

Ranking of the best football players in the world 2023

Our comprehensive collection of the top 10 world footballers of 2023.

Who is the best football player in the world? The question will always be asked, and the answer will never be unanimous.

Declaring the best player on the planet is an almost impossible task given the incredible proliferation of options and those that are getting better all the time.

Erling Haaland mocked Premier League defenses during his first trip last season, Kylian Mbappe remains a hugely talented star, while Lionel Messi is lighting up a whole new continent at the age of 36.

We've based our list on a variety of factors. We've thought about short-term form, but particularly strong or weak 2022/23 seasons are not the final factor in many cases, so players with a long history of stunning performances are not dismissed at the first sign of decline.

Trophies, league power, raw stats, unquantifiable magic, and a host of other aspects have come together to form our criteria for the list, and we know you'll disagree completely.

To further whet your appetite, and to show the absolute strength of the top ten, Manchester United's creative giant Bruno Fernandes, Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, and the brilliant Pedri and Javi, were all absent, in addition to defensive giants David Alaba and Virgil van Dijk.

RadioTimes.com brings you our definitive list of the world's best footballers of 2023.

10. Jude Bellingham (Real Madrid)

Some may say it's too early to include him in the Giants' roster, but Bellingham has already shown enough to convince the world of his outrageous talent at Dortmund and on the international stage.

Bellingham's dynamic presence has transformed him from a youth player into an instant starter for England at the 2022 World Cup, and his performances for Dortmund have put them firmly in the title race against Bayern Munich, who are only bettered on goal difference.

He's the complete package in midfield really. A strong physique, tremendous ball handler, and precise passing skills, Bellingham will soar in the 2023/24 season, buoyed by enough confidence to wear Zinedine Zidane's No.5 shirt at the Bernabeu.

9. Luka Modric (Real Madrid)

Immortal, immortal, majestic. Modric will not grow old or retire, we simply refuse to believe it. It's been 20 years since Modric's professional debut for Zrinjski Mostar in the Bosnian Premier League, and more than 800 games into his career, and there are still few players you trust more to lead the midfield.

Modric is the embodiment of silk. He never looks fussy or stressed, he's smooth as butter. A deft touch, a little drop of the shoulder to buy space, a deft, unstoppable pass designed to cut

through the lines. We've all seen it, and the opponents he faces have seen it before too, but no one can do anything about it.

The 37-year-old should be on the decline, should be losing his legs and unpredictability should creep in, but Real Madrid's management of his minutes has been impressive. He will be fit and fresh for those massive nights in the Champions League. He will continue to run the show until the curtain comes down.

8. Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid)

We promise this isn't just a Real Madrid lineup, but it's an ominous sign for the rest of the football world that while the capital's snake has shed some of its old skin in recent transfer windows, an equally toxic threat is slipping into the open, a team led by Vinny Junior.

The 23-year-old has made over 200 appearances for the club in all competitions since 2018, and is one of the few contenders who can, without a hint of delusion, claim to be at the top of this list in as many leagues. Years of time.

Vinicius's pace is blistering, with a dynamite acceleration capable of propelling himself past petrified defenders at will. What is even more impressive is that he exploits this speed with quick footwork and ball control to match any player in the world.

7. Robert Lewandowski (Barcelona)

Goals, goals, goals. During a decade of false attacks, inside forwards, and overturned objects, Lewandowski has relentlessly raised the flag for natural attackers.

In many ways, Lewandowski is a meaningless entity. He knows where the ball will flow, he knows the positions to be in and when to be there, he knows all the measurements of the goal rim and he will use every inch of it to ripple the net. If the ball drops to one player in a one-on-one situation in world football, Lewandowski is the player most likely to be in that position and the man you want to be there.

Lewandowski is very capable when it comes to building attacks and creating chances, but his movement and awareness as a target for others to find means that at his most he hovers around the top end of the pitch.

6. Karim Benzema (Al-Ittihad)

It may be tempting to say that Karim Benzema enjoyed a final Indian summer in 2022/23, but in reality, he simply did what he has always done: lead the line, score goals, win trophies and repeat.

Everything Real Madrid has achieved in the last 14 years was achieved under Benzema. He hasn't always been treated with respect, and Real Madrid has tried to replace him with plenty of strikers over the past decade, but no one has been able to fill the No. 9 position quite like him. Benzema did a fair amount of the dirty work in 90 minutes. He digs deep and acts as a wide/inside striker's dream, the ultimate focal point to build attacks around. Benzema is happy to

play with his back to goal and this is often as dangerous for opponents as pressing them directly. Play 'one', do a dart and you'll always get 'two'. He is a complete striker who finally got the praise his play deserved before leaving for Saudi Arabia.

5. Erling Haaland (Man City)

Haaland has normalized the abnormal. It can be said that the only drawback that the Scandinavian giant faced in the 2022/23 season was raising the level in an insurmountable manner from the beginning. Between the start of the season and the end of 2022, Haaland found the net 22 times in just 15 Premier League appearances. For context, that total would have won him the Golden Boot in seven Premier League seasons. He calmed down a bit after Christmas, but he still played at an exceptional level.

Possessing unrivaled physicality, his ability to finish – including improvised and instinctive finishes by any means necessary – is astonishing and boasts a turn of pace that few in the Premier League can match. A little better? We are likely to see Haaland at his absolute peak. The next few years should be explosive, and if he proves consistent over several years, he will take the top spot on this list without a doubt.

4. Harry Kane (Bayern Munich)

The relative obscurity of foreign leagues often inflates a player's reputation because we are fed many of their most notable achievements and rarely see the 4/10s, the days they prefer not to remember their failures and their failures. The Premier League, in all its bare-bones glory, is not often a place where rival fans can appreciate world-class talent when they see it. It feels like we'll finally reach that peak in 2023 with Kane. Then he left. For the foreign league.

Kane's end-of-season numbers remain steady around the 30-goal mark with a combination of countless assists and contributions, putting him above almost every other striker in the world. His finishing is perfect, and his positioning to accommodate the lack of raw speed is second to none, although his unique selling point is his uncanny playmaking ability, picking out the pass from deep, swinging in the cross, and playing the No. 1 ball. He played the No. 10 and No. 9 roles simultaneously. Effectively, he achieved all of this in a team that was simply not at his level and rarely even close to his level. He is a killer for club and country and started his life in Munich without missing a beat.

3. Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City)

Kevin De Bruyne appears to have had a relatively lackluster season in 2022/23... but he still has 22 assists and scored nine goals in 42 appearances in the Premier League and Champions League combined. Injury problems have meant the Belgian has failed to dominate our screens as he has in the past, but like Haaland, he has achieved extraordinary feats that seem ordinary. KDB may be the greatest passer of the ball in Premier League history, while his vision and penchant for defense-breaking passes combine with frightening effectiveness on a number of occasions.

One of the best aspects of De Bruyne is that he comes with all the trimmings. He is a lethal taker of set-pieces, is unexpectedly physical, and really quick to score goals. Without these things, KDB would still be the best player, but with them at his disposal, he becomes a multi-layered box of tricks.

2. Kylian Mbappe (Paris Saint-Germain)

Mbappe is a superstar forged by the crucible of the World Cup. It's an old-fashioned way to achieve greatness given the importance of the Champions League and Premier League, but Mbappe's international exploits prove his ability and mentality beyond doubt.

Neymar, like many before him, has been mocked by the French league, but his form on the world stage for both club and country puts him ahead of the curve. His final hat-trick in the World Cup finals will be the stuff of legend - a remarkable performance from a top player.

Mbappe is often portrayed as a dramatic figure in the ongoing psychodrama between Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid, with much of his mind on off-pitch politics, but the character he showed throughout the World Cup, his mentality and steely determination to win. Dragging his team kicking and screaming to the cup has lifted him another rung on the ladder.

He is one of the fastest footballers we have ever seen grace the field, with an unparalleled shooting range. He can hit the ball on the run or with tremendous force from a stalled start. He can hit great shots into the corners and dig the ball high and into the roof of the net. If Mbappe has the ball in your own half, you are not safe.

1. Lionel Messi (Inter Miami)

For the first time in over a decade, we had to sincerely consider our choice of No.1 but in the spirit of VAR, we found no clear reason to exclude Messi from the top.

There is no denying that Messi has improved. He has lost some of his blistering pace but his intelligence and football manipulation mean he controls the outcome of the match

Gaming remains as strong as ever. He's not a versatile terrier, and won't get into a lot of dirty work, but to count that against him is to miss the point entirely.

Messi continues to dominate matches – subtly and explicitly – for club and country. His performances directly inspired Argentina to victory in the Copa America and the World Cup, and he also turned bottom club MLS, Inter Miami, into the Cup Finals within a month.

Messi's time at the top will be over, very soon, but for now, we can't find a justification for dropping a player of this talent, this influence and influence, with such recent success and fuel left in the tank. The magician is sovereign.

Who is the best football player in the world?

Lionel Messi is still the undisputed king of world football, although it would be foolish not to raise an eyebrow as he gets older.

As an individual talent and based on nearly two decades of cold objective data and warm, incommensurable charm, he's the best. Not just the best of the moment, but the best of all time.

Do you agree with our list? of course not! And that's perfectly fine, even though you're completely wrong