Moneeb Abu-Esba, Omar Diaz, Luke Lopez

DA-6223-901-202410

12/8/2023

Best European Soccer League of the 2010s

A map of europe with different colored countries/regions

Description automatically generated

Table of Contents

**Project Goals2**

Question2

Champions League2

Europa League2

**Methodology2**

Data Sources2

SAS Techniques3

**Results3**

2009-2010 Season3

2010-2011 Season4

2011-2012 Season4

2012-2013 Season5

2013-2014 Season5

2014-2015 Season5

2015-2016 Season5

2016-2017 Season6

2017-2018 Season6

2018-2019 Season6

2019-2020 Season7

**Conclusion7**

# Project Goals

## Question

Soccer or Football is the most watched sport in the world. The 2023 FIFA World Cup final logged in around 1.5 billion viewers globally. After the FIFA World Cup, the next soccer match to be watched is the Champions League final which had an audience of 450 million viewers globally. Another important League final is the Europa League final with a viewer count of 6.5 million viewers globally.

My group and I wanted to find out which team was the best in European Soccer, but the Champions League and the Europa League informed us which team was the best in European soccer. Our next question is which European league is the best league of the 2010s. We chose the league level as soccer fans we always hear the phrases: “Farmer’s League”, “Plumber’s League”, “Retirement League”, and other names fans call European leagues. This did not make sense to us as fans will call the Bundesliga (German league) a ‘Farmer’s League”, but Bayern Munich would win the Champions League and have a player being the top scorer. We chose the league level to also see the impact of the Europa League as it is seen as a second-tier Champions League.

## Champions League

The Champions League is a tournament of 32 teams that compete in five rounds. The leagues are selected by the UEFA coefficient. The higher the league’s coefficient the more teams from that league can participate in the Champions League. The previous year’s Champions League winner, the Europa League winner, and the top six leagues based on their coefficient received automatic admission to the current year’s Champions League. The rest of the spots are based on the team's coefficient. Once the teams are selected, they are placed in the group stage. The group stage consists of four teams that play a total of 6 games against each other. The first and second place in each group stage goes to the round of 16. The round of 16 consists of 2 games where the winner is determined by the total number of goals. The same rules apply for the round of 8 and round of 4. The winners of the round of 4 play one game to determine the winner of the Champions League. The winner plays a total of 13 games.

## Europa League

The Europa League is a tournament of 48 teams. 17 teams are qualified based on the leagues and club’s coefficient. 21 teams won the UEL qualifying process. 10 teams that lost in the Champions League. These 48 teams are put in 12 groups of four. They play 6 games and the first and the second-place winners go to the round of 32. The teams play two games where the winner is determined by the total number of goals. The same rules apply for the round of 16, round of 8, and round 4. The winners of the round of 4 play one game to determine the winner of the Champions League. The number of games the winner plays could vary depending on if they came from the Champions League or started in the Europa League.

# Methodology

## Data sources

For the Champions League dataset, we collected information from the official Champions League website, where player statistics are publicly available. Unfortunately, we couldn't find a pre-existing dataset, so we created our own. The dataset includes winners of the tournament, the top goal scorer, goalie with the most clean sheets, and the player with the most assists. This dataset served as the baseline.

Similarly, for the Europa League dataset, we followed the same approach using the official Europa League website. We created a dataset including winners, top goal scorer, goalie with the most clean sheets, and the player with the most assists.

To determine which league was the best in the 2010s, we needed more information. We found the UEFA Coefficient on the official UEFA website, which included the league rankings and coefficients at the beginning and end of each year. Since there was no existing dataset, we created our own. This dataset includes the league's ranking score coefficient, the top scorer of every league, and the Balon d'Or ranking of their top scorer. We gathered this information by checking various sources, including Transfermarkt for top goal scorers and Google for Balon d'Or rankings.

## Techniques

In SAS, we utilized PROC SQL for two main purposes. Firstly, we created a count table for both Champions League and Europa League to determine how many times each league won. Next, we employed a big query to generate separate tables and compared them with previous years using filtering formulas.

For the league dataset, we used PROC SQL to add a "year\_id" column indicating the year in which the data was collected. Then, using a big query, we calculated the average ranking from the start and end of the year columns. Sorting the data in descending order allowed us to visualize the leagues with the highest rankings.

With usage of PROC SQL and big query we created pie charts and bar charts. We used these visualization tools to help better understand the dominance of teams and leagues in each of the compotation’s statistics. The bar charts show us the total amounts of goals, assists, and cleans sheets per team. The pie charts show us how much of the ten-year span was dominated by each league no matter the team.

These procedures helped us organize and analyze the data effectively, providing insights into league performance over the years

# Results:

## 2009-2010 Season

The winner of the Champions League here was Inter Milan, and the winner of the Europa League was Atletico de Madrid. For the Champions League key statistics this season, the top scorer was Lionel Messi, and he had 8 goals and his team was FC Barcelona. The Goalie with the highest Clean Sheets was Julio Caesar at 6 Clean Sheets. Caesar’s team was Inter Milan. The Assist Leader was Wesley Sheiider from Inter Milan’s team, with 6 assists in that season. For the Europa League Key Statistics, the top Scorer was Oscar Cardozo with 9 goals, and his team was S.L. Benfica. The Goalie with the highest Clean Sheets for this season was Frank Rost from Hamburger SV with 5 Clean Sheets this season. Finally, the assist leader in this season was Angel Di Maria from S.L. Benfica with 6 assists. The Avg\_Rank was calculated by taking the Rank for the different Leagues at the start of the season and end of the season and then averaging them out. The best performing League here with the best Avg\_Rank was the Premier League at 18.1245. The Premier League is closely trailed by La Liga in second place with 18.0975 as its Avg\_Rank. The Premier League is considered the best league for this 09-10 season, but in subsequent years, that will not be the case.

## 2010-2011 Season

The winner of the Champions League in this 10-11 season was F.C. Barcelona, and here are the key statistics from the Champions League this season. The top scorer from this season was Lionel Messi from F.C. Barcelona, with 12 goals. This is interesting, because in the previous season he was also the top scorer and scored 8 goals that season. Since Messi scored 4 more goals this season, that might be a contributing factor as to why F.C. Barcelona won the Champions League this season. The Goalie with the highest Clean sheets this season was Iker Casillas with 7 clean sheets, and his team was Real Madrid. Next, the Assist leader for this season was Mezut Ozil with 6 Assists, and his team was Real Madrid. The winner of the Europa League this season was F.C. Portugal, and here are some key statistics from the Europa League during the 10-11 season. The top scorer for the Europa League was Padamel Falcao with 17 goals, and his team was FC Porto. The total goals from the previous season went up by 8 total goals, which is a contributing reason why FC Porto won the Europa League that season. Next, the goalie with the highest Clean sheets was Pepe Reina with 9 Clean Sheets, and his team was Liverpool F.C. Finally, the Assist Leader for the Europa League this season was Roman Eremenko with 6 Assists and his team was Dynamo Kiev. In terms of the Avg\_Rank during this 10-11 season, La Liga was the team at the top of this list at 19.517. In the previous season, La Liga trailed Premier League by a very small margin, and now La Liga sits at the top of the Avg\_Rank with a considerable lead over the next League which happens to be the Premier League at 16.791.

## 2011-2012 Season

The winner of the Champions League for the 11-12 season was Chelsea F.C., and here are the key statistics for the Champions League from the 11-12 season. The top scorer this season was Lionel Messi with 14 goals, and his team was F.C. Barcelona. Messi continues to take the Top Scorer spot in the Champions League in the champions league and even increases his total goals made by 2. The Goalie with the highest Clean Sheets this season was Petr Cech with 5 Clean Sheets, and his team was Chelsea F.C. The total clean sheets decreased this season from the 10-11 season. Even though the total Clean Sheets number decreased, it seems as if Petr Cech with his 5 Clean Sheets contributed in helping his team, Chelsea F.C., in winning the Champions league this season. Finally, the Assist Leader in this season was Frank Ribery with 5 assists, and his team was F.C. Bayern Munchen. The winner of the Europa League this season was Atletico de Madrid, and here are the key statistics from this 11-12 season. The Top Scorer for the season was Padamel Falcao with 12 goals, and his team was Atletico de Madrid. Since Falcao was the top scorer for that season, that is a reason why Atletico de Madrid won the Europa League in that season. The Goalie with the highest Clean Sheets was Thibaut Coutois with 9 Clean Sheets, and his team was also Atletico de Madrid. Having Coutois as the Goalie with the highest Clean Sheets is also another reason why Atletico de Madrid won the Europa League in that season. Next, the Assist Leader was Diego Ribas de Cunha with 7 Assists, and his team was also Atletico de Madrid. After seeing that Atletico de Madrid had three top categories for Top Scorer, Most Clean Sheets, and Assist Leader it is now not a surprise that Atletico de Madrid won the Europa League in the 11-12 season. In terms of Avg\_Rank, La Liga still maintains first place at 19.3095 over all of the other leagues. Most notably, Premier League has slid to third place, while Bundesliga has taken the second spot. Additionally, La Liga continues its pattern of domination over all the other leagues.

## 2012-2013 Season

In the Champions League FC Bayern Munchen of the Bundesliga won the Champions League. Cristiano Ronaldo who plays in Real Madrid leading in goals with 14, Manuel Neuer who plays in FC Bayern Munchen with the most clean sheets of 5, and Zlatan Ibrahimovic of Paris Sain-Germain FC with the most assists at 7. This season all the player statistics have new leaders. For the Europa League Chealse FC of the EPL won the Europa League. Libor Kozak scored 8 goals, Volkan Demirel had 9 clean sheets, and Jose Barkero with 6 assists. This season all the player statistics have new leaders.

La Liga lead the AVG\_Rank at 20.376% even though no Spanish teams won any competition. This is due to the fact a handful of players that play in La Liga leader in the player statistics. EPL jumps to second place this is due to a mix of winning the Europa League and winning a few of the players individual statistics. With Bundesliga being at third, because the lack of different teams in the German league dominating in any other category.

## 2013-2014 Season

This year is great for La Liga as Real Madrid and Sevilla won the Champions League and the Europa League. In the Champions league player stats Cristiano Ronaldo is the top scorer again with 17 goals (increase of 5 goals from last year), Iker Casillas (Real Madrid) had 5 clean sheets, and Wayne Rooney (Manchester United) had 8 assists. For the Europa League Soriano leads with 8 goals (FC Red Bull Salzburg), Alvarado (AZ Klmaar) has the most clean sheets at 6, and Kampl (FC Red Bull Salzburg) leads in assists with 5.

La Liga increases their AVG\_Rank to 21.57% due to winning both leagues, Ronaldo’s goal increase, and winning other stats. Serie A is now second at 16.64% due to individual player stats. With Bundesliga at third due to the previous year’s ranking.

## 2014-2015 Season

Again 2 La Liga teams win the Champions League and the Europa League, FC Barcelona and Sevilla wins the Europa League for the second time in a row. In the Champions League Lional Messi (FC Barcelona) Leads in goals at 10 and assists at 6 and Buffon (Juventus FC) leads in clean sheets at 6. For Europa League Lukaku (Everton) leads in goals at 8, Boyko leads in clean sheets at 7, and Yarmolenko (Dynamo Kiev) leads in assists at 6.

For the AVG\_Ranking La Liga goes up to 22% which is reasonable as La Liga players and teams dominated multiple stats and leagues. Interesting enough Bundesliga is second even though there is no mention of any team in any player stat. Also third place is notable as Serie A is at third as 1 player is mentioned in the player stats.

## 2015-2016 Season

For the third season in a row 2 la Liga teams win the leagues. Real Madrid wins the Champions League and Sevilla wins the Europa League for the third time in a row. In the Champions League Ronaldo (Real Madrid) leads in goals at 16, Navas (Real Madrid) leads in clean sheets at 9, and Neymar (FC Barcelona) leads in assists at 5. In the Europa League Aduriz (Athletic Club Bilbao) leads in goals at 10, Mignolet (Liverpool FC) leads in clean sheets with 6, and Suarez (Villarreal CF) leads in assists with 6.

The AVG\_Rank is shocking as La Liga goes down to 21.96%. Even though 2 La Liga teams win the leagues with Sevilla winning their 3rd Europa League in a row and five out of the 6 player stats are lead by La Liga players. Second is Bundesliga even without mention in stats or winnings. This can be because Bundesliga teams reach far in both competitions. The EPL is next with 14.69% with winning 1 player stat.

## 2016-2017 Season

This season we see Real Madrid win the Champions League for the second of time in a row and Manchester United win the Europa League. In the Champions League player stats Ronaldo (Real Madrid) is the top scorer again at 12 but goal count goes down by 4, Buffon (FC Juventus) leads in clean sheets with 8, and Neymar (FC Barcelona) leads in assists by 8. For Europa League Dzeko (A.S. Roma) Leads in scoring with 8, Romero (Manchester United) leads in clean sheets with 8, and Dockal (AC Sparta Prague) leads in Assists with 6.

The AVG\_Rank is led by La Liga again at 21.95% as the Champions League goes back to La Liga and only 2 of the individual player stats goes to the league also. Bundesliga is second at 15.38% and Premier League in 3rd at 14.69%. This is notable as Bundesliga is usually in the second or third place, but not mentioned in the stats, while EPL teams will win the Europa League and have players with individual stats but is usually trailing behind them.

## 2017-2018 Season

Real Madrid has won the Champions league for the third year in a row. Atletico Madrid won the Europa League. In the Champions League player statistics Ronaldo (Real Madrid) leads in scoring again at 15 with a 3 goal increase, Karius (Liverpool FC) leads in clean sheets at 6, and Milner (Liverpool FC) Leads assists at 9. For the Europa League Aduriz (Athletic Club Bilbao leads in goals at 8, Walke (FC Red Bull Salzburg) leads in clean sheets at Walke, and Payet (Marseille FC) leads in assists at 7.

With The AVG\_Rank show a similar story to the past few seasons where La Liga is first with a raking of 21.95%, Bundesliga second at 15.34%, and EPL third at 14.74%. There seems to be a skill curve between Bundesliga and EPL as Bundesliga will not win any league and will not lead in any player statistic but will be ahead of EPL even when an EPL team wins a competition and lead some individual player statistics.

## 2018-2019 Season

This season there is big changes. Liverpool FC wins the Champions League and Chelsea FC wins the Europa League. This is the first time in 5 seasons that a La Liga team did not win a competition. In the Champions League Messi (FC Barcelona) leads in goals with 12, Alisson (Liverpool FC) leads in clean sheets at 6, and Tadic (Ajax FC) leads in assists at 5. In the Europa League all 3 stats are lead by Chelsea FC players: Giroud at 11 goals, Kepa at 7 clean sheets, and Willian at 7 assists.

As much as EPL dominated this season with winning both leagues and winning a bunch of individual player stats they still underperformed in the AVG\_RANK. La Liga is first, Bundesliga is Second, and EPL is third. This is due to La Liga has a high start season AVG\_Rank and Bundesliga always has teams that go far in the leagues.

## 2019-2020 Season

FC Bayern Munchen wins the Champions League and Sevilla wins the Europa League. FC Bayern Munchen Leads in all Champions League stats with Lewandoski at 15 goals, Neuer at 6 clean sheets, and Lewandoski with 6 assists. In Europa League Fernandes (Manchester United) leads with 8 goals, Romero (Manchester United) leads with 7 clean sheets, and Galeno (S.C. Braga) leads with 6 assists.

There are some notable changes. La Liga is first at 19.84%, EPL is finally second at 18.87% and Bundesliga despite winning the Champions League at 14.8%. This is most likely due to EPL having a high beginning of season ranking.

# Conclusion:

In the 2009–10 season, the league that was the best was the Premier League. In the 2010-11 season, the league that was best was La Liga. In that 2010–11 season, the Premier League took second place for all of the leagues. For the 2011–12 season, La Liga was the top league, with the Bundesliga in second place. For the 2012–13 season, La Liga was once again the best league and even increased its Avg\_Rank to 20.376, while the Premier League was in second place again. For the 2013–14 season, La Liga continued to increase its gap between itself and other leagues. During that season, Serie A took the second-place spot. In the 2014–15 season, La Liga once again increased its Avg\_Rank performance, while the Bundesliga came in second place. In the 2015-16 season, La Liga’s Avg\_Rank numbers dipped very slightly but still maintained control as the best league. Even though La Liga in that season decreased very slightly, so did the second-placed Bundesliga too. In the 2016–17 season, La Liga was the best league that season. La Liga continued its trend of dominating other leagues by being the best league, but did have a season where its numbers decreased in the 2019-20 season. In that season, La Liga came in first at 19.8385 for Avg\_Rank as the best league, but the Premier League came in second at 18.8745 for Avg\_Rank.

All of those seasons mean that La Liga was the best football league in 10 out of 11 seasons. This means that La Liga was truly the best league out of all the other football leagues during that time frame. When analyzing if goals equal championships, we can look at both the Champions League and the Europa League and see if this occurs. In 7 out of the 11 total seasons, the Top Scorer’s teams won the Champions League during those years. This means that it is more likely for one’s team to win the Champions League if they have a top scorer on their team. For the Europa League, this does not seem to be the case, because only in 3 of the 11 seasons did a Europa League team win a championship when one of their players was the top scorer that season. In terms of goals equaling championships, it seems to be true for the Champions League but not true for the Europa League. In terms of whether clean sheets equal championships, for the Champions League, in six out of the 11 seasons, if a team had a player who had the most clean sheets, that team won the championship that season. For the Europa League, in 3 out of the 11 seasons, a team that had the most clean sheets won the championship that season. It is more likely for a team that is a part of the Champions League to win a championship that season if they have a player on their team with the most clean sheets, while it is unlikely to occur for the Europa League teams. In terms of whether assists equal championships, this is not the case because it only occurred three times in the Champions League and only twice in the Europa League. In conclusion, we can say that La Liga is the most dominant league in the years that we analyzed, and having a top scorer on one’s team is more likely to lead to a championship that season, especially in the Champions League.