



Union des associations européennes de football



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## ***Zinedine Zidane voted top player by fans***

### **uefa.com users vote Zidane, Beckenbauer and Cruyff as top three**

The search to find European football's top player from the past 50 years ended today, Thursday 22 April, with the announcement that French international midfielder Zinedine Zidane has beaten off competition from German great Franz Beckenbauer and Dutch master Johan Cruyff, to be named number one by the users of uefa.com.

The announcement, made at the UEFA Golden Jubilee ceremony, which opened the XXVIII Ordinary UEFA Congress in Limassol, provided much discussion among the assembled delegates and football representatives, especially with Beckenbauer in attendance.

"Just to be in the top 20 is touching, it's great," said Zidane, who provided a message via video from the Spanish capital. "It is extraordinary to be voted one of the best European players of the past 50 years. I am a bit surprised, but I am very glad that people appreciate what we do on the pitch.

"I am bracketed with those players that have made a difference in the last 50 years and when you play football, this is the reason you do it. For me, football is everything. It was my biggest passion and something I always knew how to do best. Even today, practically at the end of my career, I enjoy playing football. It is a privilege."

No formal award was made to Zidane, although as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of both UEFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), UEFA will provide a donation to a Youth football development fund being administered by the AFC in order to help install an artificial turf pitch in East Timor, which will be named after the France and Real Madrid CF midfielder.

Although a losing UEFA Cup finalist with FC Girondins de Bordeaux in 1996, and subsequently a two-time UEFA Champions League losing finalist with Juventus FC, Zidane scored the winning goal in Madrid's 2-1 victory against Bayer 04 Leverkusen in the 2001/02 UEFA Champions League final in Glasgow. He has also won the UEFA Super Cup and the European/South American Cup twice - once with Juventus and once with Madrid. With France, Zidane has won the FIFA World Cup in 1998 and the UEFA EURO 2000, as well as being named European Footballer of the Year in 1998, twice winning the FIFA World Footballer of the Year and being selected in uefa.com users' Teams of 2002 and 2003.

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As part of the events marking UEFA's 50th anniversary celebrations, European football's governing body set out to establish the 50 best European players of the past 50 years - as voted for by the fans. A list of 250 players from across the five decades of UEFA's existence was assembled, and uefa.com readers were asked to choose their ten favourite players from each decade, a process which began in October 2003 and which ended in December 2003.

The nominations were based on performances in domestic and European club competitions, as well as UEFA European Championships and FIFA World Cups. The list of candidates was carefully compiled by a panel headed by Jozef Venglos, the former Czechoslovakia national coach, who is now chairman of UEFA's Technical Development Committee.

150,000 people took part in the poll, with over 7,000,000 votes cast. Zidane emerged in first place by 1,013 votes from Beckenbauer, with Cruyff a further 3,237 votes behind in third. Overall, Zidane also topped the list of players who competed between the period between 1994 and 2003. Beckenbauer was the top-ranked player from the period between 1964 and 1973, with Alfredo di Stéfano (1954-63), Paolo Rossi (1974-83) and Marco van Basten (1984-93) heading the other decades.

The final countdown of the top ten players was as follows:

1. Zinedine Zidane 123,582
2. Franz Beckenbauer 122,569
3. Johan Cruyff 119,332
4. Marco van Basten 117,987
5. Dino Zoff 114,529
6. Alfredo Di Stéfano 107,435
7. Eusébio 103,937
8. Lev Yashin 101,862
9. Michel Platini 99,380
10. Paolo Maldini 95,497