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CHAMPIONS
LEAGUE

MALLORCA 2023



5-7 MAY
OFFICIAL PROGRAMME
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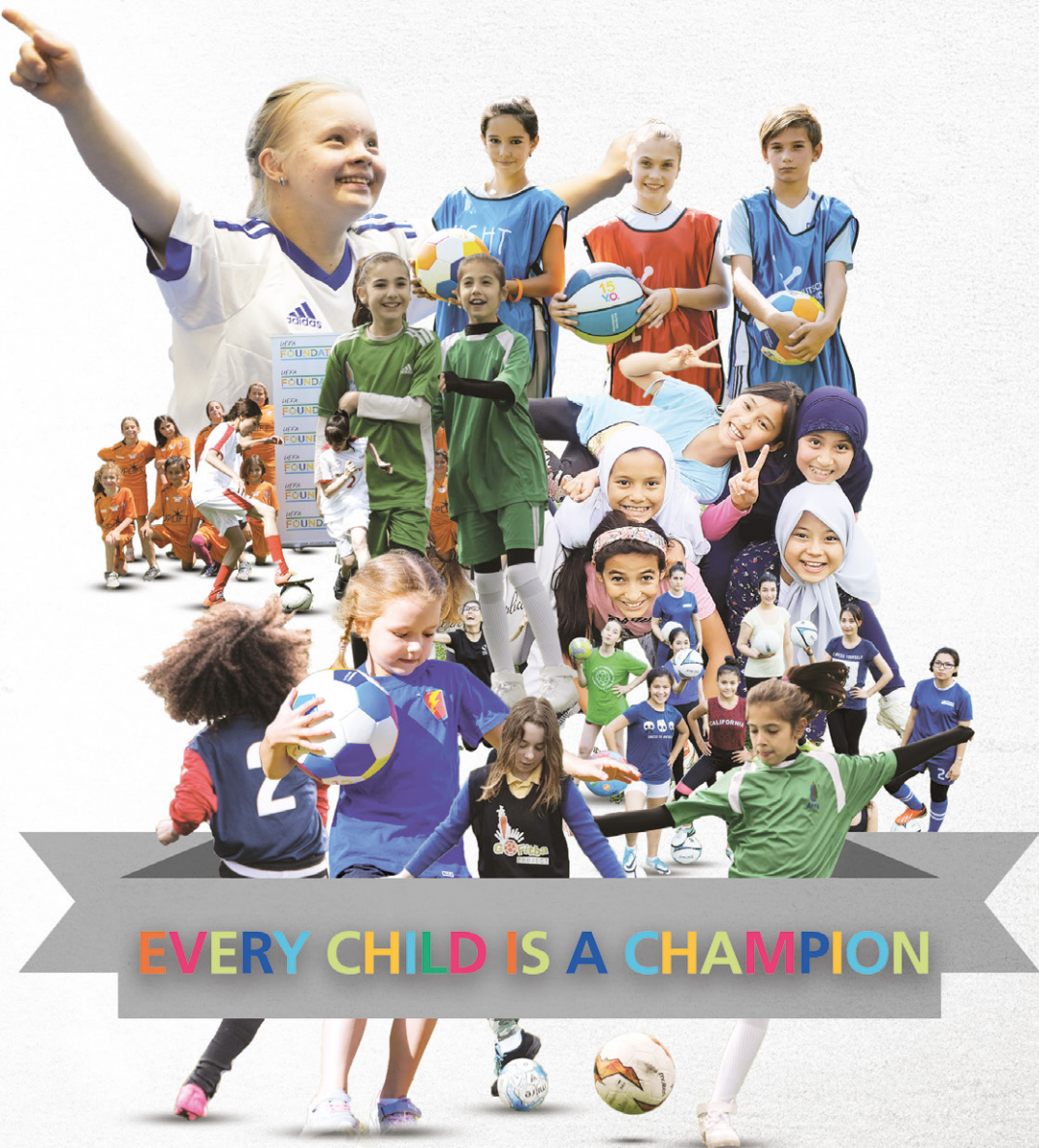


SKY'S THE LIMIT

Adolfo and Bernat Povill celebrate Barça's comprehensive 4-0 victory against Sporting CP in the 2022 Futsal Champions League final. A dominant performance at the Arena Riga earned the Spanish side their fourth title and second in three years.



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Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President
Presidente de la UEFA



WELCOME TO THE FINALS

BIENVENIDAS/OS A LA FASE FINAL

Welcome to Mallorca for the finals of the 2023 UEFA Futsal Champions League finals.

The very participation of AE Mallorca Palma Futsal and Sporting Anderlecht Futsal, who, alongside usual suspects Sporting CP and SL Benfica, will fight for the most prestigious trophy in futsal club football, is a testimony to the rise of competitiveness of the game, which grows from strength to strength.

These are exciting times for futsal, as this fast-paced and dynamic sport continues its steady growth in quality and popularity and maximises its potential across the continent. New competitions have kicked off with immense success, including the Futsal Finalissima, which added a much-needed global appeal to the game.

It is hard to imagine a more picturesque setup for such an event than the prominent Mediterranean island, and I take the opportunity to thank Royal Spanish Football Association and their president, Luis Rubiales, for their warm hospitality.

I wish the best of luck to the finalists, and may the best team win!

Bienvenidas/os a Mallorca para la fase final de la UEFA Champions League de Fútbol Sala 2023.

Con la participación del AE Mallorca Palma Futsal y el Sporting Anderlecht Futsal – que, juntos al Sporting CP y al SL Benfica, lucharán por el trofeo más prestigioso del fútbol sala de clubes – vemos evidencia del aumento de la competitividad de este juego, que está cada vez más fuerte.

Ésta es una época emocionante para el fútbol sala, un deporte rápido y dinámico que ha mantenido su crecimiento – en calidad y popularidad – y ha maximizado su potencial en todo el continente.

Es difícil imaginar un escenario más pintoresco para tal evento que esta isla Mediterránea tan importante, y aprovecho la oportunidad para dar las gracias a la Real Federación de Fútbol Española y a su presidente, Luis Rubiales, por su calurosa hospitalidad.

Les deseo la mejor suerte a todos los finalistas ... ¡y que gane el mejor equipo!

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RESPECT



José Tirado
General director of Mallorca Palma Futsal
Director general del Mallorca Palma Futsal



WELCOME TO MALLORCA BIENVENIDOS/AS A MALLORCA

Mallorca is an island which embraces sport and lives it with a lot of passion. Futsal has become a social and sporting reference point for a wonderful place from which world-class sporting figures have emerged in many disciplines.

Mallorca Palma Futsal have managed to create a culture and an attachment to a sport which has grown exponentially to the point where the club has become one of the great sporting phenomenons in Spain.

For us, it is a matter of pride and responsibility to be hosting the UEFA Futsal Champions League in the year of our 25th anniversary – an event which will give Mallorca, a tourism hot spot, a world-class sporting showcase.

Sport is a way of life for us and this final phase represents both a challenge and an extraordinary experience and we hope everyone who comes to our island will feel at home. To play in Europe was a dream for us and we'd like you all now to form part of that dream and enjoy a great experience.

Mallorca es una isla que abraza el deporte y lo vive con mucha pasión. El fútbol sala se ha convertido en un referente social y deportivo de un paraíso del que sobresalen figuras mundiales deportivas en numerosas disciplinas. El Mallorca Palma Futsal ha conseguido crear una cultura y una afición a un deporte que ha crecido de forma exponencial hasta convertir al club en uno de los grandes fenómenos deportivos en España. Para nosotros es un orgullo y una responsabilidad ser los anfitriones de la fase final de la UEFA Futsal Champions League en el año de nuestro veinticinco aniversario y que convertirá a Mallorca, referente del turismo, en un escaparate mundial deportivo. El deporte es un modelo de vida para nosotros y esta fase final supone un reto y una extraordinaria experiencia en la que queremos que todos los que vengan a nuestra tierra, se sientan como en casa. Jugar en Europa era un sueño para nosotros y ahora queremos que todos forméis parte de él para que podáis disfrutar de una gran experiencia.

FUTSAL FLYING HIGH

WITH FRESH INVESTMENT AND A CLEAR STRATEGY FOR THE GAME IN EUROPE, FUTSAL'S FUTURE HAS NEVER BEEN BRIGHTER

For an indication of just how quickly futsal in Europe is growing, look no further than last season's Futsal Champions League finals in Riga. Latvia is not a traditional futsal heartland and has never had a side reach the finals, but even so 8,442 fans packed Arēna Rīga for the decider between Barça and Sporting CP, a record crowd for a neutral UEFA club futsal fixture. This attendance has only been topped seven times in finals matches, and all of them had the host teams involved.

Across the board UEFA's futsal competitions are breaking new ground, showing the spectators' growing appetite for top-level futsal. Four UEFA futsal championship trophies were lifted for the first time in 2022, for men's and women's national teams, clubs and youth teams. Meanwhile, the first Finalissima was contested between the top European and South American nations, with World and European champions Portugal coming out on top.

The Futsal Champions League itself continues to grow. This season kicked off with 56 contenders from 52 of 54 eligible national associations, more than double the number of clubs that took part in the inaugural 2001/02 UEFA Futsal Cup. The expansion of domestic leagues in places where futsal was not even recognisable has played a huge part in this growth.

The development of European futsal has

always been about tending to the grassroots and supporting showcase events like the Futsal Champions League finals. UEFA rewards associations entering its futsal competitions via the HatTrick scheme, which uses profits from the UEFA European Football Championship to fund football and futsal initiatives across the continent.

In the case of the Futsal Champions League, each association represented at any stage receives €20,000 a season; and with 52 nations fielding clubs, total payments topped €1m this season. Further grants are made for entries into the men's and women's national-team tournaments, with newcomers such as Austria now taking part.

There has also been direct HatTrick funding for projects such as San Marino's national futsal arena and the French Football Federation's conversion of outdoor sport spaces into futsal courts. The competitive nature of San Marino's national team, and France's rise up the futsal ranks, is proof of how beneficial this aid can be.

With competitions growing and innovations introduced such as home-and-away national-team qualifiers, European futsal is attracting players and fans all over the continent. For UEFA, that means expanding into fresh territories and supporting associations in development, as well as putting on as spectacular a show as possible on the biggest stages. So sit back and enjoy the action. ■



Portugal's Zicky Té kisses the Finalissima trophy



THE PERFECT MATCH



THE PATH TO PALMA

THE QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN IN NUMBERS

70

Sporting's João Matos broke the competition appearance record during the main round when he featured in his 70th game



This is the third time Benfica and Sporting have both qualified – following last season and 2010/11

3



Top scorer

Vinicius Lazzaretti
(Piaś Gliwice)

11

Most assists

7

Grélio
(Sporting Anderlecht)

Lassi Lintula
(Kampuksen Dynamo)

Mikko Kytölä
(Kampuksen Dynamo)

24

Anderlecht and Palma are the 23rd and 24th different clubs to reach the finals since 2007

120



games played

60

Barça's Jesús Velasco also became the first person to coach more than 60 games

854

goals scored



minutes per goal



Most attempts

Diego Cavinato
(Sporting CP)

28

1



Anderlecht are the first Belgian team into the finals since Charleroi in 2007

7.12

goals per match



4

All four finalists qualified unbeaten

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AE MALLORCA PALMA FUTSAL

FINALS APPEARANCES 1

BEST PERFORMANCE DEBUT EUROPEAN SEASON



COACH
Antonio Vadillo

HOMETOWN HEROES

For Palma, staging the finals at Velòdrom Illes Balears is a fond return to the home where the club – then known as Manacor – played between 2010 and 2014 before the revamped Son Moix arena opened. It is also a sign of how far they have come. Only following the 2014 move, when they were renamed Palma, did they become regular Spanish league play-off contenders. They began to build

support in Mallorca and eventually earned a European debut after coming so close to a first major honour last season.

Palma became only the sixth different Spanish club to qualify for the domestic finals after an epic play-off semi-final win against Jaén at an ecstatic Son Moix. They had to fight till the end, before winning the second leg in extra time to take the tie 6-5 on aggregate. →

SQUAD

Goalkeepers	Nationality	Date of birth	Qualifying apps/goals	Competition apps/goals
1 Carlos Barrón	ESP	01/10/1987	6/0	9/0
3 Luan Muller	ARM	17/03/1993	6/0	11/0
Outfield players				
2 Chaguinha	GEO	25/07/1988	6/2	26/9
7 Mancuso	BRA	01/06/1988	6/3	6/3
8 Eloy Rojas	ESP	27/11/1994	6/4	6/4
10 Marlon	BRA	28/12/1987	5/3	7/4
11 Mario Rivillos	ESP	13/12/1989	6/4	44/24
13 Moslem Oladghobad	IRN	29/11/1995	6/1	6/1
14 Francisco Tomaz	BRA	13/09/1990	6/0	6/0
15 Hossein Tayebi	IRN	29/09/1988	5/5	39/21
17 Cléber Batista	BRA	06/01/1997	6/2	6/2
20 Dani Saldise	ESP	08/07/1995	6/3	10/4
28 Fabinho	BRA	28/11/2001	0/0	0/0
33 Cainan De Matos	ITA	27/01/1990	6/0	6/0

QUALIFYING RESULTS AND STANDINGS

Main round Group 1

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Palma (ESP)	3	1	2	0	15	9	5
Sporting Anderlecht (BEL)*	3	1	2	0	8	4	5
Kairat Almaty (KAZ)	3	1	2	0	7	6	5
Sporting Paris (FRA)	3	0	0	3	7	18	0

Palma 11-5 Paris, Kairat 2-2 Anderlecht, Kairat 2-2 Palma, Anderlecht 4-0 Paris, Paris 2-3 Kairat, Anderlecht 2-2 Palma

Elite round Group B

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Palma (ESP)*	3	3	0	0	15	3	9
Piast Gliwice (POL)	3	2	0	1	10	8	6
Novo Vrijeme (CRO)	3	0	1	2	3	7	1
Dobovec (SVN)	3	0	1	2	5	15	1

Novo Vrijeme 1-4 Piast Gliwice, Dobovec 2-8 Palma, Dobovec 1-1 Novo Vrijeme, Palma 5-0 Piast Gliwice, Piast Gliwice 6-2 Dobovec, Palma 2-1 Novo Vrijeme

*Tournament hosts

ONE TO WATCH

HOSSEIN TAYEBI

Palma's intent showed with Tayebi's summer signing from Benfica. With experience in several top European leagues and well over 150 goals for Iran, he's a thrilling attacking player.



Please see [UEFA.com](https://www.uefa.com) for definitive finals squad.



Mancuso lines up a shot against Piast Gliwice

“TOP SEEDING AND HOME ADVANTAGE WERE BOTH FULLY EXPLOITED IN THE ELITE ROUND AS PALMA QUALIFIED WITH A GAME TO SPARE”

→ And although Barça beat Palma to the league title, it is the Champions League debutants who have made it to these finals as opposed to the four-time winners. It seemed unlikely when Palma found themselves 3-0 down in just over two minutes against Sporting Paris in their main round opener, but they fought back for an extraordinary 11-5 win. After drawing 2-2 with both Kairat Almaty and Sporting Anderlecht, Palma were first in the group on goal difference.

Top seeding and home advantage at Son Moix were both fully exploited in the elite round as Palma beat Dobovec 8-2 and Piast Gilwice 5-0, meaning their finals place was secured with a game to spare. They were determined to keep their unbeaten run intact, however, coming from behind to beat Novo Vrijeme 2-1. Although their four-goal hero of that play-off against Jaén, Diego Nunes, is now with Benfica, there is plenty more attacking talent to go around. And even though

Palma have never been at this stage before, a number of their squad have played at the finals.

Mario Rivillos struck twice when Inter beat Sporting CP 7-0 in the 2017 final and has also been a bronze medallist with Barça as well as a EURO winner for Spain. He joined last summer from Levante, as Palma also enlisted Iranian star Hossein Tayebi from Benfica. Previously a bronze medallist with the Portuguese side and runner-up with Kairat, he is a world-class talent who is always among the goals. Marlon, Dani Saldise and Chaguinha also have final-four experience. Completing the team are Eloy Rojas, Cainan de Matos, Cléber, Moslem Oladghobad, Mancuso and goalkeepers Luan Muller and Carlos Barrón, a club stalwart for over a decade. They are led by former Spanish international Antonio Vadillo, who made the leap from player to coach in 2017. ■



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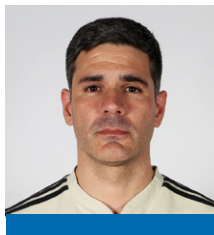
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SL BENFICA

FINALS APPEARANCES 6

BEST PERFORMANCE WINNERS 2010



COACH
Mário Silva

NATIONAL PRIDE

Benfica were the first Portuguese side to lift this trophy on a memorable night in Lisbon in 2010. They are now keen to wrest the national limelight back from two-time European champions and rivals Sporting CP. Benfica were knocked out by Kairat in the quarter-finals of the one-off eight-team tournament in Riga last year after Barça recovered from three goals down – their title

hopes ending in extra time on both occasions.

The Eagles are now aiming to make the final for the first time since that famous 2010 win. Their 15 goals in three main round wins were shared among nine different players, with just one goal conceded in each game. However, the elite round then brought plenty of nerve-racking twists and turns, including a scare in Almaty during the opener. →

SQUAD

Goalkeepers	Nationality	Date of birth	Qualifying apps/goals	Competition apps/goals
12 André Sousa	POR	25/02/1986	6/0	38/1
22 Léo Gugiel	BRA	13/06/1996	5/0	18/0
Outfield players				
2 Silvestre Ferreira	POR	05/05/1999	6/2	17/5
3 Rômulo	RUS	28/09/1986	3/3	36/16
4 Afonso Jesus	POR	06/01/1998	6/1	29/7
7 Bruno Coelho	POR	01/08/1987	2/0	26/11
8 Gonçalo Sobral	POR	10/04/1996	6/1	6/1
10 Arthur	BRA	16/05/1994	6/2	30/7
11 Ivan Chishkala	RUS	11/07/1995	3/2	31/17
16 Bruno Cintra	BRA	05/10/1993	5/3	19/7
17 Carlos Monteiro	POR	21/08/2002	0/0	0/0
18 Diego Nunes	BRA	31/10/1994	4/1	4/1
70 Rocha	BRA	30/03/1995	6/7	26/14
99 Jacaré	BRA	20/01/1999	6/2	17/8

QUALIFYING RESULTS AND STANDINGS

Main round Group 4

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Benfica (POR)	3	3	0	0	15	3	9
Uragan (UKR)	3	1	1	1	10	8	4
United Galati (ROU)*	3	1	0	2	5	15	3
Haladas (HUN)	3	0	1	2	7	11	1

Benfica 3-1 Haladas, Uragan 5-0 United Galati, Uragan 1-4 Benfica, United Galati 4-2 Haladas, Haladas 4-4 Uragan, United Galati 1-8 Benfica

Elite round Group C

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Benfica (POR)	3	2	1	0	11	4	7
Chrudim (CZE)	3	1	2	0	7	6	5
Luxol St. Andrews (MLT)	3	0	2	1	2	8	2
Kairat Almaty (KAZ)*	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Benfica 3-3 Chrudim, Luxol St. Andrews 0-0 Kairat Almaty, Luxol St. Andrews 0-6 Benfica, Kairat Almaty 1-2 Chrudim, Chrudim 2-2 Luxol St. Andrews, Kairat Almaty 1-2 Benfica

*Tournament hosts

ONE TO WATCH

AFONSO JESUS

At 25, Afonso Jesus has already won every major honour with Portugal. Signed in 2016 from Sporting, the lifelong Benfica fan has developed into a world-class winger and defender.



Please see [UEFA.com](https://www.uefa.com) for definitive finals squad.



Ivan Chishkala on the ball against Chrudim

→ Leading 1-0 at half-time against Chrudim, Benfica conceded twice, and even though they turned things around, they let in a late equaliser to end the game 3-3. Malta's Luxol, who had just held Kairat, were defeated 6-0, but Benfica only led Chrudim on goal difference ahead of the last day. Chrudim's draw with Luxol seemed to make Benfica's life easier, but they were pushed hard in the final game. Kairat led at half-time and although Romulo's equaliser lifted spirits, it was only when Arthur struck with 81 seconds left that the Eagles could truly celebrate their first-ever win against two-time champions Kairat in the clubs' fifth fixture.

Since last season Hossein Tayebi has gone to Palma and Diego Roncaglio joined Anderlecht, while Robinho also departed, but the core remains, with Brazil's Léo Gugiel now the goalkeeping alternate to Portugal's André Sousa. Also adding international experience are more Portugal stars in Afonso Jesus, Bruno

Coelho – back after stints at ACCS and Napoli – and Silvestre Ferreira, if he recovers from his elite-round injury. Further talent includes Ivan Chishkala, a 2016 winner with Ugra, and three-time finalist Romulo alongside Brazilians Bruno Cintra, Arthur, Jacaré and Diego Nunes.

The most prolific of all is Rocha, with his haul of seven goals in qualifying. Summer arrival Gonçalo Sobral add further depth to a selection that was coached by Pulpis for two seasons until March. He left and was replaced by Mário Silva, Joel Rocha's Benfica assistant from 2014 to 2021 and most recently in charge at Leões Porto de Salvo. The new coach said on appointment: "It is a privilege and an honour to be able to return to this home, which I have learned about since I was a child, which I know from the inside." After two years where the cookie crumbled the wrong way for Benfica in the finals, the Eagles will hope to finally lift their second title. ■

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ARGENTINA'S WORLD CUP-WINNING COACH
LIONEL SCALONI ON THE JOY OF FUTSAL

'AN INCREDIBLE SPORT'

Palma's qualification for the Futsal Champions League finals has caused quite a buzz on the island, and one famous fan in particular can't wait for kick-off. Lionel Scaloni led Argentina to victory in the World Cup in December and the Palma resident now has eyes on silverware of a different kind – namely the biggest prize in club futsal.

Football may be the 44-year-old's premier passion, but the former right-back – who spent a decade of his playing career in Spain with Deportivo La Coruña, Real Racing Club and Mallorca – is a big fan of the small-sided game. "It's an incredible sport," he said at the semi-final draw.

Scaloni has the perspective of a fan and a coach and knows exactly how a grounding in futsal can help a footballer's development. "It's directly linked to association and 11-a side professional football, although we may not consider it. We've come to several conclusions. In fact, in football it is becoming more common to see teams try to create numerical superiority with the goalkeeper, as is frequently seen in futsal. We also play one-on-one all the time.

"I came because I am a fan, but I was also interested in watching it closely so that I could

form my own opinion. And I think it is quite interesting. We are proud to have a team like Palma Futsal and it's a pleasure to be able to come and see the team and support them."

And as far as Scaloni is concerned, the sooner kids can get involved, the more they will benefit from exposure to the sport. "It's essential," he says. "If I were five or six years old, I would start off playing futsal. It's vital that the kids get lots of touches of the ball for the development of technique. Both [sports] could be mixed. In fact, I think it should be like that and everybody should take this as an example, because I'm sure there would be better players with better technique and they would understand the sport much better."



Futsal is hugely popular in South America and many of Scaloni's World Cup winners started out on the futsal court. "Many of the Argentina team began playing futsal," he says. "The midfielders, above all, are players who get many touches of the ball and many of them began playing in different neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires and around the country. If I had to mention just one, you all know who I would choose. I think he plays all sports well. I have the same name as him..." ■



MATCH SCHEDULE

#UCLFutsal

SEMI-FINALS

FRIDAY 5 MAY	18:00	Sporting CP  v  Sporting Anderlecht
	21:00	Palma  v  Benfica

THIRD-PLACE MATCH

SUNDAY 7 MAY	17:00	 v 
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FINAL

SUNDAY 7 MAY	20:00	 v 
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All times local (CET). All matches played at the Velòdrom Illes Balears.

RULES AND REGS

If a semi-final or the final is drawn, two five-minute periods of extra time will be played, followed by a penalty shoot-out if necessary.

The third-place match will go straight to penalties if the game is drawn after normal time.



REFEREES

- Vedran Babić (CRO)
- Nikola Jelić (CRO)
- Ondřej Černý (CZE)
- Marc Birkett (ENG)
- Grigori Ošomkov (EST)
- Cédric Pelissier (FRA)
- Gábor Kovács (HUN)
- Kamil Çetin (TUR)

ISLAND LIFE

Known for its stunning beaches, historic landmarks and lively nightlife, Palma is a beautiful and vibrant city on the island of Mallorca, Spain. The magnificent Gothic cathedral, La Seu, dominates the skyline and offers stunning views of the sea. With its pleasant climate and abundance of eye-catching scenery, it is bound to provide a lovely environment for the Futsal Champions League finals.



VELÒDROM ILLES BALEARS

A multisport pavilion in the city of Palma, this arena will host a UEFA club tournament for the very first time. The 6,607-capacity arena has previously staged the UCI Track Cycling World Championship and the famous 'Battle of Surfaces' match between tennis legends Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.



SPORTING ANDERLECHT FUTSAL

FINALS APPEARANCES 1

BEST PERFORMANCE ELITE ROUND 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022



COACH
Luca Cragnaz

DARE TO DREAM

Anderlecht are a new name to futsal after the football club joined forces with Halle-Gooik, who last season won the Belgian title for the sixth time in eight years. Having fallen five times in the elite round under their previous guise, the Brussels club have reached their maiden finals in superb fashion. They signalled their intent in the main round, holding two-time champions Kairat and eventual fellow finalists

Palma to 2-2 draws, and beating an experienced Sporting Paris 4-0 in front of capacity crowds at their new home in Belleheide.

Clearing the previously insurmountable hurdle of the elite round has really announced Anderlecht on the top European stage. They edged an exciting opener against hosts Pula 3-2 and then faced holders Barça, on a run of 12 straight European wins having →

SQUAD

Goalkeepers	Nationality	Date of birth	Qualifying apps/goals	Competition apps/goals
12 Cristiano Marques	POR	29/08/1996	6/0	26/0
22 Diego Roncaglio	BRA	15/07/1988	5/0	32/1
90 Bram Meyers	BEL	01/10/1990	6/0	12/0
Outfield players				
4 Gil De Kerf	BEL	01/03/2002	6/0	9/0
6 Eduardo Mello Borges	AZE	14/10/1986	5/2	38/15
7 Dragan Tomić	SRB	25/03/1991	6/4	18/11
8 Maximiliano Rescia	ARG	29/10/1987	6/1	29/11
9 Jonhn Lennon	BRA	12/07/1994	0/0	14/4
11 Roninho	GEO	04/04/1987	5/1	59/37
14 Serginho	BRA	27/02/1995	0/0	0/0
17 Steven Dillien	BEL	24/02/1992	6/1	12/1
19 Diogo	BRA	15/08/1985	6/5	48/38
20 Franco Jelovčić	CRO	06/07/1991	6/3	21/10
21 Gabriel Grélló	BEL	04/07/1985	6/3	46/17

QUALIFYING RESULTS AND STANDINGS

Main round Group 1

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Palma (ESP)	3	1	2	0	15	9	5
Sporting Anderlecht (BEL)*	3	1	2	0	8	4	5
Kairat Almaty (KAZ)	3	1	2	0	7	6	5
Sporting Paris (FRA)	3	0	0	3	7	18	0

Palma 11-5 Paris, Kairat 2-2 Anderlecht, Kairat 2-2 Palma, Anderlecht 4-0 Paris, Paris 2-3 Kairat, Anderlecht 2-2 Palma

Elite round Group D

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Sporting Anderlecht (BEL)	3	2	1	0	17	7	7
Barça (ESP)	3	2	1	0	18	9	7
Pula (CRO)*	3	1	0	2	9	12	3
United Galati (ROU)	3	0	0	3	4	20	0

Barça 6-2 United Galati, Sporting Anderlecht 3-2 Pula, Sporting Anderlecht 5-5 Barça, Pula 5-2 United Galati, United Galati 0-9 Sporting Anderlecht, Barça 7-2 Pula

*Tournament hosts

ONE TO WATCH

DIOGO

Diogo is always a reliable goalscorer, as shown by his run of goals in nine straight European games for Sporting CP to help them to two finals before his 2019 switch to Belgium.



Please see [UEFA.com](https://www.uefa.com) for definitive finals squad.



Maximiliano Rescia celebrates a vital goal against Barça

→ made the final three years running. Anderlecht scored first but trailed 4-2 at half-time. The deficit was three with seven minutes left but then Gabriel Grélo, Maximiliano Rescia and Fits wiped out Barça's lead. Two days later, Anderlecht's 9-0 defeat of United Galati left Barça needing to beat Pula by six goals. The reigning champions got to 7-2 with nine seconds left but were denied another goal. And with the fans chanting their name, Anderlecht were through.

They are the first Belgian side to get this far since Action 21 Charleroi in the inaugural four-team finals of 2007. Charleroi were runners-up in 2002 and 2003 before lifting the trophy in 2005, but since their demise Belgium lacked a similar European force – until now. Under former Charleroi goalkeeper and Belgium coach Luca Cagnaz, Anderlecht have assembled an experienced team, adding Brazil goalkeeper Diego Roncaglio from Benfica and Argentinian FIFA Futsal World Cup winner Rescia from

Levante to their ranks.

January signings Serginho and Jonhn Lennon – a Champions League runner-up with Kairat – add even more depth, which Anderlecht needed to replace Fits as the pivot moved to Inter FS. Still around from the Halle-Gooik days is the prolific Diogo, a two-time finalist with Sporting CP, whose experience will be invaluable in their finals debut. Rounding off a strong squad are the evergreen Roninho – who made his debut in this tournament with Iberia Tbilisi in 2008 – goalscoring veteran Grélo, Croatia captain Franco Jelovčić, Azerbaijan defender Eduardo, Serbian pivot Dragan Tomić, Belgian Steven Dillien and the academy graduate Gil De Kerf.

All this means that Anderlecht are no raw outsiders – just ask Barça. Sports director Lieven Baert admits: "We are living a dream. We wanted to close the gap to the European elite, but I never expected it to go so fast." ■

"WE ARE LIVING A DREAM. WE WANTED TO CLOSE THE GAP BUT I NEVER EXPECTED IT TO GO SO FAST"



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FINALS APPEARANCES ⁹

BEST PERFORMANCE WINNERS 2019, 2021



SQUAD

Goalkeepers	Nationality	Date of birth	Qualifying apps/goals	Competition apps/goals
14 Guitta	BRA	11/06/1987	6/0	33/3
16 Bernardo Paço	POR	19/04/2000	6/0	21/1
Outfield players				
3 Diogo Santos	POR	07/11/2002	6/2	6/2
4 Tomás Paço	POR	19/04/2000	6/3	16/8
6 Zicky Té	POR	01/09/2001	6/4	19/9
7 Hugo Neves	POR	05/05/2000	6/5	6/5
8 Erick Mendonça	POR	21/07/1995	6/1	32/11
9 João Matos	POR	21/02/1987	6/1	74/14
10 Pauleta	POR	12/06/1994	3/3	21/6
13 Anton Sokolov	RUS	28/02/1999	6/5	12/9
17 Diego Cavinato	ITA	06/05/1985	6/4	49/42
18 Pany Varela	POR	25/02/1989	3/1	44/8
29 Alex Merlim	ITA	15/07/1986	6/0	54/18
44 Esteban Guerrero	ESP	18/02/1995	6/1	8/2

QUALIFYING RESULTS AND STANDINGS

Main round Group 2

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Sporting CP (POR)	3	3	0	0	19	4	9
Novo Vrijeme (CRO)*	3	1	1	1	4	9	4
Pula (CRO)	3	1	0	2	8	9	3
Ayat (KAZ)	3	0	1	2	5	14	1

Sporting 5-3 Pula, Ayat 2-2 Novo Vrijeme, Ayat 1-7 Sporting, Novo Vrijeme 2-0 Pula, Pula 5-2 Ayat, Novo Vrijeme 0-7 Sporting

Elite round Group A

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Sporting CP (POR)	3	3	0	0	13	4	9
Uragan (UKR)	3	2	0	1	11	9	6
Città di Eboli (ITA)*	3	1	0	2	6	12	3
Loznica-Grad 2018 (SRB)	3	0	0	3	3	8	0

Sporting 4-2 Loznica-Grad, Uragan 7-4 Città di Eboli, Uragan 2-4 Sporting, Città di Eboli 2-0 Loznica-Grad, Loznica-Grad 1-2 Uragan, Città di Eboli 0-5 Sporting

*Tournament hosts

ONE TO WATCH

ZICKY TÉ

Sporting's Player of the Tournament in their 2021 triumph in Zadar, and again for Portugal at Futsal EURO 2022, the 21-year-old pivot is an attacking talent quickly fulfilling his stellar potential.



Please see [UEFA.com](https://www.uefa.com) for definitive finals squad.



COACH
Nuno Dias

TREBLE CHANCE

Though their 4-0 loss to Barça last year in Riga deprived Sporting of back-to-back titles, they had reached an unprecedented fifth final in six seasons, and again have high hopes of becoming the first non-Spanish club to claim a third UEFA futsal title. The Lisbon club were the only team to qualify with six wins out of six, and none of the other finalists can match

Sporting's tally of 32 goals on the way there.

In the main round opening game, Pula pushed them to the limit before Sporting came through to claim a 5-3 win, but the 17-time Portuguese champions were soon up to full speed. Nine different players shared the 19 goals in their three victories in Croatia, where they won their second title in 2021. →



Sporting celebrate their qualification-clinching win against Città di Eboli

“THE AMBITION I HAD IN 2012 TO WIN, CONQUER AND DO THINGS WELL WITH SPORTING CP IS THE SAME FEELING AS TODAY”

→ And though Sporting did concede 45 seconds into the elite round against Loznica-Grad, they were 3-1 up by half-time and closed out the victory comfortably. Against Uragan, the Ukrainian contenders wiped out a 2-0 Sporting lead but João Matos struck just 14 seconds later, and Italian hosts Città di Eboli were then dispatched with ease.

The evergreen Alex Merlim more than played his part in qualifying. The Italian international is part of a core that could win a third European title with Sporting. Alongside him are the charismatic Brazil goalkeeper Guitta, all-round talent Erick Mendonça, prolific winger Diego Cavinato, the thrilling Pany Varela and captain João Matos.

In fact, competition appearance record-holder Matos, in his third decade with Sporting, has played in all

six of their finals dating back to 2011. When Matos made his senior club debut in 2005, Zicky Té was four but he and Tomás Paço have provided an injection of new blood that has been crucial to Sporting – and Portugal’s – recent dominance, aided too by Pauleta and Hugo Neves.

On the managerial side, no one has coached a single club in this competition more than Nuno Dias, in charge for more than ten years with over 20 major honours in that time. “The ambition to win, conquer and do things well with Sporting CP I had in 2012 is the same feeling I feel today after so many years of work,” Dias said when signing another long-term contract till 2027 in January. It sums up the inexhaustible ambition that has made the Lions a true European force. ■



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WORDS **AARYAN PARASNIS**
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INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

AC MILAN MIDFIELDER JUNIOR MESSIAS CHARTS OUT HIS MOVIE-LIKE STRUGGLE TO REACH THE PINNACLE OF FOOTBALL – AND HOW IT ALL BEGAN WITH FUTSAL

If you were to ask a filmmaker to come up with an inspirational rags-to-riches story of a humble Brazilian who worked tirelessly to achieve his dream, it would probably still fall short of capturing the rollercoaster that took Junior Messias from playing futsal with friends to starring in the Champions League.

Like many youngsters in Brazil, the AC Milan midfielder began honing his talent in the small-sided game, playing futsal whenever he could. "In my town, we'd play virtually every weekend," he says. "Because getting a few people together is easier than gathering 10 or 15. We had our famous five-minutes-or-two-goals-up matches. Things could get pretty wild. It was how we amused ourselves. It was a small town with only 5,000 people, so everybody knew each other and we got together to have some fun."

Like compatriots including Neymar and Ronaldinho before him, Messias was drawn to the pace and scale of the sport, which allowed everyone to be at the heart of the action in games with guaranteed excitement. "The thing with futsal is that it's fast-paced. Everything happens very fast. That's where our rule of five minutes or two goals up came from. On a regular pitch with 22 players, it'd be hard to have a winner under such rules. That quick rotation between the teams ensured everyone had fun."

The 31-year-old played futsal in tournaments too, and at school – where he and his fellow pupils were reluctant to change into their kit for anything else. "We got angry when the PE teacher told us to play volleyball," he explains. He credits his early grounding in futsal for teaching him to use the sole of his boot, an ability he embraces to this day as one of the most technically gifted footballers in Serie A.

Watch him dribble past a defender with the ball seemingly glued to his feet and those years spent finessing his close control in futsal shine through. So too his preference for stitching the play together with short passes, his nimble touches and extravagant flicks all surely refined in the cramped conditions of the futsal court. But while he set out to become a pro footballer with an impressive set

of skills, getting to the top of the European game would require much more than raw talent.

"I never played for a club in Brazil, I didn't grow up with a club and I didn't play for an academy, so I came to Europe to try and build a career," he says, recalling how he moved to Italy to join his brother in 2011. "When we got here, we tried to get my papers but we didn't manage to. From that moment, football became an impossible dream. I was 20 years old, without a club, without any prospects of playing or getting the paperwork to become a legal immigrant. I had almost given up."

But Messias refused to concede defeat. He worked odd jobs like cleaning bricks or delivering appliances to make ends meet; playing the sport he loved became a mere hobby on the weekends. "I made 20 cents for each brick I cleaned. Our hands and feet were freezing, and the rain was pouring down, but we had to carry on working to pay rent, buy food. My back started to hurt because it's not easy to climb to the tenth floor carrying a 150kg fridge on your back."

Despite those strains, Messias found the energy to turn out for Sport Warique, an amateur side consisting mainly of Peruvian immigrants. It was here that his potential was spotted and the upward trajectory began, all the way from the fifth tier of Italian football in 2016 to the first in 2020. Then came his move from Crotone to Milan at the age of 30 in 2021, initially on loan, and the fairy tale has only continued since, including a winning goal on his Champions League debut and the Serie A title last season.

That Scudetto crown ended Milan's 11-year wait for the trophy – 11 years after Messias himself had first moved to Italy. As personal triumphs go, it's hard to imagine one more fitting. "Maybe one day I will make a movie or TV series or write a book and tell everything in detail because it's God's will," he says. The first episode, no doubt, would be set on a futsal court, something in common with some of football's biggest names, such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Andrés Iniesta, Lionel Messi, Neymar – and now Messias. ■

"THE THING ABOUT PLAYING FUTSAL IS THAT IT IS VERY FAST-PACED. EVERYTHING HAPPENS VERY FAST"

WINNING NUMBERS

THE KEY FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE 21 FINALS SO FAR

MOST TITLES

- 5 Inter FS
- 4 Barça
- Kairat Almaty
- 2 Playas de Castellón Sporting CP

MOST FINALS

- 8 Inter FS
- Barça
- 6 FC Dynamo Sporting CP
- Action 21 Charleroi
- 3 Kairat Almaty

12,090

A competition record crowd was on hand to see hosts Kairat's 5-2 semi-final win against Barça in Almaty on 28 April 2019



4

Four is the most goals scored by an individual player in a finals match, and both happened against the same team Dina Moskva, in the 2013/14 finals. First Leo hit four for Kairat in the semi-finals, then Alex matched that feat for Sporting in the third-place match.

MOST FINAL TOURNAMENT APPEARANCES

- 10 Sporting CP
- Barça
- 9 Kairat Almaty
- 8 Inter FS
- Benfica
- 6 FC Dynamo

4

"Three players have won four titles: Gabriel (Inter FS 2006, 2009; Barça 2012, 2014), Sergio Lozano (Barça 2012, 2014, 2020, 2022), Ortiz (Inter FS 2009, 2017, 2018; Barça 2022).



TOP SCORERS*

- 11 Ferrão (Barça)
- 10 Esquerdinha (Dina Moskva, Barça)
- 8 Ricardinho (Benfica, Inter FS)

MOST APPEARANCES*

- 17 João Matos (Sporting CP)
- 16 Sergio Lozano (Barça)
- 15 Aicardo (Barça)

*2007 onwards

OVERALL COMPETITION STATS

MOST APPEARANCES

- 74 João Matos (POR)
- 69 Rizvan Farzaliyev (AZE) Lúcio (BEL)
- 66 Michal Mareš (CZE)

OVERALL COMPETITION STATS

MOST GOALS

- 54 André Vanderlei (BRA)
- 50 Lúcio (BEL)
- 49 Ricardinho (POR)

7-0



Inter hold the record for the biggest finals win, 7-0 against Sporting in the 2016/17 final.



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Barça players celebrate winning their fourth title in 2022



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THE CHAMPIONS

WITH SPORTING CP SEEKING THEIR THIRD TITLE AND BENFICA THEIR SECOND, DEBUTANTS PALMA AND ANDERLECHT WILL BOTH BE HOPING TO BECOME THE 12TH NAME ON THE TROPHY

2022	Barça 4-0 Sporting CP	2011	Montesilvano 5-2 Sporting CP
2021	Sporting CP 4-3 Barça	2010	Benfica 3-2 Inter*
2020	Barça 2-1 Murcia	2009	Inter 5-1 Ekaterinburg
2019	Sporting CP 2-1 Kairat	2008	Ekaterinburg 4-4 Murcia**
2018	Inter 5-2 Sporting CP	2007	FC Dynamo 2-1 Inter
2017	Inter 7-0 Sporting CP	2006	Inter 9-7 FC Dynamo***
2016	Ugra 4-3 Inter	2005	Charleroi 10-9 FC Dynamo*/***
2015	Kairat 3-2 Barça	2004	Inter 7-5 Benfica***
2014	Barça 5-2 FC Dynamo*	2003	Castellón 7-5 Charleroi***
2013	Kairat 4-3 FC Dynamo	2002	Castellón 5-1 Charleroi
2012	Barça 3-1 FC Dynamo		

*After extra time
 **Ekaterinburg won 3-2 on penalties
 ***Aggregate after two legs
 Eight-team finals 2002 and 2021;
 two-legged final 2003–2006; final four 2007–2020 and from present.



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