, who trailed 3-0 at Maccabi Tel-Aviv FC after 76 minutes – and ended up 4-3 winners. At this stage there were 48 teams from 21 countries involved and an unbounded strength of the UEFA Europa League is the opportunity for clubs with little European experience to test themselves against some of the continent’s big names. Of this year’s greenhorns, Italy’s Sassuolo caused the biggest stir with a 3-0 matchday one win over Athletic Club before slipping to the foot of their section.

A more familiar Italian face, Francesco Totti, made headlines when, two days after turning 40, he played a part in three of Roma’s four goals against Astra on matchday two; his 100th UEFA club competition appearance followed against Austria Wien. Meanwhile, another experienced player, Wayne Rooney, struck a record 39th European goal for Manchester United in their 4-0 win over Feyenoord.

That José Mourinho’s men finished second in Group A was no real setback given that only two of the 12 group winners – Ajax and Schalke – would still be involved when the quarter-finals came round.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic became the third player after Adrian Mutu and John Carew to have scored for seven clubs in UEFA competition with United’s winner against Zorya Luhansk.

73,063
Manchester United’s crowd for the matchday three win over Fenerbahçe was a record for the UEFA Europa League group stage.

7
Zlatan Ibrahimovic became the third player after Adrian Mutu and John Carew to have scored for seven clubs in UEFA competition with United’s winner against Zorya Luhansk.

5
Aritz Aduriz became the first player to score five times in a UEFA Europa League fixture in Athletic’s 5-3 victory over Genk.
The UEFA Europa League trophy had ended in Spain in four of the previous five seasons yet with holders Sevilla now competing in the UEFA Champions League, the Spanish stranglehold was further weakened by defeats for Athletic and Villarreal as the knockout phase began.

Athletic succumbed to APOEL at their fortress-like home in Nicosia, the GSP Stadium, where the Cypriot side – boosted by two away goals, one superbly taken by George Efrem – overturned a 3-2 first-leg loss with a 2-0 win. As for Villarreal, semi-finalists in 2016, they had no answer to an Edin Džeko-inspired Roma, who seized control with a 4-0 success in the first leg at El Madrigal.

That left Celta Vigo to fly the flag for a cliff-hanger comeback against Shakhtar, the team of the group stage. Beaten 1-0 in Spain, Celta received a lifeline with a 91st-minute logo Aspas penalty in Ukraine before adding a second goal in extra time.

In a competition that is a test of endurance as well as skill, Shakhtar were one of seven group winners to tumble at this hurdle. Fenerbahçe, Osmanlispor and Sparta Praha suffered the same fate – losing to Krasnodar, Olympiacos and Rostov respectively – while St-Étienne’s unbeaten run before Christmas counted for nothing against Manchester United (0-4 agg) in a contest pitting United’s Paul Pogba against his brother Florentin.

St-Étienne’s great rivals Lyon, by contrast, recorded an emphatic 11-2 aggregate victory over AZ Alkmaar on their introduction from the UEFA Champions League. Four other new arrivals advanced too – Beşiktaş, København, Rostov and a Borussia Mönchengladbach side who pulled off a sensational comeback against Fiorentina. Already 1-0 down from the first leg, they conceded twice more in the first half in Florence, yet Lars Stindl’s 12-minute hat-trick either side of the interval turned the tie on its head and Gladbach ran out 4-2 winners on a night their followers are unlikely to forget.

There was less to remember for some of the other sides coming in from the UEFA Champions League. Legia Warszawa lost to Ajax and Ludogorets to fellow newcomers København, while Tottenham suffered a surprise 3-2 aggregate reverse against Gent for whom Jerémy Perbet scored in both legs. This was one of a trio of Belgian triumphs, with Gent defeating Astra Giurgiu (3-2 agg) and, most dramatically, Anderlecht upsetting Group D winners Zenit. The Russian team had appeared on the brink of a famous victory, having scored three goals to undo a 2-0 first-leg loss, but Isaac Kiese Thelin’s 90th-minute header edged Anderlecht through on away goals.

“Tottenham suffered a surprise reverse against Gent, one of a trio of Belgian triumphs”
Round of 16

An all-Bundesliga tie was among the appetising contests in the round of 16 – and the comeback kings of the last round, Mönchengladbach, now found the boot on the other foot against Schalke. After a 1-1 draw in Gelsenkirchen, Gladbach took a 2-0 half-time lead in the return, with the help of a fine Mahmoud Dahoud strike, but Schalke came back to draw 2-2 – scoring through driving force Leon Goretzka and Nabil Bentaleb’s spot kick – and so advanced on away goals.

There was another tie involving compatriot clubs in Belgium though the outcome was effectively decided after the first leg as Genk won 5-2 at Gent en route to a 6-3 aggregate success. Albert Stuivenberg’s team led 4-1 at half-time in Ghent and though Kalifa Coulibaly – source of some spectacular strikes in the group stage – pulled a goal back, Mathew Ryan’s penalty save from Perbet and Mbwana Samatta’s second goal of the night left Gent with a mission impossible in the second leg.

In the glamour tie of the round, Olympique Lyonnais shrugged off a 2-1 half-time deficit to win the first leg against Roma 4-2. The Giallorossi were left rueing late goals conceded to Nabil Fekir and Alexandre Lacazette in France when they finished a goal short in the second leg, which they won 2-1 (agg 4-5).

Of the two eventual finalists, both Ajax and Manchester United earned narrow victories in the last 16. The Eredivisie club overturned a 2-1 first-leg deficit when beating København 2-0 in Amsterdam through Bernard Traoré and Kasper Dolberg’s penalty. United needed a 70th-minute Juan Mata goal to see them past Rostov at Old Trafford after a 1-1 draw in Russia.

Celta’s third successive away victory – 2-0 at Krasnodar – ended the hopes of the other Russian side in the competition (4-1 agg) and took them through to their first quarter-final since 2001. As for Anderlecht, they had not been to the last eight since 1997 but secured their place thanks to a 2-0 aggregate success against APOEL. Nicolae Stanciu’s first-leg goal in Cyprus ended APOEL’s 33-game unbeaten home run in all competitions before Frank Acheampong finished the job in Brussels.

In Piraeus, finally, Olympiacos had the fillip of a terrific opening goal by Esteban Cambiasso against Beşiktaş but ran out of steam in an eventual 1-1 first-leg draw, before they were then overpowered 4-1 in Istanbul where Ryan Babel’s double strike brought his first European goals since August 2010.

“Anderlecht advanced to their first European quarter-final in 20 years.”

“Comeback kings Gladbach found the boot on the other foot against Schalke”

20

Anderlecht advanced to their first European quarter-final in 20 years.

7

Ryan Babel had not scored in Europe for seven years when he struck twice for Beşiktaş against Olympiacos.
Quarter-finals

It was on an earlier evening in this 2016/17 campaign that Zlatan Ibrahimović claimed he was "like Indiana Jones". Sadly for him, the quest – or perhaps that should be last crusade – for a final appearance in Stockholm came to an end on the night of Manchester United’s quarter-final second leg against Anderlecht as he ruptured a cruciate ligament. Marcos Rojo had already suffered an identical injury yet United dug deep and resisted the challenge of an enterprising Anderlecht side as teenager Marcus Rashford’s extra-time strike secured a 2-1 home victory, and 3-2 triumph overall.

There was also extra time in Gelsenkirchen where Schalke scored twice to cancel out Ajax’s 2-0 first-leg lead – and added a third goal in the 101st minute against opponents missing the red-carded Joël Veltman. Yet Ajax’s ten men somehow summoned goals from Nick Viergever and Amin Younes to snatch a 4-3 aggregate victory. Lyon and Beşiktaş produced even more drama as their tie went to penalties. After trading 2-1 home wins – in Lyon’s case, thanks to two late goals – it was the Ligue 1 side who prevailed 7-6 in the ensuing Istanbul shoot-out, skipper Maxime Gonalons converting the winning kick. Eduardo Berizzo’s Celta were the only team who did not need extra time, a goal in each leg from Pione Sisto helping them overcome Genk 4-3 on aggregate.

Number of goals scored after the 80-minute mark in the quarter-finals.

Penalties saved in the shoot-out against Beşiktaş by Lyon’s Anthony Lopes, who ended the season with the most saves of any goalkeeper.
Semi-finals

Ajax won through to their first European final since 1996 thanks to an electrifying home first-leg display against Lyon. The 4-1 victory was their seventh in a row in the competition at an increasingly raucous Amsterdam Arena and none was more compelling as they took a huge step towards the final with goals from Bertrand Traoré (two), Amin Younes and Kasper Dolberg, answered only by Mathieu Valbuena's superb, but solitary, strike. To Lyon’s credit they fought back at home, where after an early Dolberg goal, they rallied to win 3-1 through Alexandre Lacazette (two) and Rachid Ghezzal, but it was not enough.

There was a tense finish to the other semi-final as Manchester United, already ahead against first-time semi-finalist Celta through Marcus Rashford’s first-leg free-kick, doubled their aggregate lead at Old Trafford thanks to a Marouane Fellaini header. Yet Facundo Roncaglia pulled a goal back in the 85th minute, home defender Eric Bailly was sent off and the Spaniards would have snatched victory had striker John Guidetti not missed an open goal with the game’s very last kick.
United complete the set

Paul Pogba and Henrikh Mkhitaryan got the goals to clinch the one European club trophy that had eluded the English side.

A European final on an early summer’s evening brings a particular tingle of anticipation, and for anybody surveying the two ends of the Friends Arena in the lead-up to kick-off on 24 May 2017, that feeling was impossible to ignore. This was a UEFA Europa League final that paired together two of European football’s great names, Ajax and Manchester United – both clubs with proud histories including four and three European Cups respectively, and both now brimming with motivation to put another continental prize on the honours board.

In the North Stand, the Dutch supporters, chorusing loudly one of their favourite anthems – the popular André Hazes song Leaf – were hoping to see an exciting new generation of talents gain tangible reward for their efforts in reaching the club’s first European final in 21 years.

The South Stand opposite was awash with red, white and black tricolours, each flag carrying a different place name to reflect the mass diaspora of United followers. They would have planned their trips hoping to see their team become the fifth club with a full set of European trophies. Now, though, they had another, stern, preoccupation.

Back at home Mancunians were still coming to terms with a terror attack in their city two nights earlier that had claimed 22 lives. A long, red banner stood out for its poignant message: “Manchester – a City United – pray for Manchester” and after the teams had taken the field, with each player wearing a black armband, there was a period of silence in memory of those lives lost. It ended with a defiant chorus of “Manchester, Manchester” from the United fans.
THE FINAL

From the first whistle, José Mourinho's team offered a clear message of their own. With the third touch of the final, United's opening goal came. Paul Pogba fires in a powerful shot from the edge of the box and it hurtles past Onana.

“Tactically speaking, José Mourinho’s team offered a clear message of their own.”

The Ajax line-up was split into two halves. The side of the pitch between the Ajax derailed. The Ajax forwards found no space to exploit. "The Ajax line-up was split into two halves. The side of the pitch between the Ajax derailed. The Ajax forwards found no space to exploit.”

In the first 20 minutes United just played long balls to put the Ajax defenders under pressure and it worked.

“Space was minimal but to Amin Younes’s credit, he was able to slide through. There was a pocket of space for Pogba to exploit and he did just that taking one touch with his right foot and then unleashing a shot with his left that struck the shin of Davinson Sánchez and changed course. This was a rare examination for these two sides.”

The Ajax defenders were under pressure. And Herrera's aggression was a rare examination for these two sides.

De Ligt was not to be denied. The towering centre-back read his intentions and poked the ball away. The noise levels at the Ajax end rose once more, but Traoré was frustrated that his team had not reacted quickly enough.

“De Ligt was not to be denied. The towering centre-back read his intentions and poked the ball away.”

The Ajax defenders had been playing their own game in the first half hour. They were in control, though one player had been feeling the pressure: Ander Herrera. For this reason Mourinho, as he later revealed, had instructed his players to deny De Ligt the ball as much as possible and force his partner, Sánchez, to make the play instead.

“I should have been around the edge of the box,” Herrera explained later, “but as I had a yellow card Ander Herrera said it would be better if I got involved in the corner, and stayed in front of the goalkeeper.”

If Herrera would end the evening with the man of the match award, another player catching the eye was Fellaini. Mitsu Paatelainen, one of UEFA's technical observers, praised the Belgian midfielder’s body control as he evaded Fellaini and Pogba on a surge into the box. As it bounced back up, Mkhitaryan pounced. He may have had his back to goal but the Armenian got his right boot to the ball, hooking it behind him and into the net.

“A wonderful instinctive strike, it was his sixth in the competition though he was only there thanks to the advice of Herrera.”

The Ajax defenders were playing their own game. The Moroccan played a spark for his team. The Moroccan played a spark for his team.

The Ajax forwards found no space to exploit. The Ajax forwards found no space to exploit. However, in the second half, the Ajax players started to grow in confidence. They were able to maintain possession and create chances.

“From the first whistle, José Mourinho’s team offered a clear message of their own.”

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Chris Smalling’s header from a Mkhitaryan free-kick left Ajax’s goalkeeper Onana with no chance. The Ajax players were unable to respond. The Ajax players were unable to respond.

“Smalling headed the ball into the net.”

The Ajax players were unable to respond. The Ajax players were unable to respond.

With the third touch of the final, United's opening goal came. Paul Pogba fires in a powerful shot from the edge of the box and it hurtles past Onana. The Ajax players were unable to respond. The Ajax players were unable to respond. The Ajax players were unable to respond.
was the one who kept driving forward and he rarely gave the ball away. I thought he was the one player in their team who had that same aggression as United.”

Ziyech was not the only Ajax player praised by Sir Alex afterwards. De Ligt underlined his preternatural authority by blocking off Mata as the Spaniard entered the box on a one-two with Rashford. “For a 17-year-old to play in a final with that composure and defensive quality, he was outstanding,” Sir Alex said.

And yet as the same observer also noted of Ajax, they simply “didn’t get enough men into the box” at the other end. Although Bosz removed the starved-of-service Dolberg, his club’s leading scorer, and sent on David Neres in the 62nd minute, it changed little as Ajax carried on looking to snake their way through the middle of the pitch, and hitting a blue brick wall in the process.

By contrast, United’s chance count continued to climb. With 66 minutes played, Fellaini won another of his 15 successful aerial duels – a record for a UEFA Europa League game – then spun away from Klaassen and spread play out to the right. Seconds later he was in the penalty box, getting his head to a fabulous Pogba cross but directing the ball too close to Onana.

When Ajax did get a rare glimmer of hope, it was because of Mkhitaryan’s handball in the D outside United’s box. Ziyech, however, drove his free-kick straight at one of his own players in the wall and his sinking shoulders suggested he knew it would not be their night.

By now United’s first substitute, Jesse Lingard, had joined the fray as a replacement for Mkhitaryan and his first touch, a cute flick, sent Pogba breaking upfield. The Frenchman continued his progress via a one-two with Rashford but then went shoulder to shoulder with Sánchez in the box and hit the floor. Mourinho’s pleading arms at pitchside told you his verdict but Sánchez had showed great power to match his opponent and play continued.

It was not the only time Sánchez saved his side. He had already recovered brilliantly to thwart Rashford as the pair sprinted to the Ajax goal and, in the 87th minute, the Colombian did the same to deny Lingard.

A United victory had long felt inevitable and only in the closing minutes did Ajax threaten Romen’s goal again. The Argentinian made an easy save from Donny van de Beek, after the substitute had stepped inside Smalling. And when finally Neres got behind United’s defence from Ziyech’s pass and lobbed the ball over Romero, the shot lacked power and Valencia was there to tidy up.

By this point, United’s squad men were already on their feet in the technical area, sharing hugs and slapping backs. The sight of four of them on crutches – Zlatan Ibrahimović, Ashley Young, Luke Shaw and Marcos Rojo – highlighted the toll taken by a long campaign. Yet Mourinho had managed his resources impressively, and he did so right down to his final substitution, sending on his club’s soon-to-depart captain, Wayne Rooney, so he could be the one to lift the trophy when the celebrations began.
José Mourinho plotted a path to victory

After highlighting Ajax’s weaknesses, José Mourinho plotted a path to victory that his players followed to perfection.

The Observers Group on the morning after the UEFA Europa League final. “I observed Ajax twice this year and saw a lot of quality players, a lot of talent, but not a lot of experience. José really read the game in the right way.”

It was a point reiterated by Sir Alex Ferguson, a man who led Manchester United to five European finals. “José knew exactly how they were going to operate and set his stall out to make it difficult for them by playing the long balls and putting them under pressure to keep turning them back towards their goal,” he said. “There was a change in tactics from José. Throughout the season they’ve had a lot of possession and played a lot of good football but they identified one or two weaknesses, including a lack of experience.”

The reward for this change of approach was a fourth major European trophy for a coach unbeaten in continental finals, as Mourinho added the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League to his UEFA Cup and UEFA Champions League triumphs with FC Porto. In the process the 54-year-old became the third man – after Sir Alex and Sir Matt Busby – to claim the UEFA Cup and UEFA Champions League success with Inter. In the process the 54-year-old became the third man – after Sir Alex and Sir Matt Busby – to claim European silverware with United. Moreover, he became the third coach to have won more than one major UEFA club competition twice apiece, along with the Italian Nereo Rocco and Sir Alex again.

If hindsight told us Mourinho would come up with a perfect plan, the man himself had offered a hint when it was put to him in a pre-match interview that “Ajax are going to press hard”. Mourinho’s response suggested an underlying confidence that Ajax would not be able to play their usual game. “I don’t know if they are able to do what they want to do.”

By then Mourinho had watched Ajax eight times and, seeing how well they won the ball high up the pitch, decided on a strategy of bypassing that area of the field. “If the ball’s not there, what are they going to press?” he explained when discussing his approach to a class of international postgraduate students on a High Performance Football Coaching course at the University of Lisbon in June.

“I was seeing the same game against FC Bayern München. ‘I had déjà vu,’ he said. “I was seeing the same game that we’d played against Bayern with very good organisation, a very determined team with a lot of aggression who were very strong defensively, with two lines playing men against men in the middle. He wants to win games and win trophies.” Mourinho himself would surely concur. “For me,” the Portuguese said, “beauty is not giving your opponent what they want.”

Just what the resulting triumph meant to Mourinho was clear to see. He had not had it easy during his first season at Old Trafford, with United finishing sixth in the Premier League. Yet this was a second cup-final victory – after the capture of the English League Cup in February – and it meant UEFA Champions League qualification. Hence his vigorous on-field celebrations. His team of assistants formed a circle and threw him up in the air. Mourinho then stood alone in front of the United supporters, both arms outstretched, his index finger raised to the stands. It called to mind the song, ‘This Is The One’, they play at Old Trafford to herald United’s entry into the arena, by the Manchester band The Stone Roses. When it comes to European finals, Mourinho might have a point about his specialness. As he said afterwards: “There are lots of poets in football but poets, they don’t win many titles.”
Group stage

September 2016

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13

Thirteen clubs made their group stage debuts, with Dundalk (above) becoming the first Irish club to win a group stage game when they beat Maccabi Tel-Aviv 1-0.

10.69

Jan Sykora’s (above, in white) opening goal of the group stage – for Slovan Liberec at Qarabağ – came after 10.69 seconds, the quickest ever UEFA Europa League goal.

Wayne Rooney became Manchester United’s record scorer in Europe when he struck his 39th goal in a victory against Feyenoord on matchday five.

Results

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Paul Pogba and Amin Younes were the only two players to appear in each of their respective team's matches from the group stage to the final.

Knockout stage

Francesco Totti made his 103rd and final UEFA club competition appearance for Roma in their second leg against Lyon, just six months shy of his 41st birthday.

**Results**

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**Quarter-finals**

- Lyon 2 - 1 Beşiktaş
- Celta 1 - 2 Man. United
- Anderlecht 1 - 0 Olympiakos
- Anderlecht win 4-1 on aggregate after extra time

**Semi-finals**

- Ajax 1 - 0 Lyon
- Genk 0 - 0 Man. United
- Olympiakos 0 - 0 Manchester United
- Olympiakos win 0-0 on aggregate after extra time
- Manchester United win 3-0 on aggregate after extra time

**Final**

- Ajax 0 - 2 Manchester United

**Knockout stage**

- Lyon became the first team to score seven times in a UEFA Europa League game from group stage to final, when they beat AZ Alkmaar 7-1 in the second leg of their round of 32 tie.

**Notes**

- Francesco Totti made his 103rd and final UEFA club competition appearance for Roma in their second leg against Lyon, just six months shy of his 41st birthday.
Ajax’s new era

One talented generation looked on as the next put Ajax back on Europe’s centre stage.

“The name Ajax is back on the lips of football fans,” so said Edwin van der Sar, the goalkeeper of Ajax’s 1995 UEFA Champions League-winning team, on the day of the UEFA Europa League final. Van der Sar, back at the club as general manager, had played his part in building a new Ajax side capable of reaching a continental final alongside his old team-mates, Marc Overmars and Dennis Bergkamp, contributing as technical director and assistant coach respectively. With Justin Kluivert, 18-year-old son of their 1995 matchwinner Patrick Kluivert on the bench in Stockholm, the connection between two different eras was clear to see.

It was worthy of comment, moreover, given that the increased concentration of wealth in Europe’s bigger leagues has made it ever harder for clubs from a smaller nation like the Netherlands to compete for continental prizes. Not since Feyenoord’s 2002 UEFA Cup triumph had an Eredivisie side appeared in a European final, yet Ajax ended that wait and did so by sticking to the same principles with which the club built its name in the days of Rinus Michels and Johan Cruyff, who laid the foundations for the hat-trick of European Cups won between 1971 and 1973.

The lure of the club evidently remains intact, bringing back men of the calibre of Van der Sar, Overmars and Bergkamp to help write this new chapter. “It’s a tradition they’ve kept,” added Cristian Chivu, drawing on his insider knowledge as a young player at Ajax from 1999 to 2003. “I’ve always said that for a young player, the best club to learn to be a professional player at is Ajax. Every time I watch an Ajax game I recognise what we always did in training and what they always do in the youth sectors as all the kids are doing the same as the first team. In this way a young player knows exactly what he has to do. It’s the same system they’ve always used, with only four or five attacking patterns that they recognise, and they do it with their eyes closed.

“We have to give credit to them, because they always had the courage to play with the young guys,” added Chivu, though he noted that their success in 2016/17 will bring another challenge – keeping enough members of their promising young team together to enable them to build on this achievement. Coach Peter Bosz and captain Davy Klaassen were among those to depart in the month that followed the final, though Chivu reflected that this was a fact of life for the Amsterdam club. “The policy of the club is that: raising young players and selling them,” he said.

“I’ve always said that for a young player, the best club to learn to be a professional at is Ajax.”
ANALYSIS

The kids are all right

Ajax showed the upside – and downside – of putting faith in youth

Ajax’s policy of bleeding young talent led to the club setting a record for the youngest starting XI in a UEFA club competition final – an average age of 22 years and 282 days. Yet if the upside of youth was evident on their road to the final – when energy and enthusiasm melded with their impressive technical ability – there is a downside too which was evident in the gulf between their home and away performances in the competition.

In Amsterdam they won all seven matches, on the road, however, they did not win once and suffered successive defeats at København, Schalke and Lyon. “You could see in the final, they were not able to read some situations, not having the knowledge and understanding of the difficulties your opponent can put you in in that situation. They didn’t know how to react as in Holland they dominate the game. You need the experience of those games to know how to deal with it.”

By contrast with Ajax, Manchester United’s starting XI in Stockholm had an average age of 27.1 years while this year’s UEFA Champions League winners Real Madrid had an average of 28. Looking back over the eight years of the revamped UEFA Europa League, the youngest winning team was Porto (average: 25.4 years) in 2011 while the oldest was Chelsea FC (average: 27.45) in 2013. “If you haven’t got the experience of these matches before you tend to be a little bit tentative”.

“The first goal from a throw-in, before Paul Pogba’s opening goal, as Chivu’s elementary error made by Jairo Riedewald in in that situation. They didn’t know how to react as in Holland they dominate the game. You need the experience of those games to know how to deal with it.”

For Chivu, Ajax’s naivety is understandable given that the Dutch side will face serious tests “only six or seven” times a season in the Eredivisie. “You could see in the final, they were not able to read some situations, not having the knowledge and understanding of the difficulties your opponent can put you in in that situation. They didn’t know how to react as in Holland they dominate the game. You need the experience of those games to know how to deal with it.”

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“We layed on an extra striker, they never put the ball in the middle.”

Plan A all the way?

Tactical flexibility versus strict adherence to a preferred style proved fertile ground for debate

It was little surprise to hear José Mourinho’s pointed comments after the final about “bottles” given that the Portuguese is the ultimate pragmatist, a master at devising a strategy to stop the opposition and a coach operating on the other end of the spectrum to Ajax – a club committed to a particular philosophy. This latter approach has its pros and cons as the UEFA Europa League final highlighted and it led to a debate among UEFA’s technical observers about the need for a back-up plan.

Cristian Chivu said his old club could have varied their approach and “maybe put some pressure on the line of defence by playing some long balls”. Sir Alex Ferguson recalled another instance where he saw a Dutch team persist with their game plan and end up vanquished – namely the UEFA-EUROC 2000 semi-final between the Netherlands and Italy. “At 2-0 down, you would think Ajax would maybe have got the ball into the penalty box but they crossed the ball maybe once or twice in the whole game,” said Sir Alex. “That is the Dutch nature. Back in the European Championship in 2000, when they played Italy in the semi-final, Italy had a man sent off early on and they played with ten men and Holland did not change their system. They never put on an extra striker. They never filled the penalty box – they played the way Dutch teams play, kept playing the short passes.” In short, no Plan B, though Ioan Lupescu said Chivu was also something to applaud in their adherence to a specific style: “It’s nice to see that they have a philosophy and they go to the wall with this philosophy.”

Plan B?

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Technical topics

Set plays, quick transitions, the diagonal pass and attacking full-backs all came under the UEFA observers’ microscope in Stockholm.

Importance of set plays
Should more time be dedicated to fine-tuning set pieces?

If the final offered a reminder of the importance of set pieces – the first goal followed an erroneous Ajax throw-in, the second a United corner – there were other examples. The round of 16 tie between Lyon and Roma produced five goals from set-play situations, scored either directly from deliveries into the box or from second-chance crosses as the attacking side recycled the danger. The crossing ability of Lyon’s Mathieu Valbuena and Roma’s Daniele De Rossi stood out in those instances, though according to UEFA’s technical observers, teams generally could be doing more to threaten from these positions.

For instance, from the round of 16 onwards there was only one headed goal scored direct from a corner into the box – by Genk’s Omar Colley against Gent. Facundo Roncaglia’s headed equaliser for Celta Vigo in their semi-final second leg at Old Trafford came after a short corner to Théo Bongonda who then swung the ball in.

UEFA observer Mixu Paatelainen said: “Not too much imagination is being used, which for me is quite surprising, because the matches are so tight. Maybe when it comes to European matches there’s not enough time for them to rehearse and general play takes priority.”

Paatelainen noted that he had seen few examples of blocks – when attacking players obstruct the path of a defender at a set play – and nor had he seen teams “trying to overload an area, or (produce) a really well-worked short corner-kick either”. For Sir Alex Ferguson, there was a positive to be found in the lack of holding by defenders in the penalty area during the final. “In the final on the corner-kicks and free-kicks, there was no blocking, no pulling jerseys,” he reflected. “Hopefully this was an example of the way the game should be played.”

Cristian Chivu suggested the presence of the extra match officials watching the penalty box was a deterrent. “Now you have six referees and if you pull or hold a player, it’s easy to give away a penalty.”

Chivu, a former Romania centre-half, added that he saw some teams paying more attention to set pieces than others. “Some coaches take advantage of the tall players they have – maybe good central defenders or brave players who know how to attack the space by timing their jump. But I think they should do more. Today every team is well organised and knows how to play defensively so set plays are such key moments that can decide a game in any moment. As a defender it’s not easy as you have to move a split-second after the opponent – you have to wait for his movement and to watch where the ball is coming from.”

Danger on the diagonal
Receiving the ball out wide creates space for a dart at the defence

One feature of Beşiktaş’s attacking approach during their run to the quarter-finals was the use of crossfield passes to their Portuguese winger Ricardo Quaresma. He would hug the right touchline in the style of an out-and-out winger and run at his full-back from there. Mixu Pastelainen saw the logic in this play, saying: “The tendency to defend these days is with a very narrow back four, so there’s not many penetrating runs through the middle. So Quaresma, when he holds his width, gets that diagonal pass and he’s a good dribbler who can take the full-back on and create a goalscoring chance.”

If it served Beşiktaş well, other teams were equally likely to hit diagonal passes to their full-backs according to Chivu. “Most of the wide players prefer to cut inside the field lately, and to find spaces between the midfield line of the opponent,” he said. “In order to use that ball, in my opinion you should have wide players that stay wide, or you should have backs that are very offensive.”

Sir Alex Ferguson noted that there were two types of diagonal pass – each requiring a specific type of player for a team to profit. “If you’ve got two wide players, then penetration from midfield on a diagonal ball is very useful,” he said of the first. “If you’ve got two wide players, then penetration from midfield on a diagonal ball is very useful.”

“Then you have a striker. You’ve got a relaxed full-back who’s got to do something else, maybe hold up the ball, and you’ve got a really good second-striker who can come in and take the full-back on.”

The other is the diagonal to the centre-forward. “It really depends on the type of striker you have,” said Sir Alex. “If you’re building from one side and you’ve got a Diego Costa or Sergio Agüero then you’ll use them. The good strikers can do that, because they’ve got enough speed to threaten the defenders.”
Fast forward
Quick transitions and the long ball are back in vogue

In the chain of cause and effect, each new football fashion is a response to what went before – hence the switch from tiki-taka to fast transitions. UEFA’s technical observers’ in-depth analysis of the UEFA Europa League from the round of 16 onwards confirmed that this latter strategy remains very much en vogue – and one such example was the breakaway goal scored by Juan Mata in Manchester United’s home victory over Rostov in the last 16. When the Spaniard first collected a stray pass inside his own half the clock said 69:46. As his final touch directed the ball toward the Rostov net – concluding a nine-touch, three-man move – it said 69:56.

Reflecting on the evidence of the matches he witnessed, Mixu Paatelainen said: “What I’ve seen is that teams have that fast transition when they win the ball and pass it forward, instead of taking their time. It’s not a new trend that teams are so compact and so organised, that’s nothing new – but I think the onus now is football, for success, is ‘What happens when you win the ball? Can you gain territory and get men forward quickly?’”

The final itself offered an extreme example. As Ajax struggled to dent United’s defence with their slow build-up, United profited from hitting long balls to the distinctive head of Marouane Fellaini. Paatelainen speculated that we may see more teams take a direct route. “Possibly there will be an increase of long balls in the future, because if you just pass it short or pass it sideways, teams will throw themselves into their compact unit, and it’s very difficult to break that.”

Whether any of this is new, though, is a moot point. Fashion – as with history – has a tendency to repeat itself. “Is this modern football or not?” Ioan Lupescu asked. “I think this was used to be there, 20, 30, 40 years ago too – defending and countering attacking.”
A total of 565 goals were scored in the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League from the opening night of the group stage to the final in Stockholm. This represented a rise of 29 from the 2015/16 total and an average of 2.76 per match – the second-highest rate since the revamped competition’s launch in 2009/10 (surpassed only by the 585 scored in 2011/12).

The second half of matches again produced more goals than the first – 305 to 255 – while the most fertile time for goals in each half was actually the middle section. However, if we include the goals scored in added time to those struck in the 76-90 minutes period, the combined total of 125 accounts for 22.12% of all goals. Of the five goals scored in extra time, four arrived in the second period when players are at their most fatigued.

The scoring analysis in this review is based on the 168 goals registered during the knockout rounds, all of which were watched by UEFA’s technical observers.

**Goals from open play**

Crosses played an important part in the clubs’ attacking repertoires in the knockout stage, judging from the fact 44 goals came from this source – in other words, over a third of the total of open-play goals (34.38%). There were also 11 goals following cut-backs, so emphasising further the importance of good wing play.

**Goals from set plays**

Of the 168 goals scored in the UEFA Europa League knockout rounds, 128 came from open play and 40 – or 23.81% of the total – from set plays.

**Goals per knockout round**

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**Goals per UEFA Europa League season**

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<th>Goals</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
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<td>205</td>
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<tr>
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<td>475</td>
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</tr>
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<td>521</td>
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<td>2.54</td>
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<td>2011/12</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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</table>
Goals of the season

Leon Bailey’s strike took top spot for Genk while Kalifa Coulibaly featured twice in the top ten

The UEFA Technical Observers Group had the task of selecting a top ten from among the 565 goals scored in the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League. Their first choice came from Genk forward Leon Bailey who, from a square pass, swept the ball high into the Rapid Wien net from distance – a strike singled out by UEFA’s technical observers for the “high degree of difficulty of execution in this exceptional first-time strike that was both from distance and on the run.”

Lyons’ Corentin Tolisso ranked second for a goal against AS Roma in the round of 16 that highlighted his club’s brilliant combination play around the box, as a flurry of passes between him and Alexandre Lacazette ended with a powerful strike from 20 metres.

Edin Džeko scored a competition joint-best eight goals for Roma and his close-range effort at Villarreal in the round of 32 was deemed his best as it concluded a ten-man passing move that carried the ball from one box to the other without an opposition player getting a touch. UEFA’s technical observer praised it for the “excellent build-up capped by a brilliantly composed feint and finish”.

If that was a team goal, Moussa Sow’s effort for Fenerbahçe against Manchester United was all about the individual – a wonderfully acrobatic overhead kick – and so too the one dead-ball strike on this short list: a 25-metre free-kick of terrific precision from Fiorentina’s Federico Bernardeschi at Mönchengladbach.

The only player to feature twice in the top ten was Kalifa Coulibaly of Gent. The Malian showed impressive imagination and athleticism to cushion a ball on his chest and guide an overhead volley into the Braga goal in the group stage. Against Konyaspor a fortnight later he delivered another high-class strike, controlling a long pass and in one smooth move swivelling and volleying low into the net from the edge of the box.

“Grünewald’s precise long pass in his crosshair as it dropped over his shoulder and produced a left-foot lob over the goalkeeper. ‘It’s a hard shot to take,’ said Sir Alex Ferguson, yet he took it perfectly. Lyon’s Lacazette, finally, might have featured more than once in the top ten given his cute lobbed finish at Beşiktaş in the quarter-finals; instead it was his fiercely arrowed drive from the edge of the box into the top corner of Roma’s net that made the final cut.”

Visit UEFA.com to see all the goals

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Top ten goals

1. Leon Bailey
   Rapid Wien 3-2 Genk
   Group F

2. Corentin Tolisso
   Lyon 4-2 Roma
   Round of 16, first leg

3. Edin Džeko
   Villarreal 0-4 Roma
   Round of 32, first leg

4. Moussa Sow
   Fenerbahçe 2-1 Manchester Utd
   Group A

5. Federico Bernardeschi
   Mönchengladbach 0-1 Fiorentina
   Round of 32, first leg

6. Kalifa Coulibaly
   Gent 2-2 Braga
   Group H

7. Kalifa Coulibaly
   Konyaspor 0-1 Gent
   Group H

8. Beñat Etxebarria
   Athletic Club 1-0 Rapid Wien
   Group F

9. Kevin Friesenbichler
   Astra 2-3 Austria Wien
   Group E

10. Alexandre Lacazette
    Lyon 4-2 Roma
    Round of 16, first leg
One of the tasks of the UEFA Technical Observers Group, meeting in Stockholm on the morning after Manchester United’s triumph, was to select their UEFA Europa League squad of the season – and not surprisingly, the winning club featured prominently.

The technical observers chose players who had made significant contributions over the entire course of the campaign and their selection meant that eight of their players were chosen in the 18-man squad. This number includes the two players whom Sir Alex Ferguson described as United’s best defenders of the campaign, Daley Blind and Antonio Valencia, along with their man of the match in the final, Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera.

Runners-up Ajax were represented by three players, including teenage centre-back Matthijs de Ligt, who caught the eye in the final with a sense of composure far ahead of his 17 years. Of the beaten semi-finalists, meanwhile, there were three players from Celta Vigo, including midfielder Pablo Hernández who played so well when the Spanish side nearly pulled off an improbable comeback at Old Trafford. A trio from Olympique Lyonnais were also on the list, including the six-goal centre-forward Alexandre Lacazette. The fifth and final club represented was Anderlecht in the form of young midfielder Youri Tielemans, a pivotal figure in the Belgian club’s longest run in Europe in 20 years.

From defence to attack, Manchester United players dominated the 2016/17 selection.
For the fourth year running, Fiorentina and Tottenham featured in the top ten passing teams, and were joined by winners Manchester United, though pass completion was no guarantee of success. Nice, the team with the highest rate overall (92%), did not make it out of the group stage.

### Top ten teams (overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Attempted passes per match</th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludogorets</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenit</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiorentina</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakhtar</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villarreal</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How the last 16 compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Attempted passes per match</th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schalke</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Münchenladbach</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celta</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gent</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beşiktaş</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krasnodar</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genk</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympiacos</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostov</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderlecht</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>København</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APOEL</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roma and Schalke had the highest pass completion rate out of the last 16 teams (89%).

Only two of the top ten actually made it to the last 16 or beyond.

Just as in 2015/16, Azerbaijan’s Qarabağ were in the top ten for attempted passes but failed to qualify from their group.

Ludogorets recorded the highest average for both attempted passes (563) and possession (86%) but played only two games against a København side who took a more direct approach with a tall target man.

Manchester United’s average number of attempted passes for the season contrasted dramatically with their figures for the final – 276 passes completed and 70% completion rate.
Possession

Only four of the ten teams who had most possession in the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League reached the last 16 of the competition. It is another illustration that possession is no guarantee of success – a point underlined in the final when Manchester United had 33% of the ball.

Average possession (overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Average possession per match</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludogorets</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenit</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tottenham</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United*</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajax*</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma*</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakhtar Donetsk</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gent*</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qarabag*</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maccabi Tel-Aviv</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainz</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A reached last 16 or beyond

Athletic posted the highest possession figure of any team in the knockout stage at home to APOEL.

69%

Ajax’s possession rate in the final was their highest in 15 matches played.

67%

Manchester United had the lowest average possession of the three English participants.

55%

Percentage of knockout-stage matches won by the team with more possession compared with 31.15% for the team with less.

37.71%

Disciplinary

There were 901 yellow cards issued over the 205 matches of the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League – 36 more than in the previous season. There were also 48 red cards shown, the same number as 2015/16. If Ajax ended with the most red cards with four, Inter and Panathinaikos each amassed three reds from just six matches played. With 48 yellows, Ajax collected the most cards of that colour too, including seven for defender Joel Veltman. This was double the 24 of fellow finalists United.

Fouls and cards (round of 16 teams)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Fouls committed</th>
<th>Fouls suffered</th>
<th>Yellow cards</th>
<th>Red cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schalke</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celta</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krasnodar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APOEL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderlecht</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Roma</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olympiacos</td>
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<td>129</td>
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<td>Lyon</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Beşiktaş</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>79</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostov</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mönchengladbach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Junior Kabananga of Astana was caught offside an unsurpassed 18 times in 496 minutes on the pitch (once every 26.6 minutes). There were players who recorded a higher rate, notably Osmanlıspor’s Cheick Diabaté (once every 13.7 minutes).

45

Eric Bailly of Manchester United was the only player to receive more than one red card, and he missed the final owing to his second sending-off. Yet, overall, he committed only 11 fouls in 11 appearances.

251

Ajax committed the most fouls as a team but they also played the most matches, their 251 fouls over 15 games translating to 16.73 per match. Among the last 16, a powerful København side registered the most fouls per match (19.75) and Borussia Mönchengladbach the least (11.75). Across the whole competition it was Zürich, with 129 from six group fixtures, who earned the highest rate (21.5 per match) of all.

18

Calvo midfielder Pablo Hernández received more fouls than any other player. His teammate Pione Sisto was fouled 24 times – the third-highest tally.

2

APOEL’s Pana Sotiriou was the player with most fouls to his name, 34 from 765 minutes played (once every 22.21 minutes). He collected four yellow cards.

4.4

The average number of yellow cards per game in the 2016/17 campaign, up from 4.2 last year.

STATISTICS

Johan Tobias Nociellis takes to the air.
Goal attempts

With their world-class attacking talents, Manchester United ended the campaign as the competition’s 25-goal top scorers – though they had to share that accolade with quarter-finalists Genk who proved the most efficient team in front of goal, scoring their 25 goals from 151 attempts, or a goal every 6.04 attempts. Roma’s position as the second-most-efficient finishers owed something to the predatory powers of Edin Džeko, the 2016/17 eight-goal joint-top scorer, alongside Zenit’s Giuliano.

Goal attempts (Round of 16 teams)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Total attempts</th>
<th>Ave attempts per match</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Ave attempts per goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schalke</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>178</td>
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<td>9.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderlecht</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celta</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>11.79</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genk</td>
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<td>12.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olympiacos</td>
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<td>139</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<td>7.66</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mönchengladbach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostov</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>København</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top scorers (overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giuliano</td>
<td>Zenit</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edin Džeko</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aritz Aduriz</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandre Locazetta</td>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrikh Mkhitarayan</td>
<td>Man. United</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasper Dolberg</td>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Athletic striker Aritz Aduriz featured among the leading marksmen for the second year running with the help of five goals in a single group-stage fixture against Genk. Not bad for a 36-year-old.

Lyon were the team with the highest average for attempts per match, helped by a hungry forward in Alexandre Locazetta. Of the 11 players to score five goals or more in the 2016/17 campaign, he alone participated from just February onwards.

Ajax had the most attempts on target of any club in the competition. Overall, though, they needed 10.06 attempts for every goal scored and of the last 16 clubs, only Olympiacos were less economical with their finishing (11.58 attempts per goal).

The group-stage top scorers, Shakhtar Donetsk, struck 22 times in their eight games before going out – a scoring rate of 2.75 goals per game that was surpassed only by Lyon (3.38 per match).
Keeping the lead

The statistics suggest that the first goal carries real weight on UEFA Europa League nights.

There are few cast-iron guarantees in football but for any team taking the lead in a UEFA Europa League fixture, their odds of finishing victorious – or at least avoiding defeat – certainly shortened massively. Of the 59 matches in the knockout rounds that produced goals, the team scoring first won 40 of them (a 67.79% success rate) and avoided defeat 53 times (89.83%).

Of the exceptions, the outstanding example was the comeback produced by Mönchengladbach in their round of 32 tie against Fiorentina when, already 1-0 down from the first leg, they conceded twice more in the first half in Florence only to hit back with four goals of their own. Ironically Gladbach then went out in the next round after losing a 2-0 lead in a home draw with Schalke and these were the only two matches where any team recovered from two goals behind.

Just as in the previous season, there were only six matches in the knockout stage where a team came from behind to win after conceding first.

There were only two goalless draws in the 61 games played in the knockout rounds.

Lyon overturned deficits to win their home matches against both Beşiktaş in the quarter-finals and Ajax in the semi-finals.

Of the 18 finals in which a goal has been scored since the competition’s switch to a single-match final in 1998, the team conceding first has lifted the trophy only three times (a 16.66% success rate). In this sense, the 2017 final – in which Manchester United scored early to gain a grip they never looked like easing – was a return to type after Sevilla’s comeback victories against Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk and Liverpool in the previous two seasons.

2016/17 comeback victories

Athletic 3-2 APOEL, Round of 32 first leg
Fiorentina 2-4 Mönchengladbach, Round of 32 second leg
Roma 2-1 Lyon, Round of 16 second leg
Celta 3-2 Genk, Quarter-final first leg
Lyon 2-1 Beşiktaş, Quarter-final first leg
Lyon 3-1 Ajax, Semi-final second leg

16.66%

Of the 18 finals in which a goal has been scored since the competition’s switch to a single-match final in 1998, the team conceding first has lifted the trophy only three times (a 16.66% success rate). In this sense, the 2017 final – in which Manchester United scored early to gain a grip they never looked like easing – was a return to type after Sevilla’s comeback victories against Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk and Liverpool in the previous two seasons.

2

Lyon overturned deficits to win their home matches against both Beşiktaş in the quarter-finals and Ajax in the semi-finals.

0

There were only two goalless draws in the 61 games played in the knockout rounds.

6

Just as in the previous season, there were only six matches in the knockout stage where a team came from behind to win after conceding first.

2016/17 comeback victories

Athletic 3-2 APOEL, Round of 32 first leg
Fiorentina 2-4 Mönchengladbach, Round of 32 second leg
Roma 2-1 Lyon, Round of 16 second leg
Celta 3-2 Genk, Quarter-final first leg
Lyon 2-1 Beşiktaş, Quarter-final first leg
Lyon 3-1 Ajax, Semi-final second leg

Gladbach's thrilling come-from-behind win at Fiorentina was one of only six successful fight-backs all season.
**AFC AJAX**

**Coaches**
- Peter Bosz
  - Born: 23/12/1965
  - Apeldoorn (NED)
  - Nationality: Dutch
  - Matches in UEFA Europe League/UEFA Cup: 15
  - Matches in European club competitions:** 23
  - Match results: from 24/05/2016 to 05/05/2017
  - *Goal:scored in final* Including qualifying

**Team shape**
- **4-3-3**
  - Dark green = home, light green = away
  - Orange = final
  - See page 5 for full club names

**Team statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App</th>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key features**
- 1-4-3-3: Compact team, good in possesson with good balance between lines
  - Compact:constant pressure in middle line, especially in home matches
  - Energy and enthusiasm of youthful squad
  - Baseline by defenders
  - Holding midfielders: good box-to-box midfielders

**Substitutions**
- 2 (including two double substitutions)

**Player statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>OT G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Unused substitutes: Wout Faes, Noor Klazinga, Mike Sriver

**Coach**
- René Weiler
  - Born: 15/10/1975
  - Winterthur (SUI)
  - Nationality: Swiss
  - Matches in UEFA Europe League/UEFA Cup: 12
  - Matches in European club competitions:** 16
  - Head coach: Since 06/2016
  - *Goal:scored in final* Including qualifying

**Team statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App</th>
<th>Mins</th>
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<th>A</th>
<th>Cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key features**
- 1-4-5-3: Defenders with high line forwards press high, then drop to keep compact shape
  - Attacking full-backs e.g. Overmars cross for first leg goal
  - Mann United
  - Midfield operation: pushing forward
  - Players with excellent technique, comfortable in possession when under pressure
  - Excellent returning of the game in midfield (Teixeira, Stanisic)
  - Fine passing游戏, with good link between the lines
  - Direct on counterattack with defensive splitting vertical press or solo runs

**Substitutions**
- 3 (including two double substitutions)

**Player statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>OT G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Note:** Used substitute: Wout Faes, Noor Klazinga, Mike Sriver
### Group stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defenders</th>
<th>Goalkeeper</th>
<th>Midfielders</th>
<th>Forwards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Roberto Logo</td>
<td>10 Yannis Gianniotas</td>
<td>11 Nicklas Alexandrou</td>
<td>23 Iñaki Astiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Carilo</td>
<td>10 Pieros Sotiriou</td>
<td>11 Stathis Aloneftis</td>
<td>30 Giorgos Merkis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Nektarios Alexandrou</td>
<td>10 David Barral</td>
<td>10 Facundo Bertoglio</td>
<td>44 Nicholas Ioannou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Zhivko Milanov</td>
<td>10 606 2</td>
<td>3 228</td>
<td>10 810 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Inaki Astiz</td>
<td>10 755 3</td>
<td>10 143</td>
<td>10 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Gliorgis Merkis</td>
<td>10 780 1</td>
<td>3 188</td>
<td>10 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Nicholas Ioannou</td>
<td>10 436</td>
<td>10 188</td>
<td>10 349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 Cedric Yamere</td>
<td>12 123</td>
<td>10 143</td>
<td>10 349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Player statistics

#### Forwards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Apps</th>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 Yannis Gianniotas</td>
<td>10 606</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Pieros Sotiriou</td>
<td>10 755</td>
<td>10 188</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17 David Barral</td>
<td>3 228</td>
<td>10 143</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Midfielders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Apps</th>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Zhivko Milanov</td>
<td>10 606</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10 188</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7 580</td>
<td>3 188</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Nicholas Ioannou</td>
<td>4 360</td>
<td>3 188</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 Cedric Yamere</td>
<td>2 123</td>
<td>3 188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key features

- **1-4-2-3-1**: The team tends to use a 1-4-2-3-1 formation. The defenders seek out the striker. The team has strong, athletic, hard-working full-backs on both sides.
- **Aerial power**: The team is strong in aerial duels, with a compact defence that keeps the ball away from the attackers. The centre-backs work well in the air.
- **Playmaker**: The team benefits from a playmaker, who brings the ball high up the pitch and offers an option for diagonal passes.
- **Goal threat**: The team has players with good goal threat, such as De Camargo dropping deep from the forward line to provide an extra layer of protection for the defence.
- **Technical ability**: The team has players with good technical ability, dribbling skills, and good passing accuracy.
- **Possession**: The team has a good share of possession, keeping the ball away from the opposition.
- **Theatre of the Mind**: The team has a good understanding of the theatre of the mind, with players who can read the game well.

### Team shape

- **Winger**: Quaresma provides good crossing from the left wing.
- **Direct running**: Babel can come inside, freeing up space for the full-backs.
- **Full-backs**: The full-backs are strong, powerful, and experienced, with a good understanding of their roles.
- **Midfield**: The midfielders are good at recovering possession quickly and are able to draw on power and skill to create chances.

---

### Turkey

#### Beşiktaş JK

**Coach**

Şenal Güneş

**Nationality**: Turkish

**Country**: Turkey

**Club**: Beşiktaş JK

**Results**

- **Group stage**: 2 wins, 2 draws, 1 loss
- **Quarter-finals**: 1 win, 1 draw, 1 loss
- **Semi-finals**: 1 win, 1 loss

**Final**: 1 win, 1 loss

**Averages**

- **Possession**: 52.9%
- **Attempts**: 247
- **On target**: 21
- **Shots on target**: 47

**Key features**

- **1-4-2-3-1**: The team tends to use a 1-4-2-3-1 formation. The centre-backs seek out the striker.
- **Aerial power**: The team is strong in aerial duels, with a compact defence that keeps the ball away from the attackers.
- **Playmaker**: The team benefits from a playmaker, who brings the ball high up the pitch and offers an option for diagonal passes.
- **Goal threat**: The team has players with good goal threat, such as De Camargo dropping deep from the forward line to provide an extra layer of protection for the defence.
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- **Theatre of the Mind**: The team has a good understanding of the theatre of the mind, with players who can read the game well.
**RC CELTA DE VIGO**

**Spain**

**Coach**
Eduardo Berizzo  
Born: 13/11/1968, Cruz Alta (ARG)  
Nationality: Argentinean  
Matches in UEFA Europa League/Uefa Cup: 14  
Matches in European club competitions: **4**  
Head coach: From: 05/04/2014  
To: 30/05/2017  
*Stage in final: **Qualifying*

**Round of 32**

---

**Group stage**

- **Spain**
- **Belgium**

**Group statistics**

- **Spain:** 11胜 4平 1负 32分  
  11胜 4平 1负 32分
- **Belgium:** 12胜 2平 2负 38分  
  12胜 2平 2负 38分

**Goalkeepers**

- **Spain:**  
  - Fabiano  1胜 1平 1负  
  - Chaves  1胜 2平 1负

**Defenders**

- **Spain:**  
  - Bartra  2胜 1平 1负  
  - Óliver  2胜 1平 1负

**Midfielders**

- **Spain:**  
  - Aspas  5胜 2平 1负  
  - Vela  4胜 1平 1负

**Forwards**

- **Spain:**  
  - Aspas  4胜 2平 1负  
  - Orellana  2胜 1平 1负

**Team shape**

- 1-4-2-3-1

**Card substitutions**

- 1胜 1平 1负

**Key features**

- **Spain:**  
  - 1.4-3-3  
  - Coordinated  
  - Attacking focal point (Santos)  
  - Compact defensive line  
  - Dynamic build-up play  
  - Structured pressing  
  - Strong transition from back to front  
  - Patient build-up play  
  - Positively aggressive  

- **Belgium:**  
  - 1.4-2-3-1  
  - Quick and direct  
  - Scoring opportunities (Sanchez)  
  - Compact defence  
  - Successful build-up play  
  - Aggressive pressing  
  - Strong transition from back to front  
  - Patient build-up play  
  - Positively aggressive

**Points table**

- **Spain:**  
  - 1胜 1平 1负  
  - 1胜 1平 1负

**Forwards**

- **Spain:**  
  - Aspas  5胜 2平 1负  
  - Orellana  2胜 1平 1负

**Team shape**

- 1-4-2-3-1

**Card substitutions**

- 1胜 1平 1负

**Key features**

- **Spain:**  
  - 1.4-3-3  
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  - Aggressive pressing  
  - Strong transition from back to front  
  - Patient build-up play  
  - Positively aggressive
### UEFA Europa League Technical Report 2016/17

KAA GENT Belgium

**Coach**
Hein Vanhaezebrouck
Born: 16/12/1964, Kemmel (BDL)
Nationality: Belgian
Matches in UEFA Europa League/Uefa Cup: 10
Matches in European club competition: 24
Head coach
Since 05/2014

**Team shape**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round of 32</th>
<th>Round of 16</th>
<th>Quarter-finals</th>
<th>Semi-finals</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRA KON D1</td>
<td>KON W01</td>
<td>D4</td>
<td>W12</td>
<td>2-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Team statistics**

- **Players used**
  - Goals scored: 15 (1 own goal)
  - Attempts: 39 (11.5 per match)
  - On target: 0 (0 per match)
  - Cards: 0

- **Substitutions**
  - 27/30 (including two double substitutions)

**Averages**

- **Possession**
  - Min. 54% v Ajax (a)
  - Max. 70% v Braga (h)
  - Posseions attempted: 432
  - Possesions attempted: 349 v Tottenham (a)
  - Possesion accuring: 465 v Tottenham (a)

**Player statistics**

- **Shots**
  - T = Total shots; OT = On target; G = Goals
  - Total shots: 31-35 & 61-75: 3
  - Total shots: 66-70 & 71-75: 1
  - Total shots: 81-85 & 86-90: 1
  - Total shots: 91-95 & 96-100: 0

- **Passes**
  - A = Passes attempted; P = Passes completed
  - Total passes: 554 & 654
  - Total passes: 44 & 54 & 64

**Key features**

- **1-3-4-3; also used 1-4-4-2**
  - Deep defensive block with three centre-backs
  - Midfielders pressing high up pitch
  - Good passing game; game-opening passes and well-timed final balls
  - Strong in the air in both boxes; danger at set-pieces
  - Players with pace; athleticism; attacking power in 1v1
  - Midfielders prominent in playmaker role off main striker; aerial power
  - Central attacking threat and aerial power of four-goal Coulibaly

**Defenders**

- Thomas Mathon 4 201
- Renato Neto 4 191 5
- Kenneth Saief 9 794 1
- Ruben Gerson 4 640

**Midfielders**

- Ján Greguš 2 76
- Kasper Kusk 2 37
- Uroš Matić 4 360
- Federico Santander 4 270 1
- Robin Olsen 4 360

**Forwards**

- William Kvist 3 270 1
- Benjamin Verbic 3 33
- Andreas Cornelius 3 256 1

**Team shape**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round of 32</th>
<th>Round of 16</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POR W15</td>
<td>LUD W12</td>
<td>D4</td>
<td>W12</td>
<td>2-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Team statistics**

- **Players used**
  - Goals scored: 19 (10 per match)
  - Attempts: 10 / 12 (including one double substitution)
  - On target: 0 (0 per match)
  - Cards: 12

- **Substitutions**
  - 10/12 (including one double substitution)

**Averages**

- **Possession**
  - Min. 77% v Ludogorets (a)
  - Max. 81% v Ajax (a)
  - Posseions attempted: 503
  - Possesions attempted: 439 v Ludogorets (a)
  - Possesion accuring: 578 v Ludogorets (a)

**Player statistics**

- **Shots**
  - T = Total shots; OT = On target; G = Goals
  - Total shots: 1-15: 1
  - Total shots: 46-60: 2
  - Total shots: 61-75: 1
  - Total shots: 76-90: 0

- **Passes**
  - A = Passes attempted; P = Passes completed
  - Total passes: 547 & 597

**Key features**

- **1-4-4-2**
  - Line-up in three classic lines, with players keeping defined positions
  - Hard-working, well-organised, physically strong team
  - Defend with a deep block; compact and disciplined
  - Composure and leadership from centre-back Johansson
  - Full-backs Ankersen and Augustergren provide attacking width, crosses into box
  - Rapid transition from attack to defence, and vice versa
  - Danger from set-pieces with aerial power
  - Talented Cornelius gives goalkeeper option to play long
  - Cornelius steps up pitch while second striker Santander stays with build-up

**Defenders**

- Tom Hagel 2 1 1
- Ludwig Augustinsson 4 360
- Erik Johansson 4 360
- Nicolai Boilesen 2 46
- Andrija Pavlović 3 56
- Rasmus Falk 3 256 1

**Midfielders**

- Andreas Cornelius 4 360 1
- Frederico Santander 4 304
- Andrija Pavlović 3 56
- Rasmus Falk 3 256 1

**Forwards**

- Ståle Solbakken
Born: 27/02/1968, Kongsvinger (NOR)
Nationality: Norwegian
Matches in UEFA Europa League/Uefa Cup: 32
Matches in European club competition: 94
Head coach
Since 21/06/2015

**Team shape**

<table>
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<td>KON W01</td>
<td>D4</td>
<td>W12</td>
<td>2-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Team statistics**

- **Players used**
  - Goals scored: 15 (3.9 per match)
  - Attempts: 39 (11.5 per match)
  - On target: 0 (0 per match)
  - Cards: 0

- **Substitutions**
  - 10/12 (including one double substitution)

**Averages**

- **Possession**
  - Min. 54% v Ajax (a)
  - Max. 70% v Braga (h)
  - Posseions attempted: 432
  - Possesions attempted: 349 v Tottenham (a)
  - Possesion accuring: 465 v Tottenham (a)

**Player statistics**

- **Shots**
  - T = Total shots; OT = On target; G = Goals
  - Total shots: 1-15: 1
  - Total shots: 46-60: 2
  - Total shots: 61-75: 1
  - Total shots: 76-90: 0

- **Passes**
  - A = Passes attempted; P = Passes completed
  - Total passes: 554 & 654

**Key features**

- **1-3-4-3; also used 1-4-4-2**
  - Deep defensive block with three centre-backs
  - Midfielders pressing high up pitch
  - Good passing game; game-opening passes and well-timed final balls
  - Strong in the air in both boxes; danger at set-pieces
  - Players with pace; athleticism; attacking power in 1v1
  - Midfielders prominent in playmaker role off main striker; aerial power
  - Central attacking threat and aerial power of four-goal Coulibaly

**Defenders**

- Samuuel Gigot 4 360
- Stefan Mitrović 5 304
- Youssef Tougouh 4 270 1
- Jérémy Taravel, Elton Kabangu, Emir Kujović, Jérémy Taravel, Elton Kabangu, Emir Kujović

**Midfielders**

- Dante Walen
- Siebe Horemans, Dante Walen, Yassine Abdelali, Andreas Burssens, Julian Kratcov, Julian Kratcov, Julian Kratcov

**Forwards**

- Thomas Matton 4 201
- Dieumerci Ndongala 2 85
- Samuel Gigot 4 360
- Dieumerci Ndongala 2 85
- Lovre Kalinić 4 360
- Jacob Rinne 5 450
- Lasse Nielsen 4 360
- 20 Yannick Thoelen 1 90
- Samuel Kalu 3 196 1 1
- 8 Thomas Matton 4 201
- 18 Samuel Kalu 3 196 1 1
- 88 Dieumerci Ndongala 2 85

**Tactical shape**

- 1-3-4-3; also used 1-4-4-2
- Deep defensive block with three centre-backs
- Midfielders pressing high up pitch
- Good passing game; game-opening passes and well-timed final balls
- Strong in the air in both boxes; danger at set-pieces
- Players with pace; athleticism; attacking power in 1v1
- Midfielders prominent in playmaker role off main striker; aerial power
- Central attacking threat and aerial power of four-goal Coulibaly
**FC KRASNODAR**

**Coach**

Igor Shalimov  
Born 02/03/1966, Moscow (RUS)  
Nationality: Russian  
Matches in UEFA Europa League/Uefa Cup: 9  
Matches in European club competition: 8  
Head coach:  
Since 05/2016  
(appointed caretaker 13/09/2016)

**Team shape**

- **Defenders**
  - 2 Marat Izmailov 2 45
  - 5 Dmitri Torginski 4 252
  - 11 Vyacheslav Podberezkin 8 481
  - 10 Odil Akhmedov 6 437
  - 17 Vitali Kazaev 6 326
  - 22 Joãozinho 7 537
  - 12 Cristian Ramirez 3 270
  - 6 Andreas Granqvist 9 781
  - 4 Aleksandr Martynovich 5 450
  - 3 Naldo 9 810

- **Forwards**
  - 90 Fedor Smolov 6 479
  - 14 Wanderson 4 297
  - 11 Vyacheslav Podberezkin 8 481
  - 10 Odil Akhmedov 6 437
  - 17 Vitali Kazaev 6 326
  - 22 Joãozinho 7 537
  - 12 Cristian Ramirez 3 270
  - 6 Andreas Granqvist 9 781
  - 4 Aleksandr Martynovich 5 450
  - 3 Naldo 9 810

**Key features**

- 1-4-5-5; also 1-4-2-2-1 when defending.
- Defending with deep block, good discipline and organisation.
- Long passes from goalkeeper and defender, looking for second balls in opposition half.
- Strong in air when attacking and defending set-pieces (Granqvist).
- Gazinski the pivot in midfield, giving other midfielders licence to push on.
- Athletic players with hard-working approach.
- Counterattacking threat, with fast transitions from attack to defence.
- Recent passing game, with good links between the lines.
- Defenders taking up well with deeper attackers.
- Statistic, dribbling and scoring ability of four-goal striker Smolov.

**Team statistics**

- **Shots**
  - 1: 15 (Minutes)
  - 2: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75, 76-90
  - 3: 80+ 100-120

- **Passes**
  - 1: 10% to defenders  
  - 2: 41% to midfielders  
  - 3: 47% to wider forwards

- **Key passes**
  - 1: 10% to defenders
  - 2: 41% to midfielders

- **Cards**
  - 1: 1-15 (Minutes)
  - 2: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75, 76-90
  - 3: 80+ 100-120

- **Goals scored**
  - 1: 1-15
  - 2: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75
  - 3: 80+ 100-120

**Group stage**

- **Round of 32**
  - W 0-1 W 5-2 L 0-1 L 2-0 D 1-1 L 2-1

**Quarter-finals**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Semi-finals**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Final**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Unused substitutes**

- Denis Adamov, Derid Foros, Les Gogotsishvili, Aminul Totanov, Derid Vorobyov

**App: Appearances; Mins: Minutes played; G: Goals; A: Assists**

---

**OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS**

**Coach**

Bruno Génésio  
Born 05/09/1966, Lyon (FRA)  
Nationality: French  
Matches in UEFA Europa League/Uefa Cup: 9  
Matches in European club competition: 8  
Head coach:  
Since 12/2015

**Team shape**

- **Defenders**
  - 27 Maxwel Cornet 8 474
  - 18 Nabil Fekir 8 518
  - 10 Alexandre Lacazette 8 537
  - 28 Mathieu Valbuena 6 557
  - 5 Mouctar Diakhaby 8 750
  - 13 Christophe Jallet 7 541
  - 20 Rafael 6 300
  - 12 Jordan Ferri 2 113
  - 15 Jérémy Morel 6 556
  - 13 Christophe Jallet 7 541
  - 20 Rafael 6 300

- **Forwards**
  - 8 Corentin Tolisso 8 669
  - 11 Nabil Fekir 6 278
  - 14 Jordan Ferri 2 113
  - 15 Jérémy Morel 6 556
  - 13 Christophe Jallet 7 541

**Key features**

- 1-4-2-2-1; changing to 1-4-4-2 when attacking.
- Strong goalkeeper Lopes good in 1v1s, covering behind high line of defence.
- Deep defensive block; defenders disciplined and well organised, often power at the back.
- Dead-ball specialists; Diakhaby threat of offensive set plays.
- Attacking full-backs (Nkoulou) wide forwards moving inside to free-up space.
- Hard-working, athletic players with excellent determination, team spirit.
- Valbuena vital source of composure, ability in 1v1s and game-opening passes.
- Counterattacking, quality with rapid transitions from defence to attack.
- Excellent combination play around box, quick passing and penetrating runs.
- Scoring threat of ex-goal Lopes.

**Team statistics**

- **Shots**
  - 1: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75
  - 2: 80+ 100-120

- **Passes**
  - 1: 10% to defenders
  - 2: 41% to midfielders
  - 3: 47% to wider forwards

- **Key passes**
  - 1: 10% to defenders
  - 2: 41% to midfielders

- **Cards**
  - 1: 1-15 (Minutes)
  - 2: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75
  - 3: 80+ 100-120

- **Goals scored**
  - 1: 1-15
  - 2: 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61-75
  - 3: 80+ 100-120

**Group stage**

- **Round of 32**
  - W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Quarter-finals**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Semi-finals**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Final**

- W 1-0 D 1-1 L 2-1 L 0-2

**Unused substitute**

- Mathieu Gorgelin

**App: Appearances; Mins: Minutes played; G: Goals; A: Assists**

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**Dark green = home, light green = away; see page 5 for full club names**
### Manchester United FC

**Coach**
José Mourinho  
Born: 26/01/1963, Setubal (POR)  
Nationality: Portuguese  
Manager in UEFA European League/UEFA Cup: 28  
Manager in European club competitions: **157**  
Head coach:  
Since 27/05/2016

**Defenders**
- Anthony Martial: 10, 484 min, 1 goal  
- Wayne Rooney: 7, 359 min, 2 goals  
- Marcus Rashford: 11, 767 min, 2 goals  
- Zlatan Ibrahimović: 11, 897 min, 5 goals  
- Bastian Schweinsteiger: 1, 28 min  
- Morgan Schneiderlin: 2, 135 min  
- Juan Mata: 10, 721 min, 2 goals  
- Ashley Young: 7, 331 min  
- Michael Carrick: 7, 466 min  
- Jesse Lingard: 10, 526 min, 2 goals  
- Marouane Fellaini: 11, 722 min, 1 goal  
- Henrikh Mkhitaryan: 11, 817 min, 6 goals

**Midfielders**
- Paul Pogba: 15, 1263 min, 3 goals  
- Juan Mata: 10, 721 min  
- Jesé Lingard: 10, 536 min  
- Michael Carrick: 7, 466 min  
- Ashley Young: 7, 331 min  
- Ander Herrera: 9, 810 min  
- Henrikh Mkhitaryan: 11, 817 min  
- Marouane Fellaini: 11, 722 min  
- Morgan Schneiderlin: 2, 135 min  
- Bastian Schweinsteiger: 1, 28 min

**Forwards**
- Anthony Martial: 10, 484 min, 1 goal  
- Wayne Rooney: 7, 359 min, 2 goals  
- Henrikh Mkhitaryan: 11, 767 min, 2 goals  
- Zlatan Ibrahimović: 11, 897 min, 5 goals  
- Bastian Schweinsteiger: 1, 28 min  
- Morgan Schneiderlin: 2, 135 min  
- Marouane Fellaini: 11, 722 min  
- Henrikh Mkhitaryan: 11, 817 min, 6 goals

**Team statistics**

- **Goals scored**: 25 (1 own goal)  
- **Attempts**: 80 (5.3 per match)  
- **On target**: 36 (6.5 per match)

**Averages**
- **Possession**: Max. 78% v Anderlecht (a) & 76% v Feyenoord (a)  
- **On target**: Max. 100% v Schalke (h)

### VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach

**Coach**
Dieter Hecking  
Born: 12/05/1964, Castrop-Rauxel (GER)  
Nationality: German  
Manager in UEFA European League/UEFA Cup: 4  
Manager in European club competitions: **4**  
Head coach:  
Since 22/12/2016

**Defenders**
- Timothée Kolodziejczak: 1, 90 min  
- Andreas Christensen: 3, 270 min  
- Jonas Vestergaard: 4, 360 min  
- Tobias Strobl: 3, 145 min  
- Nico Schulz: 1, 6 min  
- Oscar Wendt: 4, 360 min  
- Tony Jantschke: 4, 334 min

**Midfielders**
- Christoph Kramer: 2, 117 min  
- Patrick Herrmann: 4, 268 min  
- Mahmoud Dahoud: 4, 360 min  
- Thorgan Hazard: 3, 145 min  
- Lars Stindl: 3, 220 min  
- Jonas Hofmann: 3, 231 min  
- Fabian Johnson: 4, 175 min  
- Julian Korb: 1, 13 min  
- André Hahn: 3, 45 min

**Forwards**
- Josip Drmić: 3, 172 min  
- Raffael: 2, 169 min

**Team statistics**

- **Goals scored**: 19  
- **Attempts**: 44/45 (Including one double substitution)

**Averages**
- **Possession**: Max. 70% v Fiorentina (a) & 65% v Schalke (h)  
- **Passing accuracy**: Min. 81% v Schalke (h)

### Key features

**Manchester United FC**
- 1-4-2-3-1; also played 1-4-4-2  
- Experienced goalkeeper in Sommer, good with feet  
- High defensive line with keeper  
- Experienced goalkeeper in Sommer, good with feet

**VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach**
- 1-4-2-3-1; also played 1-4-4-2  
- Experienced goalkeeper in Sommer, good with feet  
- High defensive line with keeper  
- Experienced goalkeeper in Sommer, good with feet

**Unusual substitutes**
José Mourinho: 1, 37 min  
Nacho: 1, 39 min  
Casillas: 1, 20 min

**Technical Report 2016/17**

**Manchester United FC**

**Player statistics**

- **Shots**: T: 36, O: 12  
- **Passes**: A: 500, C: 590

**VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach**

**Player statistics**

- **Shots**: T: 26, O: 13  
- **Passes**: A: 190, C: 217

**Unusual substitutes**
Niko Elvedi, Tobias Sippel, Ödilhan Sow

**App = Appearances; Mins = Minutes played; G = Goals; A = Assists**

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**VfL BORUSSIA MÖNCHENGLADBACH**

**Group stage**
- **UEFA Champions League**
  - Round of 32
  - Round of 16
  - Quarter-finals
  - Semi-finals

**Team shape**

**Group stage to final**
- **Including qualifying**

---

**Manchester United FC**

**Group stage**
- **FA Premier League**
  - Round of 32
  - Round of 16
  - Quarter-finals

**Team shape**

**Group stage to final**
- **Including qualifying**

---

**Manchester United FC**

**Group stage**
- **UEFA Europa League**
  - Round of 32
  - Round of 16
  - Quarter-finals

**Team shape**

**Group stage to final**
- **Including qualifying**
**OLYMPIACOS FC**

**Greece**

**Coach**

**Vasileios Vouzas**  
Born: 21/03/1984, Mournitz (SMH)  
Nationality: Greek  
Matches in UEFA Europa League/UEFA Cup: 2  
Matches in European club competition: 2

**Round of 32**

**AS ROMA**

**Italy**

**Coach**

**Luciano Spalletti**  
Born: 07/05/1958, Ceravolo (SM)  
Nationality: Italian  
Matches in UEFA Europa League/UEFA Cup: 5  
Matches in European club competition: 106  
Head coach:  
From 14/02/2016  
To 20/05/2017

**Group stage**

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**AS ROMA**

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**Team shape**

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**Team shape**

### Group stage

**Round of 32**

**Round of 16**

**Quarter-finals**

**Semi-finals**

**Final**

Dark green = home, light green = away; see page 5 for full club names

**Team statistics**

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<td>4</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>1-15 16-30 31-45 46-60 61-75 76-90 90+ 91-105</td>
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**Key features**

- **1-5-5-2**
- **Good team organisation with players standing in formation, very compact**
- **Defensive discipline solid block setting deep, close to 30m line**
- **Strong defensive set-up with support from midfield players**
- **Good teamwork, aggressive on the ball**
- **Press opposition to allow little space between lines**
- **Attracting wing-backs (Bukharov) provide regular supply of balls to striker**
- **Technical player with eye for goal in Novosibirsk**

### Team shape

**Defenders**

- Dark green = home, light green = away; see page 5 for full club names

### Full team statistics

- **A = Passes attempted**
- **G = Goals**

### Final

**Team shape**

**Group stage**

**Round of 32**

**Round of 16**

**Quarter-finals**

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**Key features**

- **1-5-5-2 also played 1-4-2-3-1 and 1-4-4-2**
- **Influential, chock-stopping goalkeeper in Fährmann**
- **Leadership of experienced Howedes, orginating defence**
- **Variety in passing with game-opening diagonal or vertical passes in build-up**
- **Strong on counterattack with fast defence-to-attack transitions**
- **Notable attacking contribution from left-back Kolašinac**
- **Goretzka drives team on from midfield, strong technique, links well with forwards**
- **Dead-ball threat with set-piece specialists**
- **Speedy winger Choupo-Moting, dangerous in 1 vs 1**
- **Hard-working central striker Tarkowski helps back defensively**

### Full team statistics

- **A = Passes attempted**
- **G = Goals**

### Final
Roll of honour

2017 Manchester United FC
2016 Sevilla FC
2015 Sevilla FC
2014 Sevilla FC
2013 Chelsea FC
2012 Club Atlético de Madrid
2011 FC Porto
2010 Club Atlético de Madrid
2009 FC Shakhtar Donetsk
2008 FC Zenit
2007 Sevilla FC
2006 Sevilla FC
2005 FC Dynamo Moskva
2004 Valencia CF
2003 FC Porto
2002 Feyenoord
2001 Liverpool FC
2000 Galatasaray SK
1999 Porto FC
1998 FC Internazionale Milano
1997 FC Schalke 04
1996 FC Bayern München
1995 Porto FC
1994 FC Internazionale Milano
1993 Juventus
1992 AFC Ajax
1991 FC Internazionale Milano
1990 Juventus
1989 SSC Napoli
1988 Bayern 04 Leverkusen
1987 IFK Göteborg
1986 Real Madrid CF
1985 Real Madrid CF
1984 Tottenham Hotspur FC
1983 RSC Anderlecht
1982 FC Copenhagen
1981 Ipswich Town FC
1980 Eintracht Frankfurt
1979 VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach
1978 PSV Eindhoven
1977 Juventus
1976 Liverpool FC
1975 VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach
1974 Feyenoord
1973 Liverpool FC
1972 Tottenham Hotspur FC

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