

# Buffon, Messi, Ronaldo Shortlisted for Player of Year: UEFA



Players are judged on their performances in all competitions - domestic, continental and international

LONDON (Dispatches) - Gianluigi Buffon, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have been shortlisted for the UEFA men's

player of the year. Italy and Juventus goalkeeper Buffon, Argentina and Barcelona striker Messi and Portugal and

Real Madrid forward Ronaldo were chosen by a jury of 80 coaches and 55 journalists. Messi and Ronaldo have won the

award twice - Ronaldo winning last season.

The award will be presented at the 2017/18 Champions League group stage draw in Monaco on Thursday 24 August.

Pernille Harder (Denmark, Linköping and Wolfsburg), Dzsenifer Marozsán (Germany, Lyon) and Lieke Martens (Netherlands, Rosengård and Barcelona) are the three nominees for the women's award.

The players who make up the rest of the top 10 are:

- 4: Luka Modric (Croatia, Real Madrid)
- 5: Toni Kroos (Germany, Real Madrid)
- 6: Paulo Dybala (Argentina, Juventus)
- 7: Sergio Ramos (Spain, Real Madrid)
- 8: Kylian Mbappe (France, Monaco)
- 9: Robert Lewandowski (Poland, Bayern Munich)
- 10: Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Sweden, Manchester United)

## Iran Beat Hong Kong at Asian Women's Volleyball Championship

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran defeated Hong Kong 3-1 (21-25, 25-19, 25-18, 25-15) at the 19th Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship on Tuesday.

Mahsa Saberi top scored Iran with 24 points at the Muntinlupa Sports Complex.

The Persians have been beaten by Chinese Taipei (3-1), Thailand (3-0) and Australia (3-1) and defeated the Maldives (3-0) and Hong Kong in the competition so far.

The 2017 Asian Women's Volleyball Championship is being held from 9 to 17 August 2017 in the Philippines.

The matches are being held in two cities, namely Binan and Manila.

## Bayern Expected to Win Sixth Straight Bundesliga Title



BERLIN (AFP) - Bayern Munich kick off the new Bundesliga season on Friday with the coaches of 13 of their 17 rivals expecting them to dominate again -- although Usain Bolt's recent shock defeat is being used as inspiration.

Bayern host Bayer Leverkusen at the Allianz Arena in the season opener, with the Bavarians the overwhelming favorites to win the title.

In a survey by AFP subsidiary SID of the 18 coaches in Germany's top flight, the overwhelming consensus is that Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern will claim a sixth straight league crown.

"I'm tipping Bayern, but nothing is set in stone," said Cologne's coach Peter Stoeger.

"If Usain Bolt can lose a 100 meters race, perhaps someone else can be champions in Germany."

Jamaica's Bolt could only settle for bronze over 100m behind Justin Gatlin at the IAAF World Championships in his final individual race before retiring in London.

In the last decade, Bayern have won the Bundesliga title seven times -- five of which have been on the spin since 2012.

They finished 15 points ahead of second-placed RB Leipzig last term.

"Our required standard is to win the Bundesliga title," said Bayern president Uli Hoeness bluntly.

According to the SID survey, only Borussia Dortmund's new boss Peter Bosz, Hoffenheim's Julian Nagelsmann and Stuttgart's Hannes Wolf opted not to say which name they think will be engraved on the trophy for 2017/18.

Leverkusen's Heiko Herrlich was the only coach who tipped Dortmund, the last team to break Bayern's stranglehold in 2011/12, to be champions.

## U.S., Canada, Mexico Bid for 2026 World Cup

ZURICH (AFP) - The United States, Mexico and Canada's bid for the 2026 World Cup on Tuesday invited 44 cities across the three nations to declare an interest in staging games at the football extravaganza, a statement said.

A total of 49 stadiums in the candidate cities have been considered for inclusion in the official World Cup bid which will be submitted to FIFA by March 16, 2018.

The joint North American bid is

seen as the favorite for the 2026 World Cup, with only one other bid -- Morocco -- so far in the running for the tournament.

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada World Cup bid will submit between 20-25

venues in its final bid to FIFA, with 12 locations likely to be chosen as host cities.

The 2026 World Cup will be the first tournament using FIFA's expanded 48-team format.

## Zverev Seeking Strong Start in Bid for ATP Hat Trick

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - He's the hottest man in tennis after winning trophies at Montreal and Washington this month, but Alexander Zverev would like to escape his opening round without a scare for once.

The 20-year-old German, a career-best seventh in this week's ATP rankings, could complete a hat trick of titles this week at Cincinnati in the last major tuneup for the U.S. Open, which starts August 28 in New York.

But his first matches have been nail-biters in both championship runs, Australia's Jordan Thompson falling 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) at Washington and France's Richard Gasquet squandering three match points in losing 6-3, 4-6 7-6 (7/3) at Montreal.

"I won both first rounds in Montreal and Washington 7-6 in the third and then after that I haven't lost a set in the whole tournament," Zverev said Tuesday.

"I think winning those kinds of matches helps as well. That gives you a lot of confidence for the next

few rounds."

Zverev has captured five titles this year, taking Montpellier and Rome after being pushed to three sets in openers and Munich after dropping the first set but winning two tie-breakers in his second match against countryman Jan-Lennard Struff.

### Sharapova Awarded Main Draw Wildcard at U.S. Open

Meanwhile, former world number one Maria Sharapova will make her first grand slam appearance in over 18 months after she was awarded a main-draw wildcard for the upcoming U.S. Open, organizers said on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old Russian, who returned from a 15-month doping ban earlier this year, was denied a wildcard at the French Open, then missed the grasscourt season, including Wimbledon, with a thigh injury.

Sharapova tweeted on Tuesday: "Thank you, @usopen. This is so so special. #goosebumps"

Sharapova tested positive for the drug meldonium in 2016, which



had been added to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) banned substances list in January of that year.

The winner of five grand slam titles, including the 2006 U.S. Open, said she was unaware of the

change.

Alexander Zverev of Germany hits a return against Roger Federer of Switzerland during their ATP Rogers Cup final match, at Uniprix Stadium in Montreal, Quebec, on August 13, 2017.

## Fröome Looking Forward to Tour/Vuelta Double Bid



PARIS (Reuters) - The Vuelta is where everything started for Chris Froome and it could well be where

in the modern era.

Only Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil (1963) and Bernard Hinault (1973) have achieved that feat, but the Spanish race was then held in April-May.

Froome, instead, will have only had 25 days to rest before Saturday's Grand Depart in Nîmes, France, on Saturday.

"I've got the opportunity and I'm certainly going to go for it," Froome said. "The Vuelta is a race I love - it's vicious but it's three weeks that I enjoy."

Froome has had his share of disappointment in the Vuelta, losing

by 13 seconds to Spain's Juan Jose Cobo in 2011, the year he came to prominence, before settling again for second in 2014 and 2016.

Last year, the Team Sky rider effectively lost his chances after being trapped behind following an unexpected attack in a downhill by Alberto Contador, who will take part in his last race before heading into retirement.

The Spaniard, who won the last of his seven grand tour titles at the 2015 Giro d'Italia, is not among the top favorites after finishing ninth overall in the Tour, where Froome prevailed for the fourth time.

## German Minister Calls for Tough Response to Soccer Violence

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's interior minister called for tough measures to crack down on soccer fans who commit violent acts, including stadium bans, after fireworks and fires disrupted a match in the Baltic city of Rostock on Monday.

Thomas de Maiziere, who also serves as sports minister, told the daily Bild that overall violence levels were rising in Germany, as evidenced by clashes that injured hundreds of police officers at the G20 summit in Hamburg in July.

"We are talking about significant criminal acts in some cases," de Maiziere told the paper. "The justice system must be hard-nosed in this regard." One approach could be to have known perpetrators

register with police before and after matches, or to impose stadium bans.

Monday's violence in Rostock erupted after supporters of Berlin's Hertha BSC, one of the top teams in the country, fired fireworks at fans of third division Hansa Rostock at a match in the Ostsee Stadium in Rostock.

Rostock fans then set fire to a Hertha banner that German media said was likely stolen from the Berlin team's stadium in 2014, as well as seats.

De Maiziere condemned the violence and said it was a shame that small groups of "violent anarchists" were able to ruin the image of the sport.