



TECHNICAL REPORT

2022/23

PART ONE



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COVER
Federico Dimarco keeps
an eye on Bernardo Silva
during the final

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Manchester City
captain İlkay
Gündoğan lifts the
trophy in Istanbul

UEFA's technical observers tracked the
season's tactical and statistical developments
thanks to detailed analysis of every game

This review of the 2022/23 UEFA Champions League season provides a record of a campaign that spanned 125 matches between the start of the group stage in September 2022 and the final at Istanbul's Atatürk Olympic Stadium on 10 June.

The 24th UEFA Champions League technical report of its kind, it assesses the action with the input of UEFA's Technical Observers' Panel and the support of UEFA's dedicated performance analysts.

A member of the observers' group analysed every fixture from Matchday 1 onwards to ensure in-depth coverage of the group stage while, for the knockout rounds, there was an observer present at every fixture. The resulting insights have provided the substance for the talking points in the report, as well as informing the assessment of the tactical approach of all 32 clubs.

UEFA's team of technical observers for 2022/23 comprised: David Adams (Wales), Wayne Allison (England), Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland),

Cosmin Contra (Romania), Frank de Boer (Netherlands), Corinne Diacre (France), Dušan Fitzel (Czech Republic), Frans Hoek (Netherlands), David James (England), Robbie Keane (Republic of Ireland), Stefan Kuntz (Germany), Hans Leitert (Austria), Roberto Martínez (Spain), Ginés Meléndez (Spain), Michael O'Neill (Northern Ireland), Mixu Paatelainen (Finland), Marians Pahars (Latvia), Vera Pauw (Netherlands), Stipe Pletikosa (Croatia), Gus Poyet (Uruguay), Peter Rudbæk (Denmark), Willi Ruttensteiner (Austria), Willy Sagnol (France), Thomas Schaaf (Germany), Gareth Southgate (England) and Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Netherlands).

The report is backed by statistical analysis and with the trends identified, UEFA seeks to provide a meaningful tool for coaches across Europe. It will be made available to members of the coaching family and, hopefully, will help inform development coaches about the prevailing styles and strategies, as well as the qualities needed, at the elite end of European club football.

TALKING POINTS

The technical observers have put together their main lessons – including the importance of scoring first and the increasing versatility of players – ahead of the full report



Eduardo Camavinga created space by coming inside from left-back

FULL-BACKS ON THE MOVE

Full-backs rotating was a significant trend once more in 2022/23. João Cancelo in the group stage was integral to Man City's rotational play while in Real Madrid's quarter-final home leg against Chelsea, Dani Carvajal and Eduardo Camavinga caught the eye by taking up positions inside of wingers Rodrygo and Vinícius Júnior – effectively becoming the free players, with space to make the play for the Spanish side. Similarly, at home to City Madrid improved in the second half when Camavinga came inside and Luka Modrić or Toni Kroos dropped into his left-back position – a piece of positional manipulation which made it harder for City to press Madrid as the hosts built the play as Modrić and Kroos were now deeper.



John Stones (right) was deployed in a new midfield role

SHAPE-SHIFTERS SEEK SUPERIORITY

A regular theme was defensive midfielders dropping between centre-backs and full-backs stepping into midfield and the theme of fluidity gained a fresh variation thanks to Pep Guardiola's deployment of John Stones as a midfielder, the centre-back stepping up alongside Rodri when City had possession and their shape shifted to a 1-3-2-4-1. UEFA observer David Adams reflected: "There's a lot more interchange of positions and the purpose is to create a numerical superiority either in the defensive line to build or in the mid-line where you are trying to get the ball into the final third."



The passing range of André Onana was a key asset for Inter

ONANA KEEPS THE EVOLUTION GOING

The evolution of the goalkeeper goes on with Inter's André Onana less a sweeper-keeper than a holding midfielder at times according to Roberto Martínez as he reflected on the Cameroonian's impressive passing range. Goalkeepers are increasingly taking higher positions as they help make the play and Onana embodied this shift in the final – one of five matches in Inter's campaign in which he completed 30 or more passes. One pass in the final summed up his impact as he drove the ball low to Lautaro Martínez in the opposition half, taking out six City players to help create a Romelu Lukaku chance.

30

Inter goalkeeper André Onana completed 30 or more passes in five games

PRESSING VARIATIONS

"Now they stay in a high mid-block, waiting for the right moments," said one observer of the shift in Man City's pressing game after a final in which wide forwards Jack Grealish and Bernardo Silva led the press as the central attackers screened Inter's holding midfielder. This ploy was seen previously in the quarter-final home leg against Bayern München, when a change in tack in the second-half led to Bernardo and Grealish pressing diagonally on the centre-backs. It paid off as Grealish's pressing of Dayot Upamecano led to him losing possession before City's second goal.



Bernardo Silva (right) and Phil Foden close down Inter's Nicolò Barella

88

In 88 of the 117 games in which a goal was scored, the team that struck first went on to win



Victor Osimhen celebrates putting Napoli in front against Frankfurt in the last 16

WHY THE FIRST GOAL COUNTS

Getting the first goal in the UEFA Champions League goes a long way to securing a positive result. Of the 117 games in 2022/23 featuring one or more goal, the team who scored first earned at least a draw in 90% of them. In 88 matches, they went on to win. Observer Packie Bonner said the first goal held an important psychological component: "It gives the team confidence and the players are freer then to go and play their game." From an opposition perspective, by contrast, they must often adjust their plan and can become vulnerable as they open up in pursuit of an equaliser.



Manchester City midfielder Rodri slots in the only goal of the final

CITY CLAIM THE PRIZE

A second-half strike from Rodri gave Manchester City their first title and Pep Guardiola his third, though Inter pushed them all the way in Istanbul

Unbeaten across the entire campaign and its leading scorers, Manchester City were deserving winners of the 2022/23 UEFA Champions League but they had to do it the hard way in an intriguing Istanbul final against Inter.

City had arrived in the Turkish capital as strong favourites to secure their first European crown – and, with it, complete the treble. Yet Inter, in their first final since 2010, proved clever and obdurate opponents, limiting Pep Guardiola's side to four shots on goal and so nearly taking the game to extra time after Federico Dimarco struck the crossbar and Romelu Lukaku saw a late close-range header blocked by the left leg of Ederson.

Instead Rodri's 68th-minute goal was enough for City to become the competition's 23rd winners – and for Guardiola to join Bob Paisley and Zinédine Zidane as a three-time winner as coach.

It was a night when, in the words of one member of UEFA's Technical Observer Panel, Inter "really disrupted City's build-up and all their middle-third patterns". The English title holders managed only seven shots overall – their joint-lowest number of the season – and recorded a final-third pass completion rate of 77.8%, notably lower than their season average of 86.4%.

A key factor in this was the work of Inter defenders Matteo Darmian and Alessandro Bastoni – the centre-backs on the right and left respectively of their back three – who jumped into the spaces between City's midfield and attacking lines to shut down those pockets in which Guardiola's playmakers typically create. As the UEFA match observer explained, Inter "had players in clear man-marking roles" – notably on Rodri – and "other players who had to jump and these were the two centre-halves."

The observer added that it was a “brave” ploy as middle centre-back Francesco Acerbi was often left alone against Erling Haaland, the competition’s top scorer. “Inter were not afraid to play one against one,” the observer reflected. Haaland’s only shot, saved at the near post by André Onana after 27 minutes, was one of only two touches in the Inter box for the City No9.

City had set up in a 1-3-4-2-1 with a midfield diamond featuring Rodri at the base, John Stones and Kevin De Bruyne on the right and left respectively, and İlkay Gündoğan at the top. That changed with De Bruyne’s 36th-minute withdrawal through injury, at which point substitute Phil Foden became the player to operate behind Haaland. With space at a premium, Foden’s dribbling ability proved beneficial according to the match observer. “Foden is direct,” he said of the City youth-team graduate who produced one of his side’s few clear openings when, at 1-0, he turned away from Dimarco before carrying the ball into the box and hitting a low shot at Onana.

Behind Foden, match-winner Rodri had struggled to escape Inter’s shackles in the first period. With the Inter centre-backs going up the pitch to press City’s playmakers, this freed their midfielders for other tasks – with Rodri the priority. As Guardiola admitted afterwards: “We didn’t expect [Hakan] Çalhanoğlu jammed to Rodri.”

Guardiola added: “In the first half we had trouble reading the free man in midfield. I said to Rodri [at half-time]: ‘Relax, you’ve been the best midfielder in Europe by some distance. Don’t rush it – read where the free man is.’” Rodri ended the final with more passes into the attacking third (ten) than any other player – and, crucially, the winning

goal. It came in the 68th minute when Manuel Akanji carried the ball towards the Inter box. As Bastoni stepped out of defence to challenge him, Bernardo Silva slipped into the space behind, breaking on to Akanji’s pass and cutting the ball back towards the penalty spot where Rodri arrived to side-foot a first-time shot inside the near post.

On a night when City had 55.4% of possession – only against Bayern in the quarter-finals did they have less – they still had work to do to defend their lead. Guardiola, citing the psychological barrier he had to surmount when winning Barcelona’s first European Cup as a player, admitted that “we felt the pressure”.

That pressure grew during a late push by Inter when goalkeeper Onana’s impressive passing ability came to the fore. Stepping out of his box to play as a holding midfielder, the Cameroonian took out six City players with one ball into the opposition half for Lautaro Martínez to supply Lukaku for a shot. The Inter keeper ended the tournament first among goalkeepers in the ‘goals prevented’ category with 7.84, yet it was Ederson’s stop from Lukaku’s header after 88 minutes that proved the save of the night – and left Simone Inzaghi smacking the turf in a mixture of disbelief and frustration.

The Inter coach praised his team’s aggression and organisation afterwards and added: “We were very good in both phases. We gave away very little – I remember there was one chance for Foden but they didn’t have clear chances. We deserved to take the game to extra time.”

Inter finished the game with an xG of 1.68, higher than City’s 0.99 – Guardiola side’s third-lowest of the campaign. Yet the scoreboard said 1-0 to City, and the old trophy had a new name on it.



MATCH STATISTICS



MANCHESTER CITY

EDERSON	31
AKANJI	25
RÚBEN DIAS	3
AKÉ	6
STONES	5
⚡ 2 Walker 82'	
RODRI	16
BERNARDO SILVA	20
DE BRUYNE	17
⚡ 47 Foden 36'	
GÜNDÖĞAN (C)	8
GREALISH	10
HAALAND	9

UNUSED SUBSTITUTES

ORTEGA	18
CARSON	33
PHILLIPS	4
LAPORTE	14
ÁLVAREZ	19
GÓMEZ	21
MAHREZ	26
PERRONE	32
PALMER	80
LEWIS	82
COACH	
PEP GUARDIOLA	

Istanbul 23
FINAL

1-0

SATURDAY 10 JUNE 2023
Atatürk Olympic Stadium, Istanbul

GOAL

Rodri 68

REFEREE

Szymon Marciniak (Poland)



INTER

24	ONANA
36	DARMIAN
⚡ 33 D'Ambrosio 84'	
15	ACERBI
95	BASTONI
⚡ 8 Gosens 76'	
2	DUMFRIES
⚡ 12 Bellanova 76'	
23	BARELLA
77	BROZOVIĆ (C)
20	HAKAN ÇALHANOĞLU
⚡ 22 Mkhitaryan 84'	
32	DIMARCO
10	MARTÍNEZ
9	DŽEKO
⚡ 90 Lukaku 57'	

UNUSED SUBSTITUTES

1	HANDANOVIĆ
21	CORDAZ
5	GAGLIARDINI
6	DE VRIJ
11	CORREA
14	ASLLANI
37	ŠKRINIAR

COACH

SIMONE INZAGHI



MANCHESTER CITY	INTER
1	0
55	45
7	14
4	6
3	7
2	0
0	1
2	4
2	4
0	0
512	394
443	325
112.9 km	114.2 km

Manchester City 's final match-winner Rodri was the observers' pick as Player of the Season, while Napoli's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia took the young player prize after his breakthrough campaign

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
RODRI

At half-time in the UEFA Champions League final, Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola gave Rodri a reminder that he was “the best midfielder in Europe by some distance”. It was a pep talk that followed 45 minutes in which Rodri, in his own words, “wasn't good” as he struggled to deal with Inter's man-marking. As Roberto Martínez said: “They always had one midfielder jumping on Rodri.”

That close attention can be read as a sign of the Spaniard's importance as City's midfield metronome. His response in a second half in which he scored the winning goal merely underlined that you cannot keep a good man down – certainly not one as good as Rodri.

Here is a player who had the most touches of a football (1,120) in the 2023/23 Champions League. He completed the most passes (910) and performed the most ball recoveries (105). His tally of 135 line-breaking passes was surpassed only by Toni Kroos. In the final no player made more passes into the attacking third than his ten or made more interceptions (three). Little wonder he left Istanbul with both the Player of the Match and the UEFA Champions League Player of the Season awards.

According to the UEFA Technical Observer Panel, this is a player with a formidable tactical understanding: “He breaks the game up and is always in good positions to build the play. He also has exceptional awareness of opposition pressure when receiving the ball.”

One thing the Villarreal youth product has never been renowned for is his goalscoring. Prior to City's quarter-final against Bayern München he had not scored in Europe since 2016 – for Villarreal against Osmanlıspor in the UEFA Europa League. Yet that changed with his spectacular left-foot strike from outside the box to open the scoring in the first leg against the German champions. Then came an even more significant strike against Napoli on 10 June – this time placed low with his right foot. “My first thought was to hit it hard and high but seeing the number of players there, I decided to place it,” said a man whose decision-making with a ball at his feet seldom lets him down.



YOUNG PLAYER
OF THE SEASON
KHVICHA KVARATSKHELIA

In an age when football's talent-finders receive unprecedented support from science and technology, it is surprising that a footballer of the calibre of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia should only turn up in one of western Europe's bigger leagues aged 21. It seems more surprising still given the impact made by Kvaratskhelia in his first season with Napoli. With his outstanding pace and dribbling ability, the now 22-year-old Georgian earned the moniker 'Kvaradona' as he helped Napoli earn a first Serie A title since 1990 as well as reach the Champions League quarter-finals.

Coming in from the left wing, he scored 12 goals and set up ten more in Serie A, an output which earned him the Player of the Season award; in the Champions League there were two goals and four assists.

Prior to joining Napoli from Dinamo Batumi in

summer 2022, Kvaratskhelia's experience of UEFA club competition was limited to two Europa Conference League qualifying matches with Rubin Kazan, during three-year stay with the Russian club.

By half-time of his Champions League debut against Liverpool he had highlighted his potential with an involvement in the lead-up to all three first-half goals – notably the third when he beat Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joe Gomez to tee up Giovanni Simeone. His first goal in the competition – a cool finish after a one-two with Giacomo Raspadori – followed on Matchday 3 in the 6-1 drubbing of Ajax in Amsterdam.

The data underlines the value of his dribbling: he ranked third in the 2022/23 Champions League for take-ons with 76, behind only Vinícius Júnior and Rafael Leão. He was similarly placed for ball carries following a 1v1, with 46.

"Kvara is gorgeous, magnificent and delightful," said Luciano Spalletti, the coach who oversaw Napoli's title triumph. "A top player, despite his age. He still has a lot to learn and when he does he will become deadly, a super footballer." If 2022/23 was just a taster, then we really are in for a treat in the years to come.



Khvicha Kvaratskhelia wheels away in celebration after scoring against Ajax



TEAM OF THE SEASON

Only three clubs were represented in the observers' selection, with winners Manchester City providing no less than seven players

The consistent excellence produced by Manchester City in winning the competition for the first time was reflected by the presence of so many of their players in the UEFA Champions League 2022/23 Team of the Season.

The UEFA Technical Observers' Panel selected seven City players in this best XI, starting with Rodri, the Spanish midfield pivot who was both Player of the Match in the final and the overall Player of the Season.

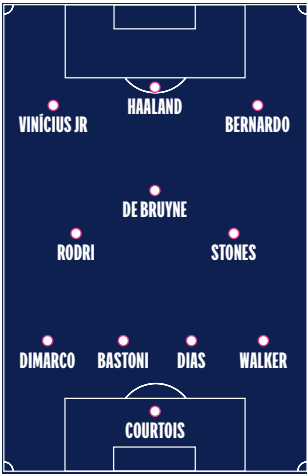
Right-back Kyle Walker's displays up against Vinícius Júnior in the semi-final were a factor in his inclusion in the defence alongside centre-back colleague Rúben Dias whose powerful, body-on-the-line defending was pivotal in the quarter-final first leg against Bayern München.

Another City centre-back, John Stones, features too, albeit in midfield in recognition of his intelligent work in a hybrid defender/midfielder role as the season progressed. Indeed the UEFA observers selected an all-City midfield which includes Rodri and Kevin De Bruyne, the season's highest assist-maker.


Inevitably, 2022/23's top marksman, Erling Haaland, has a place in the attack following his sensational first campaign in City blue, as does right winger Bernardo Silva, as tireless in his attempts to recover the ball as he was precise in his pass selection with it.

Of the other players selected for this Team of the Season, two come from runners-up Inter: Federico Dimarco, the left wing-back whose crossing was an important feature of his side's attacking efforts, and Alessandro Bastoni, the left-sided centre-back who distributed the ball so productively from the back.

Finally, Thibaut Courtois, goalkeeper of the deposed champions Real Madrid, features for the second season running as does the Madrid wide forward Vinícius Júnior – a vital outlet on the left of Los Blancos' attack for his speed and dribbling ability.



THIS TEAM WAS SELECTED BY UEFA'S TECHNICAL OBSERVER PANEL BASED ON PERFORMANCES IN THE 2022/23 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE.





THIBAUT COURTOIS
GK | REAL MADRID

The Belgian brought stature, assurance and authority, and the metrics show he prevented 5.85 goals.

42
SAVES, SECOND ONLY TO ANDRÉ ONANA







KYLE WALKER
DEF | MAN CITY

Superb semi-final marking job on Vinícius Júnior, showcasing his speed, intensity and experience.

75%
SUCCESS RATE FROM 16 DUELS OVER TWO LEGS v MADRID





RÚBEN DIAS
DEF | MAN CITY

Combined clever distribution with muscular defending – epitomised by five blocks in quarter-final v Bayern.

89
LINE-BREAKING PASSES FROM OWN HALF, THE SECOND-BEST IN THE COMPETITION






ALESSANDRO BASTONI
DEF | INTER

Showed an excellent passing range and stepped forward to good effect from defence.

96
LINE-BREAKING PASSES, THE MOST BY AN INTER PLAYER







FEDERICO DIMARCO
DEF | INTER

Wing-back had key attacking role in Inter's 1-3-5-2, ranking joint-second in competition for assists (five).

41
OPEN-PLAY CROSSES, SECOND ONLY TO DE BRUYNE





JOHN STONES
MID | MAN CITY

Showed outstanding tactical understanding and decision-making when stepping into midfield.

89%
PASS PERCENTAGE IN MIDFIELD ROLE IN FINAL





KEVIN DE BRUYNE
MID | MAN CITY

An inspiration with his driving runs, supply of passes to Haaland and unmatched stream of open-play crosses.

7
ASSISTS, THE MOST IN THE 2022/23 COMPETITION







RODRI
MID | MAN CITY

Final hero had most touches of the ball and most passes completed of any player – and invariably made the right decision.

105
BALL RECOVERIES, RANKED FIRST IN COMPETITION





BERNARDO SILVA
MID | MAN CITY

Clever, tireless and rarely gives ball away; ranked second for line-breaking passes in the attacking third.

286
PASSES IN THE FINAL THIRD WITH 87% ACCURACY





ERLING HAALAND
FOR | MAN CITY

The 12-goal striker gave new dimension to City's attack with physical presence and penalty-box instincts.

63.4%
OF HIS SHOTS ON TARGET – BEST RATIO AMONG STRIKERS WITH 5 GOALS OR MORE





VINÍCIUS JÚNIOR
FOR | REAL MADRID

Seven-goal Brazilian also contributed six assists and was Player of the Match in Madrid's 5-2 win at Anfield.

114
TAKE-ONS (41% SUCCESS RATE); THE MOST IN THE COMPETITION



HITTING THE TARGET

Although strikes from range accounted for half of the top ten, the observers' pick as the season's best strike was Erling Haaland's acrobatic close-range finish



Erling Haaland produces a remarkable finish with the outside of his left boot

There were five strikes from outside the penalty box among the top ten selected by UEFA's Technical Observer Panel yet the winner, by Manchester City's Erling Haaland against former club Borussia Dortmund, came inside the five-metre box. That is not to say it was straightforward. Quite the opposite in fact.

The Norwegian said towards the end of the season that a lot of his goals in a City shirt had come from "unreal passes" but this strike in the September home comeback win over Dortmund was even less believable – an acrobatic connection with a João Cancelo cross which was more redolent of Bruce Lee than Francis Lee, the City scoring hero of the 1970s.

As Cancelo's outside-of-the-boot cross dropped towards the far post, Haaland lifted his giant frame off the ground between two defenders and – with his left leg raised high – somehow hooked the ball into the net with the outside of his boot. That Pep Guardiola likened it to the so-called 'phantom goal' scored by Johan Cruyff for Barcelona in 1973 underlined its rare quality.

It is not the only goal that demands repeat viewing in a top ten which includes a magnificently controlled volley on the run by Kylian Mbappé – second on the list – and a lovely Darwin Núñez back-heel. There are eye-catching strikes from distance by the likes of Alejandro Grimaldo, Vinícius Júnior and Kevin De Bruyne and also a thrilling high-speed run by Karim Adeyemi from inside his own half which brought his memorable first Champions League goal for Dortmund.

TOP 10 GOALS

- 1

ERLING HAALAND
Man City 2-1 Dortmund
Matchday 2, 14/09/2022
Haaland's first home European goal for City – an acrobatic volley with the outside of his left foot as he lunges forward with both feet off the ground.
- 2

KYLIAN MBAPPÉ
Paris 2-1 Juventus
Matchday 1, 06/09/2022
A world-class one-two with Neymar ends with Mbappé meeting the Brazilian's scooped ball over the defence with an angled volley on the run.
- 3

LIONEL MESSI
Benfica 1-1 Paris
Matchday 3, 05/10/2022
Messi comes in from the right in a slick combination, the ball going to Mbappé then Neymar and back to Messi for a first-time curling finish.
- 4

DARWIN NÚÑEZ
Liverpool 2-5 Real Madrid
Round of 16 first leg, 21/02/2023
From the right Mohamed Salah slips an incisive low ball into the goalmouth where Núñez, timing his run perfectly, flicks in with his heel.
- 5

ALEJANDRO GRIMALDO
Benfica 2-0 Maccabi Haifa
Matchday 1, 06/09/2022
From 25 metres, the full-back unleashes a dipping, swerving left-foot strike which lands inside the angle of the near post and crossbar.
- 6

VINÍCIUS JÚNIOR
Real Madrid 1-1 Man City
Semi-final first leg, 09/05/2023
Eduardo Camavinga carries the ball from his own half and slips it inside to Vinícius Júnior, who takes a touch before powering a shot past Ederson.
- 7

KEVIN DE BRUYNE
Real Madrid 1-1 Man City
Semi-final first leg, 09/05/2023
The Belgian meets a lay-off outside the D with a wondrously clean first-time drive into the bottom right-hand corner.
- 8

KYLIAN MBAPPÉ
Juventus 1-2 Paris
Matchday 6, 02/11/2022
Another piece of Mbappé brilliance as he evades two defenders outside the box then curls a precise shot in off the far post from 20 metres.
- 9

KARIM ADEYEMI
Dortmund 1-0 Chelsea
Round of 16 first leg, 15/02/2023
Adeyemi gathers a clearance inside his own half and speeds forward, racing past Enzo Fernández then rounding Kepa Arrizabalaga to score.
- 10

RODRI
Man City 3-0 Bayern
Quarter-final first leg, 11/04/2023
Rodri's first-ever Champions League goal is an exceptional curling shot with his left foot from outside the box.



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