Dani Alves: Record-setting footballer convicted of rape

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Dani Alves: Record-setting footballer convicted of rape  
  
Dani Alves once said he would “play until I’m 50” if someone threatened his record of trophies won, but his career was brought to a halt in January 2023, when UNAM of Mexico released him after the Brazilian was charged with rape.  
  
He was found guilty of raping a young woman at a Barcelona nightclub in December 2022 and has sentenced to four and a half years in prison by a Spanish court.  
  
Between his debut for Esporte Clube Bahia in Brazil aged 18 in 2001 and his last game for the Pumas in January 2023 aged 39, Alves played almost 1,000 competitive games for club and country, accumulating trophies.  
  
“I have the greatest list of honours in the history of soccer, with 43 titles. If someone overtakes me, I’ll play until I’m 50,” he said in June 2022.  
  
His clubs included Barcelona, Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain. They coveted Alves because he was, for a long time, one of the best full-backs in the world.  
  
“You have to leave egos aside because if you let them emerge, you stop thinking about being happy,” he told AFP. “In life, you don’t need to be right, you need to be happy. And I’m very happy!”  
  
He came from a poor family in Juazeiro in Bahia State. At the age of ten, he got up at five in the morning with his brother to help his father in the fields, before heading to school.  
  
He made his debut for his local club but was immediately spotted by Sevilla and moved to Spain in 2002.  
  
He spent six seasons with Sevilla, where he won two UEFA Cups, a Copa del Rey and a UEFA Super Cup. Barcelona then bought Alves for 35 million euros.  
  
In his eight-season first spell at Barcelona between 2008 and 2016, Alves won 23 trophies: three Champions Leagues, three Club World Cups, six La Liga titles and four Copas del Rey as well as various Super Cups.  
  
In 2016, he left Barcelona as a free agent for Juventus where he stayed one season, enough time to add a Serie A title and an Italian Cup to his collection and also reach another Champions final, a defeat to old enemy Real Madrid.  
  
Dani Alves jumps on the pile congratulating goal scorer Lionel Messi as Barcelona beat River Plate in the Club World Cup football final in Yokohama in 2015  
  
“Dani is a crazy, sunny guy who lives his life at 300 miles an hour, always with a smile on his face,” said his Juve team-mate Giorgio Chiellini.  
  
He moved to Paris Saint-Germain in 2017, again as a free agent, to help his old Barcelona team-mate and fellow Brazilian Neymar carry the club to the Champions League.  
  
The mission failed and Alves was limited by injuries. But he still won Ligue 1 titles in both his seasons in Paris, a city he did not enjoy.  
  
“Paris is a stressful city, I don’t like it very much,” he told GQ Brazil, adding that he did not like the “racists” in France.  
  
He did not back down from racists but also fought back with humour.  
  
In 2014, when he was about to take a corner kick for Barcelona at Villarreal, a banana flew from the crowd. He picked it up, peeled it and ate it before taking the corner as if nothing had happened.  
  
In 2019, Alves returned to Brazil and won the Paulista championship with Sao Paulo.  
  
He returned for a second, brief, spell with Barcelona.  
  
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“Today, it’s time to say goodbye,” he wrote on Instagram on in June 2022 when he left Barcelona for Mexico, evoking “more than eight years dedicated to this club, these colours, this house…”  
  
He made his debut for Brazil in October 2006 and won the last of his 126 caps off the bench against South Korea in the last 16 at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. He was an unused substitute as Brazil lost on penalties to Croatia in the last eight.  
  
The World Cup was the one trophy that eluded him. He lost a quarter-final in 2010 and a semi-final in 2014 but missed 2018 with a knee injury.  
  
He won two Copa Americas, the second replacing Neymar as captain in 2019 and, at 38, led Brazil to Olympic gold in Tokyo in 2021.  
  
It was his last trophy.  
  
After his arrest his wife, Joana Sanz, broke up with him, posting a letter on Instagram saying: “I love him and always will” but “It’s so hard for me to accept that this person could break me into a thousand pieces.”