

# BARCELONA

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## 1 Introduction

Futbol Club Barcelona, commonly known as FC Barcelona and colloquially as Barça, is a professional football club based in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, that competes in La Liga, the top flight of Spanish football.

Founded in 1899 by a group of Swiss, Catalan, German, and English footballers led by Joan Gamper, the club has become a symbol of Catalan culture and Catalanism, hence the motto *"Més que un club"* ("More than a club"). Unlike many other football clubs, the supporters own and operate Barcelona. It is the third-most valuable football club in the world, worth \$5.6 billion, and the world's fourth-richest football club in terms of revenue, with an annual turnover of €800.1 million. The official Barcelona anthem is the *"Cant del Barça"*, written by Jaume Picas and Josep Maria Espinàs. Barcelona traditionally plays in dark shades of blue and garnet stripes, hence the nickname *"Blaugrana"*.

Barcelona is one of the world's most decorated clubs. Domestically, Barcelona has won a record 78 trophies: 27 La Liga, 31 Copa del Rey, 15 Supercopa de España, 3 Copa Eva Duarte, and 2 Copa de la Liga titles, as well as being the record holder for the latter four competitions. In international club football, the club has won 22 European and worldwide titles: five UEFA Champions League titles, a record four UEFA Cup Winners' Cups, five UEFA Super Cups, a record three Inter-Cities Fairs Cups, a joint record two Latin Cups, and three FIFA Club World Cups.

Barcelona was ranked first in the International Federation of Football History & Statistics Club World Ranking for 1997, 2009, 2011, 2012, and 2015, and occupies the ninth position on the UEFA club rankings as of May 2023. The club has a long-standing rivalry with Real Madrid, and matches between the two teams are referred to as *"El Clásico"*.

Barcelona is one of the most widely supported teams in the world, and the club has one of the largest social media followings among sports teams. Barcelona players have won a joint-record twelve Ballon d'Or awards, with recipients including Johan Cruyff, as well as a record six FIFA World Player of the Year awards, with winners including Romário, Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Ronaldinho, and Lionel Messi. In 2010, three players who came through the club's youth

academy—Lionel Messi, Andrés Iniesta, and Xavi—were chosen as the three best players in the world in the Ballon d’Or ranking, an unprecedented feat for players from the same football academy. Additionally, players representing the club have won a record eight European Golden Shoe awards.

Barcelona is one of three founding members of the \*Primera División\* that have never been relegated from the top division since its inception in 1929, along with Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid. In 2009, Barcelona became the first Spanish club to win the continental treble consisting of La Liga, Copa del Rey, and the UEFA Champions League, and also became the first European football club to win six out of six competitions in a single year, by also winning the Spanish Super Cup, UEFA Super Cup, and FIFA Club World Cup. In 2011, the club became European champions again, winning five trophies. This Barcelona team, which won fourteen trophies in just four years under Pep Guardiola, is considered by some in the sport to be the greatest team of all time. By winning their fifth Champions League trophy in 2015 under Luis Enrique, Barcelona became the first European football club in history to achieve the continental treble twice.

## 2 The Past

The history of Futbol Club Barcelona begins from the club’s founding in 1899 up until the present day. FC Barcelona, also known simply as Barcelona and familiarly as Barça, is based in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. The club was founded in 1899 by a group of Swiss, Catalan, German, and English footballers led by Joan Gamper. The club played amateur football until 1910 in various regional competitions. In 1910, the club participated in their first of many European competitions and has since amassed fourteen UEFA trophies and a sextuple. In 1928, Barcelona co-founded La Liga, the top tier of Spanish football, along with a string of other clubs. As of 2024, Barcelona has never been relegated from La Liga, a record they share with Athletic Bilbao and arch-rival Real Madrid.

The history of Barcelona has often been political. Though it was a club created and run by foreigners, Barcelona gradually became a club associated with Catalan values. In Spain’s transition to autocracy in 1925, Catalonia became increasingly hostile towards the central government in Madrid. The hostility enhanced Barcelona’s image as a focal point for Catalonism, and when Francisco Franco banned the use of the Catalan language, the stadium of Barcelona became one of the few places where the people could express their dissatisfaction.

The Spanish transition to democracy in 1978 did not diminish the club’s image of Catalan pride. In the 2000s and 2010s—a period of sporting success for the club and an increased focus on Catalan players—club officials have been openly faithful to the historic club commitment to the defense of the country, democracy, freedom of expression, and the right to decide, and have condemned any action that may impede the full exercise of these rights.

### 3 Support

The nickname *culer* for a Barcelona supporter is derived from the Catalan *cul* (English: *arse*), as the spectators at the first stadium, Camp de la Indústria, sat with their *culs* over the stand.[183][184] In Spain, about 25

In addition to membership, as of March 2022 there are 1,264 officially registered fan clubs, called *penyes*, around the world.[191] The fan clubs promote Barcelona in their locality and receive beneficial offers when visiting Barcelona.[192] Among the best supported teams globally, Barcelona has the second highest social media following in the world among sports teams, with over 103 million Facebook fans as of December 2021, only behind Real Madrid with 111 million.[12][193] The club has had many prominent people among its supporters, including Pope John Paul II, who was an honorary member, and former prime minister of Spain José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

### 4 El-Clasico

here is often a fierce rivalry between the two strongest teams in a national league, and this is particularly the case in La Liga, where the game between Barcelona and Real Madrid is known as "The Classic" (*El Clásico*). From the start of national competitions the clubs were seen as representatives of two rival regions in Spain: Catalonia and Castile, as well as of the two cities. The rivalry reflects what many regard as the political and cultural tensions felt between Catalans and the Castilians, seen by one author as a re-enactment of the Spanish Civil War.[196] Over the years, the head-to-head record between the two clubs is 102 victories for Madrid, 100 victories for Barcelona, and 52 draws.[197]

Barcelona fans creating a mosaic of the Catalan flag before a 2012 *El Clásico* at Camp Nou As early as the 1930s, Barcelona "had developed a reputation as a symbol of Catalan identity, opposed to the centralising tendencies of Madrid".[198][199] In 1936, when Francisco Franco started the Coup d'état against the democratic Second Spanish Republic, the president of Barcelona, Josep Sunyol, member of the Republican Left of Catalonia and Deputy to The Cortes, was arrested and executed without trial by Franco's troops[200] (Sunyol was exercising his political activities, visiting Republican troops north of Madrid).[198] During the dictatorships of Miguel Primo de Rivera and especially Francisco Franco, all regional languages and identities in Spain were frowned upon and restrained. As such, most citizens of Barcelona were in strong opposition to the fascist-like regime. In this period, Barcelona gained their motto *Més que un club* (English: *More than a club*) because of its alleged connection to Catalan nationalist as well as to progressive beliefs.[201]

There's an ongoing controversy as to what extent Franco's rule (1939–75) influenced the activities and on-pitch results of both Barcelona and Real Madrid. Fans of both clubs tend to exaggerate the myths favouring their narratives. Most historians agree that Franco did not have a preferred football team, but his Spanish nationalist beliefs led him to associate himself with the establish-

ment teams, such as Atlético Aviación and Madrid FC (that recovered its royal name after the fall of the Republic). On the other hand, he also wanted the re-named CF Barcelona succeed as "Spanish team" rather than a Catalan one. During the early years of Franco's rule, Real Madrid were not particularly successful, winning two Copa del Generalísimo titles and a Copa Eva Duarte; Barcelona claimed three league titles, one Copa del Generalísimo and one Copa Eva Duarte. During that period, Atlético Aviación were believed to be the preferred team over Real Madrid. The most contested stories of the period include Real Madrid's 11–1 home win against Barcelona in the Copa del Generalísimo, where the Catalan team alleged intimidation, and the controversial transfer of Alfredo Di Stéfano to Real Madrid despite his agreement with Barcelona. The latter transfer was part of Real Madrid chairman Santiago Bernabéu's "revolution" that ushered in the era of unprecedented dominance. Bernabéu, himself a veteran of the Civil War who fought for Franco's forces, saw Real Madrid on top not only of Spanish but also European football, helping create the European Cup, the first true competition for Europe's best club sides. His vision was fulfilled when Real Madrid not only started winning consecutive league titles but also swept the first five editions of the European Cup in the 1950s.[202] These events had a profound impact on Spanish football and influenced Franco's attitude. According to historians, during this time he realized the importance of Real Madrid for his regime's international image, and the club became his preferred team until his death. Fernando Maria Castiella, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs under Franco from 1957 until 1969, noted that "[Real Madrid] is the best embassy we have ever had." Franco died in 1975, and the Spanish transition to democracy soon followed. Under his rule, Real Madrid had won 14 league titles, 6 Copa del Generalísimo titles, 1 Copa Eva Duarte, 6 European Cups, 2 Latin Cups, and 1 Intercontinental Cup. In the same period, Barcelona had won 8 league titles, 9 Copa del Generalísimo titles, 3 Copa Eva Duarte titles, 3 Inter-Cities Fairs Cups, and 2 Latin Cups.[203][204]

The rivalry was intensified during the 1950s when the clubs disputed the signing of Alfredo Di Stéfano. Di Stéfano had impressed both Barcelona and Real Madrid while playing for Los Millonarios in Bogotá, Colombia, during a players' strike in his native Argentina. Soon after Millonarios' return to Colombia, Barcelona directors visited Buenos Aires and agreed with River Plate, the last FIFA-affiliated team to have held Di Stéfano's rights, for his transfer in 1954 for the equivalent of 150 million Italian lira (according to other sources 200,000 dollars). This started a battle between the two Spanish rivals for his rights. FIFA appointed Armando Muñoz Calero, former president of the Spanish Football Federation as mediator. Calero decided to let Di Stéfano play the 1953–54 and 1955–56 seasons in Madrid, and the 1954–55 and 1956–57 seasons in Barcelona. The agreement was approved by the Football Association and their respective clubs. Although the Catalans agreed, the decision created various discontent among the Blaugrana members and the president was forced to resign in September 1953. Barcelona sold Madrid their half-share, and Di Stéfano moved to Los Blancos, signing a four-year contract. Real paid 5.5 million Spanish pesetas for the transfer, plus a 1.3 million bonus for the purchase,

an annual fee to be paid to the Millonarios, and a 16,000 salary for Di Stéfano with a bonus double that of his teammates, for a total of 40

Di Stéfano became integral in the subsequent success achieved by Real Madrid, scoring twice in his first game against Barcelona. With him, Madrid won the first five editions of the European Cup.[206] The 1960s saw the rivalry reach the European stage when Real Madrid and Barcelona met twice in the European Cup, with Madrid triumphing en route to their fifth consecutive title in 1959–60 and Barcelona prevailing en route to losing the final in 1960–61. In 2002, the European encounter between the clubs was dubbed the "Match of The Century" by Spanish media, and Madrid's win was watched by more than 500 million people.[207] An intense fixture which is marked by its indiscipline in addition to memorable goal celebrations from both teams – often involving mocking the opposition – such notable celebrations occurred in 2009 when Barcelona captain Carles Puyol kissed his Catalan armband in front of incensed Madrid fans at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium and in 2017 when Lionel Messi celebrated his 93rd-minute winner for Barcelona against Real Madrid at the Bernabéu by taking off his Barcelona shirt and holding it up to incensed Real Madrid fans – with his name and number facing them.[

## 5 Records

In March 2021, Lionel Messi overtook Xavi's record of 767 games played for the club, and presently has made 778 official appearances in all competitions, while also holding the record for the most appearances in La Liga matches for Barcelona, with 520.[263]

Lionel Messi is Barcelona's all-time top appearance maker, top scorer, and the highest scoring player for a single club. Barcelona's all-time highest goalscorer in official competitions is Lionel Messi with 672 goals, surpassing César Rodríguez's 232 goals in March 2012, a record which stood for 60 years.[264] In December 2020, Messi also overtook Pelé's 643 goals for Santos to become the highest official scorer for a single club.[265] Messi is the record goalscorer for Barcelona in European and international club competitions,[266] and the record league scorer with 474 goals in La Liga.[267] Four other players have managed to score over 100 league goals for Barcelona: César Rodríguez (190), Luis Suárez (147), László Kubala (131) and Samuel Eto'o (108).[268] Josep Samitier is the club's highest goalscorer in the Copa del Rey, with 64 goals.[269]

László Kubala holds the La Liga record for most goals scored in one match, with seven goals against Sporting Gijón in 1952.[270] Lionel Messi co-holds the Champions League record with five goals against Bayer Leverkusen in 2012.[271] Eulogio Martínez became Barça's top goalscorer in a cup game, when he scored seven goals against Atlético Madrid in 1957.[266]

Barcelona goalkeepers have won a record number of Zamora trophies (20), with Antoni Ramallets and Víctor Valdés winning a record five each. Valdés had a ratio of 0.832 goals-conceded-per-game, a La Liga record,[272] and he also holds the record for longest period without conceding a goal (896 minutes) in all

competitions for Barcelona.[273] Claudio Bravo has the record of best unbeaten start in a season in La Liga history, at 754 minutes.[274][275]

Pep Guardiola is Barcelona's most successful coach, with 14 trophies. Barcelona's longest serving manager is Jack Greenwell, with nine years in two spells (1917–1924) and (1931–1933), and Pep Guardiola is the club's most successful manager (14 trophies in 4 years). The most successful Barcelona player is Lionel Messi with 35 trophies, surpassing Andrés Iniesta, with 32 trophies.[276]

Barcelona's Camp Nou is the largest stadium in Europe. The club's highest home attendance was 120,000 in a European Cup quarter-final against Juventus on 3 March 1986.[277] The modernisation of Camp Nou during the 1990s and the introduction of all-seater stands means the record will not be broken for the foreseeable future as the current capacity of the stadium is 99,354.[278]

El Barça de les Cinc Copes is the first team in Spanish football to have won five trophies in a single season (1951–1952).[279][280][281] Barcelona is the only club to have played in every season of European competitions since they started in 1955 counting non-UEFA competition Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.[282][283] On 18 December 2009, alongside being the only Spanish club to achieve a continental treble, Barcelona became the first ever European football team to win six trophies in a calendar year (Sextuple).[284][285] In January 2018, Barcelona signed Philippe Coutinho from Liverpool for €120 million, the highest transfer fee in club's history.[286][287] In August 2017, Barcelona player Neymar transferred to Paris Saint-Germain for a world record transfer fee of €222 million.[288][289]

In 2016, Barcelona's La Masia was ranked second by the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES) as the most top-level players producing academy in the world.[