



TECHNICAL REPORT

2022/23

PART ONE



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Cover image: Wolfsburg's Lena Oberdorf tracks Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmatí during the final

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INTRODUCTION



Barcelona celebrate their final triumph

FEVER PITCH

The new-look competition continued to deliver on and off the pitch, with high drama, thrilling contests and a huge increase in attendances

The second season in the enhanced format involved 71 clubs from 49 national associations, with 58 of them on the starting grid when Round 1 kicked off in August 2022 in the shape of 15 mini-tournaments contested by three or, mostly, four teams. Round 2, played as home-and-away ties, then decided the 12 contestants to join four automatic qualifiers in the 16-team group stage.

Vllaznia became the first Albanian club to reach this phase. Roma, having won the Italian title for the first time, were fellow debutants and ultimately progressed as far as the quarter-finals. When the group stage started in October, Lyon opened their title defence with a 5-1 home defeat by Arsenal, an eyebrow-raising scoreline which endorsed the feeling that competitive levels are rising.

This was reinforced when four of the six two-legged knockout ties were decided by single-goal margins and the defending champions were eliminated by Chelsea in a penalty shoot-out; with Paris Saint-Germain also bowing out, the semi-finals were bereft of French teams for the first time in a decade. The final between Barcelona and Wolfsburg in Eindhoven was also a single-goal victory

which ended with the Catalan club lifting the trophy for the second time. It also allowed Barcelona to climb to the top of the club rankings which Lyon had dominated since the 2018/19 season.

Once again, Barcelona attracted huge crowds to matches at the Camp Nou, with 72,262 watching the second leg of the semi-final against Chelsea. The competition's pulling power was further illustrated by an overall attendance figure of 726,206, a massive 24% increase on the figure from the previous season.

The UEFA Technical Report aims to transmit information and analysis from Europe's premier women's club competition to all the other levels of women's football. The report is based on observations by top-level club and national team coaches Britta Carlson, Gemma Grainger, Jayne Ludlow, Joe Montemurro, Martin Sjögren and Jorge Vilda.

The complete report will be available to read in August, but in the meantime here are some of the key talking points of the season, as well as an early glimpse at some of the articles from the report itself.

TALKING POINTS

Our observers have put together their key takeaways from the season – including a propensity for both wide and central attacking play – in advance of the full report

CROSSING

Deliveries from wide areas remain the most fertile source of goals. However, the 2022/23 season emphasised a move away from the traditional high cross into the box, coinciding with the relative scarcity of strikers with aerial power (Wolfsburg's Alex Popp and Chelsea's Sam Kerr are two rare examples). Instead, cutbacks accounted for 50% of the goals stemming from wide areas, and driven crosses a further 12%. The final illustrated this approach: Popp's header was courtesy of an inswinging cross from the left; a low cross by Caroline Graham Hansen set up Barcelona's first goal; and another inswinging delivery (this time left-footed from the right) by Aitana Bonmatí resulted in their equaliser. None of the deliveries were from the 'traditional' area in the vicinity of the touchline.



Wolfsburg's Alex Popp heads in against Barcelona in the final



Arsenal celebrate Jennifer Beattie's goal in the semi-final second leg against Wolfsburg

PRESSING

Direct attacking moves of five passes or fewer accounted for almost one-quarter of open-play goals this season, with high regains the origin of many of them. The collective high press was a major weapon in the armouries of top teams such as Lyon, Paris, Barcelona and Arsenal, while Chelsea made more sporadic use of the high press. Like the German clubs and Roma, the Blues sometimes preferred to press in a midfield block – as illustrated during their semi-final against Barcelona – to give themselves space to counterattack at pace. Pressing mechanisms when opponents play out from the keeper have become more sophisticated, while counter-pressing after ball losses in the attacking third was a common denominator among the top teams, who reaped dividends from fast regains in high areas.

CENTRAL ROUTES

Although overloads in wide areas are often the key to unlocking defensive blocks, teams are increasingly mixing their wing play with attacks focused on more central routes, which accounted for about one-third of the season's open-play goals. "Defensive structures among the top teams have become more courageous, in terms of holding high lines and accepting higher levels of risk," commented technical observer Joe Montemurro. Teams looked to exploit this with penetrating passes through central areas into the space behind the back line – aptly demonstrated by Chelsea. They were unafraid to directly supply forward Sam Kerr, who can operate on the shoulders of centre-backs and offer second-ball options to shadow striker Guro Reiten.

Chelsea pair Guro Reiten and Sam Kerr



50% of goals from crosses were attributed to cutbacks

23% of goals came from fast attacks, 11% from counterattacks

93% of goals in the group stage came from first-touch finishes

BARÇA TURN THE TIDE

A pre-match tactical switch from Wolfsburg gave them the early advantage, but Barcelona adjusted their approach at half-time to devastating effect

Tactical awareness, physical endurance and mental resilience were tested to the limit when Barcelona and Wolfsburg faced up on a sunny afternoon in Eindhoven. Both coaches had full squads to choose from and, whereas Jonatan Giráldez was loyal to Barcelona's habitual 1-4-3-3, Tommy Stroot raised eyebrows by moving striker Ewa Pajor to the left of his attack, looking to exploit spaces behind Barça right-back Lucy Bronze, leaving Alex Popp to manoeuvre in a more advanced central role.

The tactical ploy yielded almost immediate dividends. In the third minute, Pajor dispossessed Bronze and struck a right-footed drive that Sandra Paños could do no more than palm into the top corner of her net. A 1-0 deficit would not normally be dramatic. But, for the Barcelona players, it called up psychological phantoms – memories of the previous season's final when they had conceded two goals against

Lyon in 23 minutes and four goals in under half an hour of the 2019 final against the same opponents. "We made a mistake and conceded right at the start," Giráldez commented afterwards. "The important thing is how you react. We did that well – but then conceded again."

The second psychological blow arrived eight minutes prior to the interval, just when Giráldez's players had settled into their game and created two excellent chances – one of them a back-post header from a corner. But on one of the few occasions when Wolfsburg were able to break clear of Barça's high press and build through the thirds, Felicitas Rauch fed a pass to Pajor whose inswinging right-footed cross from the left allowed Popp to head in from close range. "It was practically Wolfsburg's only attack with control during the first half," Martin Sjögren remarked. "They'd had very little ball in middle-to-front areas,

A crowd of over 30,000 were at the PSV Stadion in Eindhoven for a thrilling final



hadn't been able to play out through the centre and had had little success when the goalkeeper played long."

But two goals from three attempts meant the talk at half-time was about Wolfsburg's efficiency in attack and, above all, their well-designed and well-implemented defensive strategy. When Barça were building from the back, Wolfsburg pushed five players forward to press, with one cutting off a passing route to midfield and, at some distance, a back line of four with left-back Rauch staying wide to hamper access to Barça's main 1v1 threat, Caroline Graham Hansen. Centre-back Dominique Janssen was ready to spring out to follow No9 Mariona Caldentey and, when Rauch moved out of her zone to police Graham Hansen, holding midfielder Lena Oberdorf was quick to fill the gap. Oberdorf and Svenja Huth engaged in tight marking in front of the back line while winger Sveindís Jónsdóttir dropped



Ewa Pajor fires in Wolfsburg's third-minute opener



Victorious Barcelona coach Jonatan Giráldez is thrown into the air

"IN THE SECOND HALF BARCELONA WERE MORE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS AND, IF NECESSARY, DEFEND 3 ON 3"



Left-back Fridolina Rolfö smashes in Barcelona's winning goal

back to pre-empt a switch of play to Barça left-back Fridolina Rolfö, thus completing a defensive line of five.

Barça's technique often allowed them to retain possession under Wolfsburg's tight marking, the psychological blows translated into unforced errors and more long passing than usual. But a tactical adjustment at half-time was signalled by the technical observers as the turning of a tide. Up to the interval their high press was led by a front line of three. "The change," Jorge Vilda observed, "was to press with Salma Paralluelo and, usually, Aitana Bonmatí as the top two, challenging the Wolfsburg centre-backs, with the false striker Mariona Caldentey dropping into a second line of four or five. They were more willing to take risks and, if necessary, defend 3v3." The risk-taking also pushed Barça's full-backs, subdued during the first half, further upfield for proactive contributions to attacks through the wide areas.

The defensive order that had been Wolfsburg's strength immediately started to gravitate towards disorder. Within three minutes, Bonmatí's ball-winning set up Bronze to find holding midfielder Patri Guijarro, whose pass allowed Graham Hansen to deliver a low cross from the right for the on-running Guijarro to side-foot in at the near post. Two minutes later, Bonmatí lofted another cross from the right for Guijarro, making an untracked run from deep, to equalise with a combination of head and shoulder.

Now it was Wolfsburg's turn to recover from psychological damage, but Barcelona's relentless possession play left them relying on sporadic counterattacks which posed genuine threats to their opponents' more expansive approach. With Caldentey and Bonmatí as free spirits and the full-backs in attacking mode, Barça created overloads in the wide areas, notably on the left where Rolfö was ready to make runs as far as the by-line. With Wolfsburg's defence pulled out of shape, it was Barça's ability to create chaos which set up the telling blow. A low cross from the right was cleared by Lynn Wilms straight at Kathrin Hendrich. Caldentey latched on to the rebound which was eventually poked out to Rolfö, who shot high into the net. Wolfsburg fought to the last. But Barcelona's technical qualities, their trademark triangular passing movements, their positional rotations and their use of the wide areas won them their second title in three seasons.



BARCELONA
3-2
WOLFSBURG

SATURDAY 3 JUNE 2023
PSV Stadion, Eindhoven

GOALS

0-1 Pajor (3), 0-2 Popp (37), 1-2 Guijarro (48), 2-2 Guijarro (50), 3-2 Rolfö (70)

YELLOW CARDS

BARCELONA Bonmatí 33, Paredes 90+4
WOLFSBURG Hendrich 21, Jónsdóttir 77, Popp 90+4

REFEREE

Cheryl Foster (WAL)

BARCELONA

- 1 Paños
- 2 Paredes
- 4 León
- 9 Caldentey
6 Pina 79
- 10 Graham Hansen
7 Crnogorčević 79
- 12 Guijarro
- 14 Bonmatí
11 Putellas 90
- 15 Bronze
- 16 Rolfö
- 17 Paralluelo
18 Geyse 70
- 21 Walsh
23 Syrstad Engen 89

WOLFSBURG

- 1 Frohms
- 2 Wilms
31 Hegering 84
- 4 Hendrich
- 5 Oberdorf
- 6 Janssen
- 9 Pajor
7 Bremer 84
- 10 Huth
- 11 Popp
- 13 Rauch
- Roord
- 14 8 Lattwein 71
- 29 Jónsdóttir

Coach Jonatan Giráldez

MATCH STATISTICS

BARCELONA		WOLFSBURG
61	POSSESSION %	39
26	TOTAL ATTEMPTS	8
39	ATTACKS	15
5	CORNERS TAKEN	1
84	PASSING ACCURACY %	73
599	PASSES ATTEMPTED	317
53	BALLS RECOVERED	42
4	SAVES	4
112.1	DISTANCE COVERED KM	114.8
2	YELLOW CARDS	3
0	RED CARDS	0

AWARD WINNERS



Player of the Season Aitana Bonmatí (left) gets away from Lena Oberdorf, winner of the young player award, in the final

Barcelona's Aitana Bonmatí was the technical observers' choice for the 2022/23 player of the season, while Wolfsburg midfielder Lena Oberdorf took the young player prize

8
appearances

678
minutes played

1
assist

62
balls recovered and 20 tackles

49.24
kilometres covered during the season (tenth highest)

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE SEASON

Lena Oberdorf

Pressing, tackling and ball-winning are major elements in the repertoire of the Wolfsburg midfielder whose tireless work in the screening role helped to propel her team into the final. Grainger commented: "She protected the back line and consistently broke up the opponents' play. She was relentlessly competitive in 1v1 duels, utilising her strength and ability to read the game to control or prevent dangerous moments."



11
appearances

927
minutes played

53.15
kilometres covered during the season (third highest)

5
goals, joint second; only Ewa Pajor on nine had more

8
assists, the most in 2022/23

PLAYER OF THE SEASON

Aitana Bonmatí

The Barcelona midfielder's five goals and eight assists added up to a goal-contribution greater than any other player in the competition. But there was more to Aitana Bonmatí than that. UEFA technical observer Gemma Grainger, watching her in action in the semi-final first leg against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, saw her "dictating the tempo, demanding the ball to ensure Barcelona dominated possession and, with a strong interchanging understanding between the two players, linking very well with Mariona Caldentey". Joe Montemurro, technical observer at the return match at the Camp Nou, added: "She worked selflessly to regain the ball and make things happen proactively. Her influence when Barcelona are in possession and her positioning off the ball were a delight to watch."

It is no coincidence that Player of the Season Aitana Bonmatí also picked up the most Player of the Match awards, winning it in nearly half of Barcelona's 11 games.



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

A Player of the Match was named after every game to recognise the key performers in Europe's top female club competition

GROUP A

Vllaznia 0-2 Real Madrid	Esther González
Paris 0-1 Chelsea	Millie Bright
Real Madrid 0-0 Paris	Caroline Weir
Chelsea 8-0 Vllaznia	Sam Kerr
Paris 5-0 Vllaznia	Ramona Bachmann
Chelsea 2-0 Real Madrid	Erin Cuthbert
Vllaznia 0-4 Paris	Kadidiatou Diani
Real Madrid 1-1 Chelsea	Olga Carmona
Vllaznia 0-4 Chelsea	Guro Reiten
Paris 2-1 Real Madrid	Kadidiatou Diani
Real Madrid 5-1 Vllaznia	Teresa Abelleira
Chelsea 3-0 Paris	Fran Kirby

GROUP B

Wolfsburg 4-0 St. Pölten	Ewa Pajor
Roma 1-0 Slavia Praha	Emilie Haavi
St. Pölten 3-4 Roma	Manuela Giugliano
Slavia Praha 0-2 Wolfsburg	Ewa Pajor
Slavia Praha 0-1 St. Pölten	Mária Micolajová
Roma 1-1 Wolfsburg	Ewa Pajor
Wolfsburg 4-2 Roma	Sveindís Jónsdóttir
St. Pölten 1-1 Slavia Praha	Olivia Lukášová
Roma 5-0 St. Pölten	Manuela Giugliano
Wolfsburg 0-0 Slavia Praha	Olivia Lukášová
St. Pölten 2-8 Wolfsburg	Marina Hegering
Slavia Praha 0-3 Roma	Valentina Giacinti

GROUP C

Zürich 0-2 Juventus	Valentina Cernoia
Lyon 1-5 Arsenal	Beth Mead
Juventus 1-1 Lyon	Barbara Bonansea
Arsenal 3-1 Zürich	Jordan Nobbs
Zürich 0-3 Lyon	Melvine Malard
Juventus 1-1 Arsenal	Lineth Beerenstey
Lyon 4-0 Zürich	Melvine Malard
Arsenal 1-0 Juventus	Steph Catley
Juventus 5-0 Zürich	Cristiana Girelli
Arsenal 0-1 Lyon	Damaris Egurrola
Zürich 1-9 Arsenal	Frida Maanum
Lyon 0-0 Juventus	Pauline Peyraud-Magnin

GROUP D

Bayern 2-1 Rosengård	Julia Grosso
Barcelona 9-0 Benfica	Asisat Oshoala
Rosengård 1-4 Barcelona	Aitana Bonmatí
Benfica 2-3 Bayern	Georgia Stanway
Barcelona 3-0 Bayern	Aitana Bonmatí
Benfica 1-0 Rosengård	Cloé Lacasse
Rosengård 1-3 Benfica	Cloé Lacasse
Bayern 3-1 Barcelona	Lina Magull
Rosengård 0-4 Bayern	Georgia Stanway
Benfica 2-6 Barcelona	Aitana Bonmatí
Barcelona 6-0 Rosengård	Aitana Bonmatí
Bayern 2-0 Benfica	Klara Bühl

QUARTER-FINALS

Lyon 0-1 Chelsea	Guro Reiten
Chelsea 1-2 Lyon	Ann-Katrin Berger
Aet; Chelsea won 4-3 on pens	
Paris 0-1 Wolfsburg	Dominique Janssen
Wolfsburg 1-1 Paris	Alex Popp
Wolfsburg won 2-1 on aggregate	
Bayern 1-3 Arsenal	Lea Schüller
Arsenal 3-1 Bayern	Frida Maanum
Arsenal won 2-1 on aggregate	
Roma 0-1 Barcelona	Salma Paralluelo
Barcelona 5-1 Roma	Fridolina Rolfö
Barcelona won 6-1 on aggregate	

SEMI-FINALS

Chelsea 0-1 Barcelona	Caroline Graham Hansen
Barcelona 1-1 Chelsea	Aitana Bonmatí
Barcelona won 2-1 on aggregate	
Wolfsburg 2-2 Arsenal	Jen Beattie
Arsenal 2-3 Wolfsburg	Jill Roord
Aet; Wolfsburg won 5-4 on aggregate	

FINAL

Barcelona 3-2 Wolfsburg	Patri Gujjarro
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Ewa Pajor keeps a close eye on Lucy Bronze during the final

TEAM OF THE SEASON

Not surprisingly, champions Barcelona are well represented in the technical observers' all-star XI with six selections

The technical observers' selection was dominated by the champions, with Barcelona providing three of the back four, two of the midfield trio along with right-winger Caroline Graham Hansen, who accompanied the Wolfsburg duo of Alex Popp and Ewa Pajor in the front line of three. Completing the defence was Katie McCabe who had impressed as left-back – or wing-back when Arsenal switched to a three-centre-back formation during the team's run to the semi-finals.

	EWA PAJOR		ALEX POPP		CAROLINE GRAHAM HANSEN
FOR	WOLFSBURG	FOR	WOLFSBURG	FOR	BARCELONA
	PATRI GUIJARRO		LENA OBERDORF		AITANA BONMATÍ
MID	BARCELONA	MID	WOLFSBURG	MID	BARCELONA
	KATIE MCCABE		MAPI LEÓN		IRENE PAREDES
DEF	ARSENAL	DEF	BARCELONA	DEF	BARCELONA
					LUCY BRONZE
					DEF
	MERLE FROHMS				
GK	WOLFSBURG				



Frida Maanum lets rip against Bayern

GOALS OF THE SEASON

Frida Maanum's long-range strike for Arsenal at home to Bayern was the technical observers' pick for goal of the season

Barcelona supplied half of the season's top ten goals and four of the best five, with Mariona Caldentey's outrageous lob from the centre-circle against Rosengård in Sweden earning third place, one behind the fierce strike from the right by team-mate Caroline Graham Hansen that gave the champions their victory over Chelsea in the away leg of the semi-final. Pride of place, however, went to Arsenal's Frida Maanum, whose right-footed shot from distance sailed into the top far corner of the net to culminate the slick combination move that opened the scoring in the 2-0 home win against Bayern München which sealed a semi-final place.

TOP 10 GOALS

- 1** **FRIDA MAANUM**
ARSENAL 2-0 BAYERN
Quarter-final second leg, 29 March 2023
- 2** **CAROLINE GRAHAM HANSEN**
CHELSEA 0-1 BARCELONA
Semi-final first leg, 22 April 2023
- 3** **MARIONA CALDENTEY**
ROSENGÅRD 1-4 BARCELONA
Group stage Matchday 2, 27 October 2022

- 4** **CLÀUDIA PINA**
BARCELONA 3-0 BAYERN
Group stage Matchday 3, 24 November 2022
- 5** **MAPI LEÓN**
BARCELONA 5-1 ROMA
Quarter-final second leg, 29 March 2023
- 6** **SAM KERR**
CHELSEA 3-0 PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
Group stage Matchday 6, 22 December 2022
- 7** **ALEX POPP**
WOLFSBURG 1-1 PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
Quarter-final second leg, 30 March 2023
- 8** **ASISAT OSHOALA**
BARCELONA 9-0 BENFICA
Group stage Matchday 1, 19 October 2022
- 9** **RAMONA BACHMANN**
VLLAZNIA 0-4 PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
Group stage Matchday 4, 8 December 2022
- 10** **JORDAN NOBBS**
ARSENAL 3-1 ZÜRICH
Group stage Matchday 2, 27 October 2022



Caroline Graham Hansen is congratulated for her goal at Chelsea



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