

= Karim Benzema =

Karim Mostafa Benzema (born 19 December 1987) is a French professional footballer of Algerian descent who plays for Spanish club Real Madrid and the France national team as a striker . He has been described as an " immensely talented striker " who is " strong and powerful " and " a potent finisher from inside the box " .

Benzema was born in the city of Lyon and began his football career with local club Bron Terraillon . In 1996 , he joined the biggest club in the city , Olympique Lyonnais , and subsequently came through the club 's youth academy . Benzema made his professional debut in the 2004 ? 05 season and appeared sporadically in his first three seasons as Lyon won three titles in that span . In the 2007 ? 08 season , Benzema became a starter and had a breakthrough year scoring over 30 goals as Lyon won its seventh straight league title . For his performances , he was named the National Union of Professional Footballers (UNFP) Ligue 1 Player of the Year and named to the organization 's Team of the Year . Benzema was also the league 's top scorer and given the Bravo Award by Italian magazine Guerin Sportivo . After another season at Lyon , in July 2009 , Benzema moved to Real Madrid in a transfer fee worth over ? 35 million (\$ 50 million) , and signed a six @-@ year contract . After struggling to establish himself in his debut season with the club , in the ensuing two seasons , Benzema reached prominence , scoring 32 goals en route to helping Real Madrid win the Copa del Rey in 2011 and the 2011 ? 12 edition of La Liga . He has been named French Player of the Year thrice for his performances in 2011 , 2012 and 2014 .

Benzema is a former French youth international and has represented his nation from under @-@ 17 level onwards . Prior to playing for the senior team , he played on the under @-@ 17 team that won the 2004 UEFA European Under @-@ 17 Championship . Benzema made his senior international debut in March 2007 in a friendly match against Austria , scoring in a 1 ? 0 win . Benzema has earned over 70 caps and represented France at three major international tournaments : the 2008 and 2012 editions of the UEFA European Football Championship and the 2014 FIFA World Cup . However , Benzema has twice been intentionally left off major tournament squads (2010 World Cup and 2016 Euros) due to various scandals .

= = Club career = =

= = = Early career = = =

Benzema began his football career at his hometown club Bron Terraillon SC at the age of eight . While at the club , he was nicknamed Coco by friends and , after scoring two goals in an under @-@ 10 match against the Lyon youth academy , began attracting attention from the biggest club in the city . According to Serge Santa Cruz , who was president of Bron Terraillon in the 1990s , Lyon officials had visited him directly in an attempt to sign the youngster ; however , Santa Cruz refused . After talking with Benzema 's father , the club allowed the player to undergo a trial with Lyon . Following the trial , Benzema officially joined Lyon and was inserted into the club 's academy .

= = = Lyon = = =

Benzema quickly ascended up the youth categories in the academy . He served as a ballboy during Lyon senior team matches and performed well in school being described as a student who was " discreet and respectful " . At under @-@ 16 level , Benzema scored 38 goals in the Championnat National des 16 ans , the domestic league for under @-@ 16 youth players in France . Ahead of the 2004 ? 05 season , Benzema was promoted to the club 's reserve team , which was playing in the Championnat de France amateur , the fourth division of French football . Despite only playing with the team during the autumn campaign , he scored a team @-@ high ten goals as the Lyon reserve team finished second in its group .

===== 2004 ? 2007 =====

Benzema was called up to the senior team for the first time under manager Paul Le Guen during the break leading up to the second half of the season . As is customary with new players arriving at Lyon , the young striker had to stand up and speak to his new teammates , which at that time included the likes of Michael Essien , Sylvain Wiltord , Florent Malouda and Éric Abidal . While speaking , Benzema was subjected to jokes and laughter , which prompted the youngster to declare " Do not laugh , I 'm here to take your place " . He , subsequently , made his professional debut on 15 January 2005 against Metz , appearing as a substitute for Pierre @-@ Alain Frau . Lyon won the match 2 ? 0 as Benzema provided the assist on the second goal scored by Bryan Bergougnoux . He would subsequently sign his first professional contract , agreeing to a three @-@ year deal . After making three more appearances as a substitute , on 2 April , Benzema made his first professional start in a 1 ? 0 win over Lens . He finished the campaign with six appearances as Lyon won its fourth @-@ straight league title .

Benzema began the 2005 ? 06 season under the tutelage of new manager Gérard Houllier . Under Houllier , he struggled for meaningful minutes due to the presence of newly signed Brazilian striker Fred , as well as Sylvain Wiltord . Benzema made his season debut on 2 October 2005 in a league win over Rennes , appearing as a substitute . On 6 December , he made his UEFA Champions League debut in Lyon 's final group stage match against Norwegian club Rosenborg . On his competition debut , he scored his first professional goal in a 2 ? 1 win . A month later , Benzema scored his first professional double in a 4 ? 0 win over Grenoble in the Coupe de France . On 4 March 2006 , Benzema scored his first professional league goal against Ajaccio in a 3 ? 1 win .

Benzema began earning more playing time in the 2006 ? 07 season and made his competitive season debut in the 2006 Trophée des Champions against Paris Saint @-@ Germain . In the French Supercup , Benzema converted a penalty which drew the match at 1 ? 1 . Lyon later won the league curtain @-@ raiser 5 ? 4 on penalties . Benzema opened the league campaign on a quick note scoring in the team 's first match of the season against Nantes . Three weeks later , on 26 August 2006 , Benzema appeared as a substitute and scored two goals in a 4 ? 1 away win over Nice . He also converted two goals in the Champions League group stage against Romanian outfit Steaua Bucure?ti and Ukrainian club Dynamo Kyiv . After appearing regularly during the autumn campaign , on 10 November , Benzema suffered a severe thigh injury . The injury resulted in the striker missing three months of action before returning in February 2007 . Benzema failed to score a goal until the final league match of the season against Nantes as Lyon recorded its sixth consecutive league title .

===== 2007 ? 08 season =====

For the 2007 ? 08 season , with the likes of Florent Malouda , John Carew and Sylvain Wiltord all departing from the club , Benzema switched to the number 10 shirt and was inserted into the lead striker role . After forming a special relationship with new manager Alain Perrin , he responded with 31 goals in 51 games . He topped the league with 20 goals , scored four goals in the Champions League , one in the Coupe de la Ligue and totaled six goals in six Coupe de France matches , helping Lyon win their first ever double . Some of his more dazzling performances that season included a hat @-@ trick against Metz on 15 September , an equalizing goal in the 90th minute from a free kick against Derby du Rhône rivals Saint @-@ Étienne , and a goal against Lens that was nominated for goal of the season by fans .

In the Champions League , Benzema scored an important double against Rangers at Ibrox Stadium on the last match day of the group stage . The 3 ? 0 victory assured Lyon progression to the knockout rounds . In the knockout rounds , Lyon faced Manchester United and Benzema continued to score , this time it was from outside the penalty box in the first leg match which ended in a 1 ? 1 draw and United eventually won the tie 1 ? 2 on aggregate . Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson and players praised Benzema for his performance . Lyon President Jean @-@ Michel Aulas later accused Ferguson of tapping @-@ up Benzema .

On 13 March 2008 , Benzema extended his contract with Lyon until 2013 with a one @-@ year extension option . After signing his new contract , Benzema became one of the highest paid footballers in France . For his efforts that season , he was named the Ligue 1 Player of the Year , selected to the Team of the Year and awarded the Trophée du Meilleur Buteur for being the league 's top scorer . He was also shortlisted by French magazine France Football for the 2008 Ballon d 'Or award , eventually won by Cristiano Ronaldo .

== = 2008 ? 09 season == = =

Benzema got off to a good start for the 2008 ? 09 season , scoring twice in Lyon 's opening league match against Toulouse . The following three weeks , he scored goals against Rhône @-@ Alpes rivals Grenoble and Saint @-@ Étienne and scored a goal against Nice , converting a penalty in the dying seconds . Lyon won all three matches . As a result of his early goals , Olympique Lyonnais President Jean @-@ Michel Aulas quelled the many transfer rumors surrounding Benzema by placing a ? 100 million price tag on the striker . He was also nominated alongside Franck Ribéry to be featured on the French cover of the video game FIFA 09 .

He scored his seventh goal of the league on 29 October , scoring in the 2 ? 0 win over Sochaux . Benzema scored again the following weekend in a 2 ? 0 win over Le Mans . He was among the top scorers in the Champions League group stage , scoring five goals , a double against Steaua Bucure?ti , two goals in two matches against Fiorentina , and a goal against the eventual group winners Bayern Munich on the final match day .

Following the winter break , Benzema endured a rough patch going scoreless the first three games before recording his 11th goal of the season against Nice in a 3 ? 1 victory . Two weeks later , he scored his 12th goal against Nancy in a 2 ? 0 victory . The next nine matches , both Benzema and Lyon 's form dwindled losing four matches , drawing three , and winning only two with Benzema scoring only two goals in that stretch , both of them against Le Mans in a 3 ? 1 victory . The bad form resulted in Lyon losing their grip on first @-@ place position and eventually falling out of the title race , thus ending their streak of seven consecutive Ligue 1 titles . Benzema was a part of four of those title runs .

Despite losing the title , Benzema got back on track scoring his 15th and 16th goals of the season on 17 May in a 3 ? 1 away victory over rivals Marseille , the first goal being a penalty . He scored his 17th goal the following weekend against Caen in a 3 ? 1 victory moving him into third place among Ligue 1 top scorers .

== = Real Madrid == =

== = 2009 ? 10 season == = =

On 1 July 2009 , it was announced that Lyon had reached an agreement with Spanish club Real Madrid for the transfer of Benzema . The transfer fee was priced at ? 35 million with the fee rising to as much as ? 41 million based on incentives . On 9 July , Benzema successfully passed his medical and signed his contract , a six @-@ year deal , later that afternoon . He was presented officially as a Real Madrid player later that night at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium , similarly to the previous signings of Kaká and Cristiano Ronaldo . Benzema made his Real Madrid debut on 20 July in the club 's opening pre @-@ season friendly against Irish club Shamrock Rovers in Dublin , appearing as a half @-@ time substitute . He scored the lone goal in the club 's 1 ? 0 win , scoring in the 87th minute . On 24 August , Benzema netted two goals in Real Madrid 's 4 ? 0 victory over Norwegian club Rosenborg in an annual friendly tournament organized for the Santiago Bernabeu Trophy . The goals brought his total tally in the pre @-@ season with Real Madrid to five , making him the joint top scorer alongside fellow striker Raúl .

Benzema made his league debut for Madrid on 29 August 2009 against Deportivo La Coruña . He started the match , but was substituted out in the second half as Madrid won 3 ? 2 . A month later ,

he scored his first goal for the club in a 5 ? 0 victory against newly promoted Xerez . After missing the mid @-@ week match against Villarreal , against Tenerife at the weekend , Benzema scored his first double for Madrid in a 3 ? 0 home victory . He made his Champions League debut for the club on 30 September in a group stage tie against Marseille . In the match , Benzema assisted on a Cristiano Ronaldo goal . After failing to score a goal in the month of October , in the team 's first match in November against Italian club Milan in the Champions League , Benzema scored the opener to give Madrid a 1 ? 0 lead . His goal was later cancelled out by a Ronaldinho penalty . On 7 November , in the El Derbi madrileño against Atlético Madrid , Benzema assisted on Madrid 's second goal , scored by Marcelo . Madrid won the match 3 ? 2 .

In late November , Benzema began appearing mainly as a substitute as manager Manuel Pellegrini preferred Gonzalo Higuaín in the lead striker role . To coincide with his benching , the striker was also being criticized by the Spanish media for his under @-@ performance and difficulties settling in the country as he had not yet begun learning the Spanish language . He was even declared the " new Anelka " by a Spanish newspaper Marca blogger , referring to former Real Madrid striker Nicolas Anelka who had a tumultuous year at the club before being sold . Benzema was defended by his compatriot Zinedine Zidane , who admitted " after two months , I was also criticized " and that Benzema was " a talented player and talented players in Madrid must win " .

On 5 December , Benzema appeared as a substitute for Rafael van der Vaart and scored the third goal in a 6 ? 0 romp of Almería . The day after the match against Almería , Benzema responded to the criticism by stating , " I am totally integrated and very happy at Real Madrid , " and , " Yes , I have improved my adaptation . I have a new home and I 'm learning Spanish to understand myself better with my teammates . " After nearly a month coming off of the bench , he started alongside Higuaín away to Valencia on 12 December and responded by assisting on one of Higuaín 's two goals . A week later , Benzema returned to the bench . On his 22nd birthday , he scored in a 6 ? 0 home win against Real Zaragoza . Following an injury to Higuaín in early January 2010 , Pellegrini inserted Benzema back into the starting lineup . After failing to score in his first two starts in the absence of Higuaín , against Deportivo La Coruña on 30 January , he scored a double in an important 3 ? 1 away win . Following the return of Higuaín , Benzema was relegated back to a substitute 's role and finished the campaign by making eight consecutive appearances off the bench . Included in one of the those appearances was his final goal of the season against Athletic Bilbao in a 5 ? 1 win .

== == 2010 ? 11 season == ==

Ahead of the 2010 ? 11 season , Benzema switched to the number nine shirt as Real Madrid were under the tutelage of new incoming manager José Mourinho . The striker immediately drew the ire of Mourinho who declared to reporters during a pre @-@ season media session that " Benzema must understand that he is extremely talented , but that in itself is not enough " , while also stating that " [Madrid] need a striker who is sparky , not one that is listless " . Mourinho sentiments were later echoed by incoming France national team coach Laurent Blanc who acknowledged that Benzema was " not used to working " . Blanc also stated that the striker needed to shed weight in order to fulfill his potential .

Due to Mourinho preferring Ronaldo and Higuaín as his forwards , Benzema began the campaign as a substitute coming off the bench in the team 's opening league match of the season against Mallorca . Following the September international break , he made his first start in a 1 ? 0 win over Osasuna . On 21 September , Benzema made a substitute appearance and scored his first goal of the season in a 3 ? 0 home win against Espanyol . Afterwards , the striker failed to score a domestic goal for nearly two months . The striker did assist on goals in back @-@ to @-@ back weeks against Hércules in the league and Milan in the Champions League .

On 10 November , Benzema scored his second goal of the campaign against Real Murcia in the 2010 ? 11 edition of the Copa del Rey . In late November , Benzema was inserted into the starting eleven following a severe back injury to Higuaín , along with the team 's lack of senior strikers . In his first match since being inserted into the starting lineup permanently , he scored his first

Champions League goal of the season in a group stage fixture against Dutch club Ajax . In Madrid 's final group stage tie against French outfit Auxerre , Benzema scored his first hat trick for the club in a 4 ? 0 win . The first goal he scored was Real Madrid 's 300th goal in the Champions League era . Two weeks later , Benzema converted another hat trick , this time in an 8 ? 0 thrashing of Levante in the Copa del Rey . In the team 's first fixture of the 2011 calendar year , he assisted on the game @-@ winning goal scored by Ronaldo in a 3 ? 2 win over Getafe . In late January , for the first time in his Real Madrid career , Benzema scored goals in back @-@ to @-@ back matches . On 23 January , he scored the only goal in a 1 ? 0 win at home against Mallorca . Three days later , Benzema repeated his efforts scoring the only goal in a win over Sevilla in the first leg of the team 's Copa del Rey semi @-@ final tie . Real Madrid later advanced to its 37th Copa del Rey final in club history after beating Sevilla 2 ? 0 in the second leg .

Following the arrival of Emmanuel Adebayor on loan , Benzema went unused in two consecutive league matches in February 2011 . He returned to the starting lineup on 19 February and embarked on a run in which he scored ten goals in eight matches . Included in those ten goals were doubles in three straight matches against Málaga , Racing Santander and Hércules , as well as a goal in the first leg of Madrid 's Round of 16 tie against former club Lyon . The strike against his hometown club was the 100th goal of his professional career , and also the first goal for Real Madrid at the Stade de Gerland in six years , though despite the honours associated with netting the goal , Benzema did not celebrate out of respect for his former club .

On 19 March , he scored the opener in the El Derbi madrileño as Real Madrid went on to win the match 2 ? 1 . Despite his form , Benzema appeared in only one of the four highly anticipated matches against El Clásico rivals Barcelona , in which the two clubs met in the league , the 2011 Copa del Rey Final and the Champions League knockout stage . In between those clashes , on 23 April 2011 , Benzema scored a goal and assisted on another in a 6 ? 3 win over Valencia . On 30 April , he scored a goal in the team 's 3 ? 2 loss to Real Zaragoza . It was the only match of the campaign that Real Madrid loss , in which Benzema scored . To close out the campaign , Benzema scored another double in an 8 ? 1 win over Almería . He finished the campaign second on the team behind Ronaldo with 26 goals as Real Madrid captured the Copa del Rey giving Benzema his first honour with the club . For his performances during the campaign , particularly during the second half , Benzema was praised by Mourinho , club officials Florentino Pérez and Emilio Butragueño , as well as national team manager Laurent Blanc .

= = = = 2011 ? 12 season = = = =

Prior to the start of the 2011 ? 12 season , Benzema , taking the advice of compatriots Blanc and Zidane , ventured to Merano , Italy , to attend a high performance clinic where he underwent treatment to reduce his weight . The spell at the clinic was ultimately a success after the striker arrived at pre @-@ season 8 kilograms (18 lb) lighter . While at the clinic , Benzema also underwent physical training to build up his muscle mass . The striker was impressive in the pre @-@ season scoring eight goals in seven matches . His performances during the pre @-@ season resulted in Mourinho naming him the starting lead striker for the new campaign . Mourinho was later credited with Benzema 's transformation , but denied full responsibility and , instead , gave credit to the striker himself .

Benzema made his 2011 ? 12 competitive debut for Madrid in the first leg of the 2011 Supercopa de España against Barcelona . In the match , he started and assisted on the opening goal of the match , scored by Mesut Özil . In the second leg , with Madrid trailing 4 ? 3 on aggregate late in the match , Benzema scored the equalizing goal to even the tie at 4 ? 4 . However , six minutes later , a Lionel Messi strike gave Barcelona the supercup . Benzema made his league debut for Madrid in the team 's 6 ? 0 away win over Real Zaragoza . In the team 's next league match two weeks later against Getafe , Benzema scored a double in a 4 ? 2 victory . After going scoreless in three consecutive league matches , he scored his third league goal of the campaign against Rayo Vallecano in a 4 ? 2 win . In the team 's ensuing match against Ajax in the Champions League , Benzema scored Madrid 's third goal in a 3 ? 0 home win . He also assisted on the opener , which

was scored by Ronaldo . In the club 's next Champions League match against Lyon , Benzema scored again netting the opener . He also turned provider for the second consecutive match assisting on a goal by Sami Khedira . Madrid won the match 4 ? 0 .

In November 2011 , Benzema scored five goals ; three in the league and two in Europe . In the league , he converted his three goals in wins over Osasuna and Valencia , while he scored his two Champions League goals in a 6 ? 2 group stage win over Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb . On 10 December 2011 , Benzema scored the opener in Madrid 's 3 ? 1 defeat to Barcelona in the El Clásico . The goal , scored just 21 seconds into the match , was the fastest goal ever scored in a match between the two rivals . Three days after his record @-@ breaking goal , for his performances during the 2011 calendar year , Benzema was named the France Football French Player of the Year , beating out Barcelona defender Éric Abidal and Lyon goalkeeper Hugo Lloris . He became only the second French player based in Spain to win the award , and also the second Real Madrid player to capture it . Zidane was the first to achieve both honorable mentions . Benzema expressed gratitude at winning the award , stating , " It is a pleasure to win an individual trophy . When I see the previous winners ? Zidane , Henry and other major players ? it makes me proud to join them on the list . " In the team 's next match after winning the award , against Sevilla , Benzema assisted on two goals in a 6 ? 2 triumph .

Benzema opened the 2012 portion of the campaign in positive form . He scored goals against Granada and Málaga . Benzema scored against the latter club in the Copa del Rey in each leg of the Round of 16 . The 4 ? 2 aggregate win advanced Real Madrid to the quarter @-@ finals where the club faced Barcelona . After failing to score in the first leg , which ended 2 ? 1 in favor of Barça , in the second leg on 25 January 2012 , Benzema scored his third goal of the season against the Blaugrana , but Madrid failed to win the tie losing 4 ? 3 on aggregate . On 12 February , Benzema scored his first league goal in over a month against Levante . A week later , he scored a double in a 4 ? 0 shutout of Racing Santander . On 24 March , Benzema scored two goals in a league win over Real Sociedad . The two goals made him the top French scorer in La Liga history surpassing Zidane . Three days later , Benzema scored another double in a 3 ? 0 first leg away win over Cypriot club APOEL in the Champions League quarter @-@ finals . On 29 April , Benzema put in a masterpiece performance scoring two goals and assisting on another in a 3 ? 0 win over Sevilla . The double was his seventh of the season and allowed Madrid to close in on its first Primera Division title in four years . Los Blancos captured their 32nd league title the following week cruising to a 3 ? 0 win over Athletic Bilbao . Benzema appeared as a second @-@ half substitute in the match .

== == 2012 ? 13 season == ==

On the first matchday of the UEFA Champions League , Benzema scored an equalizer against Manchester City in 3 ? 2 win at Santiago Bernabéu . On 4 October 2012 , Benzema scored a bicycle kick goal off a cross by Kaká in a 4 ? 1 win against Ajax in Amsterdam . On 18 December 2012 , one day before his 25th birthday , his fine form saw him earn the award for best French footballer of 2012 , for the second year running .

On 2 March 2013 , Benzema opened the scoring against Barcelona in the league game at the Santiago Bernabéu . Real went on to win the game 2 ? 1 , the second time they beat Barcelona in a week . On 30 April 2013 , Benzema scored one goal and assisted to Sergio Ramos against Dortmund .

== == 2013 ? 14 season == ==

Benzema started new season by scoring in a 2 ? 1 win over Real Betis at the Santiago Bernabéu . He scored again one week later in a 1 ? 0 away over Granada , assisted by Cristiano Ronaldo . After four matches without scoring (two with Real Madrid and two with France) , he returned to goal @-@ scoring form by netting twice in a 6 ? 1 away win over Galatasaray in Champions League . On 18 January 2014 , he scored his 100th goal for Madrid in a 5 ? 0 victory at Real Betis . On 23 March , Benzema scored two goals against fierce rivals Barcelona in El Clásico at the Bernabéu from two

crosses by Ángel Di María , taking his goal tally in La Liga to 17 goals , though Barcelona won the match 4 ? 3 .

Benzema was part of Real Madrid 's starting eleven in the 2014 Copa del Rey Final on 16 April at the Mestalla Stadium , and assisted Di María 's opening goal before Gareth Bale hit the winner for Madrid in a 2 ? 1 victory . One week later , Benzema scored the only goal of the game to win the first leg of a Champions League semi @-@ final against Bayern Munich . The club went on to win the final in May . Real Madrid 's attacking trio of Bale , Benzema and Cristiano , dubbed " BBC " , finished the season with 97 goals .

== = 2014 ? 15 season == = =

On 6 August 2014 , Real Madrid announced that Benzema had signed a new five @-@ year deal that will keep him at the club until 2019 . On 12 August 2014 , Benzema played the whole 90 minutes in Real Madrid 's 2 ? 0 win against Sevilla in Cardiff to claim the UEFA Super Cup .

On 16 September 2014 , Benzema scored Real Madrid 's 1,000th goal in European competition after netting a goal in a 5 ? 1 victory over FC Basel in the first match of the Champions League group stage . He scored the winning goal in Real Madrid 's 2 ? 1 away victory against Ludogorets Razgrad in the Champions League after coming on as a second @-@ half substitute . The next weekend , he scored a brace in the 5 ? 0 victory against Athletic Bilbao in La Liga .

Benzema was chosen as La Liga Player of the Month for October 2014 , with his manager Carlo Ancelotti winning the equivalent award . He scored three of Real Madrid 's 13 goals of the month , in which they won three matches and only conceded just one goal .

== = 2015 ? 16 season == = =

Benzema scored a hatrick in an 8 ? 0 thrashing against Malmö FF on 8 December 2015 . On 20 December 2015 , he scored another hatrick in a 10 ? 2 victory over Rayo Vallecano .

He was a regular starter when the team won the 2015 ? 16 UEFA Champions League .

== International career ==

== Youth ==

Benzema is a former France youth international having earned caps at all levels for which he was eligible , excluding the under @-@ 16 team . He is a member of the group , commonly known in France as the Génération 1987 , a youth class that produced current internationals Hatem Ben Arfa , Jérémy Ménez and Samir Nasri , alongside himself . Benzema was the last of the four to make his youth international debut under coach Philippe Bergeroo and officially joined the team ahead of the 2004 UEFA European Under @-@ 17 Football Championship that was played on home soil . In the competition , he appeared in two matches . On his tournament debut , Benzema scored the opening goal in a 3 ? 1 win over Northern Ireland . His lone other appearance in the competition was in a 1 ? 0 group stage win over Spain as France went on to win the tournament defeated the same team in the final .

Benzema was a regular starter in the team at under @-@ 18 level . He made his debut with the team at a local tournament in the Czech Republic . Benzema scored his first goal at under @-@ 18 level in the competition against Poland in the team 's final group stage match . In the final against the hosts , he scored the opening goal in a 2 ? 0 win as France were declared champions of the competition . On 30 September 2004 , Benzema was one of three goalscorers in France 's 3 ? 0 away win over Norway . In the team 's next match against Russia , he scored a double in a 3 ? 1 victory . Due to France winning the 2004 U17 European title , the under @-@ 18 team was allowed participation in the 2005 edition of the UEFA @-@ CAF Meridian Cup . Benzema was called up to the team for the competition and played in all four matches scoring a tournament @-@ high five

goals as France were crowned champions of the tournament . He opened the tournament by scoring two goals in a 7 ? 0 victory over Cameroon . After going scoreless in the team 's next match against Sierra Leone , Benzema responded by scoring a goal in a shutout victory over Nigeria and netting another double in a 4 ? 1 win against Egypt . On 19 May 2005 , in the team 's final match of the season against Slovakia , Benzema scored all four goals in a 4 ? 1 victory . He finished the under @-@ 18 campaign with 18 appearances and a team @-@ high 14 goals and was , subsequently , praised by Bergeroo who , following the campaign , declared that Benzema was " quite efficient " .

The foursome of Benzema , Ben Arfa , Ménez and Nasri returned to international play together for under @-@ 19 duty . The four were joined by Issiar Dia , Blaise Matuidi and Serge Gakpé with the objective of winning the 2006 UEFA European Under @-@ 19 Football Championship . The team opened the campaign with two friendly matches against Norway . Over the course of the two matches , Benzema scored one goal , which came in the first match , a 4 ? 0 win . In the first round of qualification for the UEFA @-@ sanctioned tournament , he scored his only goal in the final group match against Austria . France won the match 2 ? 0 , which resulted in the team progressing to the Elite Round . In the ensuing round , France were placed in a relatively easy group alongside Scotland , Bulgaria , and Belarus . In the opening group game against Bulgaria , Benzema scored a double converting a penalty and scoring in play as France won 4 ? 0 . Both of his goals were scored within a minute of each other . After surprisingly drawing 0 ? 0 with Belarus , France faced Scotland in the final group stage match . Benzema opened the scoring in the 11th minute , but his goal was cancelled out by Steven Fletcher in the second half . The match ultimately finished 1 ? 1 and , despite finishing the round undefeated , France were eliminated after being beaten on points by the Scots .

Benzema made his under @-@ 21 debut for Les Espoirs under coach René Girard in the team 's first match following the 2006 UEFA European Under @-@ 21 Football Championship against Belgium . He started the match and was replaced at half @-@ time by Yoann Gourcuff . He featured in qualification matches for the 2007 UEFA European Under @-@ 21 Football Championship and appeared as a starter and substitute in the first leg and second leg , respectively , of the team 's surprising defeat to Israel in the qualifying playoffs . Despite still being eligible to represent the under @-@ 21 team until 2009 , his appearance in the second leg defeat to Israel was Benzema 's last with the team and he finished his under @-@ 21 career with five appearances and no goals . Prior to representing France at senior international level , Benzema was courted by the Algerian Football Federation (FAF) who sought for the player to represent Algeria at senior international level . In December 2006 , the striker was approached by former federation president Hamid Haddadj and then @-@ national team coach Jean @-@ Michel Cavalli , but turned down the invite citing his desire to continue his international career with France . Benzema later told French radio station Radio Monte Carlo " Algeria is my parents ? country and it is in my heart , but football @-@ wise , I will only play for the French national team " .

== = Senior == =

== = = Euro 2008 == = =

Benzema was called up for the first time to the senior national team by Raymond Domenech on 9 November 2006 for the team 's friendly match against Greece that would be played on 15 November . Benzema described the call @-@ up as " a reward " , while also stating " I am pleased , of course , me and my family . A (the senior national team) , is the national team 's highest honor " . Two days before the match , he was forced to withdraw from the team due to a thigh injury , which he suffered while playing domestically for Lyon . After failing to make the squad for the team 's February 2007 match against Argentina , Benzema returned to the team in March for a UEFA Euro 2008 qualifying match against Lithuania and a friendly against Austria . After failing to appear in the qualifier , he made his international debut on 28 March 2007 against Austria . Benzema appeared as a half @-@

time substitute for Djibril Cissé and scored the only goal of the match after a free @-@ kick from Samir Nasri . On 13 October , Benzema scored a double in a 6 ? 0 win against the Faroe Islands . After appearing regularly in the team for the rest of the 2007 ? 08 season , he was named to the 23 @-@ man squad to participate in UEFA Euro 2008 .

Benzema made his debut in the competition on 9 June 2008 in the team 's opening match against Romania . Benzema started the match , but was substituted out for Nasri in the second half after a frustrating performance . The match finished 0 ? 0 and Benzema was , subsequently , criticized by the French media for his performance with newspaper Le Point declaring that Benzema was " unrecognizable " and that he " symbolized the impotence of France in the attack " . The newspaper also cited his lack of international experience for his subdued performance . In the team 's next group game against the Netherlands , Benzema played no part in the 4 ? 1 defeat . He returned to the team in its final group game against Italy and was given a place in the starting lineup . However , France lost 2 ? 0 and were eliminated from the competition .

In November 2008 , Benzema , among several other young players in the team , was accused of being insolent during the team 's campaign at the European Championship . The accusation came from international teammate William Gallas who inserted the charge in his autobiography . Though most of Gallas ' accusations were directed at Nasri , during the competition , it was reported by newspaper Le Parisien that several of the national team players described Benzema as " arrogant " and that the striker was scolded by midfielder Claude Makélélé following the team 's loss to the Netherlands .

= = = = 2010 World Cup = = = =

Despite the reports from after Euro 2008 , Benzema remained a regular in the team and , ahead of qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup , switched to the number ten shirt after previously wearing the number nine . In the team 's first match following its elimination from Euro 2008 , Benzema scored a goal in a 3 ? 2 friendly win over Sweden in Göteborg . Two months later , he scored another goal in a 3 ? 1 victory against Tunisia at the Stade de France . On 5 June 2009 , Benzema converted the only goal of the match , a penalty shot , in a 1 ? 0 win over Turkey at the Stade de Gerland , his home stadium . He scored his first World Cup qualification goals in victories over the Faroe Islands and Austria in October 2009 . His cap against Austria would be his last of the Domenech era as he failed to make France 's preliminary 30 @-@ man squad for the World Cup . Domenech cited Benzema 's struggle for form with his new club Real Madrid , rather than his alleged involvement in a sex scandal as his reason for leaving the striker out . Prior to the list being unveiled , Benzema informed Radio Monte Carlo that if he was not selected he would be " very disappointed , but not killed " and " I will support the France team no matter what " .

= = = = Euro 2012 = = = =

Following the World Cup , Benzema returned to the national team under the reign of new coach Laurent Blanc . Blanc , an admirer of Benzema , sought to build the attack around the striker and , after going almost a year without representing France , Benzema made his return to the team in its 2 ? 1 defeat to Norway in Oslo . Alongside Gourcuff , Benzema led the team in scoring in qualifying for UEFA Euro 2012 netting three . He scored his three goals in wins over Bosnia and Herzegovina , Luxembourg , and Albania . On 17 November 2010 , Benzema scored the opening goal in France 's 2 ? 1 win over England at Wembley Stadium . In the team 's next match against Brazil in February 2011 , he scored the only goal for France in a 1 ? 0 win . After appearing regularly in qualifying for UEFA Euro 2012 , on 29 May 2012 , Benzema was named to the squad to participate in the competition . On 5 June , in the team 's final warm @-@ up friendly ahead of the European Championship , Benzema scored two goals in a 4 ? 0 shutout win over Estonia . At UEFA Euro 2012 , Benzema started the team 's opening match against England , which ended in a 1 ? 1 draw . In the team 's ensuing group stage match against the Ukraine , he assisted on both team goals in a 2 ? 0 win .

=== 2014 World Cup ===

On 11 October 2013, Benzema scored his first goal for the France national team since June 2012 in a friendly against Australia, thus ending a scoring drought for his national team which had lasted 1 @, @ 222 minutes. In that match played at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, which France won 6 ? 0, Benzema scored France's sixth and final goal in the 50th minute after turning home Franck Ribéry's left @-@ wing cross. In the second leg of the 2014 World Cup qualification play @-@ off against Ukraine held on 19 November 2013 at the Stade de France, Benzema scored France's second goal in the 34th minute to level the aggregate score at 2 ? 2. Benzema scored his goal when he side @-@ footed home after a huge scramble in the Ukrainian penalty box, although he was shown on television replays to be offside by almost one metre when the ball took a final touch off Mathieu Valbuena's chest. Benzema had four minutes earlier been denied a legitimate goal, the offside flag wrongly raised when he turned in Ribéry's low cross into the net with his torso a metre from the Ukrainian goal @-@ line. Ukraine had won the first leg of the play @-@ off 2 ? 0 in Kiev just four days earlier. France would eventually win the second leg 3 ? 0 to advance to the 2014 World Cup finals in Brazil with a 3 ? 2 aggregate scoreline.

On 6 June 2014, Benzema was named in France's squad for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, making his debut in the tournament. In the team's first match, a 3 ? 0 win against Honduras in Porto Alegre on 15 June, he scored a goal in each half, the first from a penalty kick. He also assisted the team's second goal when his shot rebounded off the post and was fumbled over the goal @-@ line by Honduran goalkeeper Noel Valladares for an own goal, the first World Cup goal given by goal @-@ line technology. He was named by FIFA as man of the match for his performance. In the second group fixture, he scored and had a penalty saved in a 5 ? 2 defeat of Switzerland, as Les Bleus all but secured qualification to the knockout stage. France were later knocked out by Germany in the quarter @-@ final stage of the tournament.

=== Euro 2016 ===

On 13 April 2016, French Football Federation announced that Benzema would not be picked for Euro 2016 tournament on home soil. He responded on 1 June 2016 in Marca, in an interview entitled 'Benzema: "Deschamps folded due to pressure from France's racist element" '.

== Style of play ==

A skillful, quick, agile, and prolific forward, who is good in the air, Benzema has been described as an "immensely talented striker" who is "strong and powerful" and "a potent finisher from inside the box" with both feet, despite being naturally right footed. An atypical number 9, although he is usually deployed as a centre @-@ forward, Benzema is also capable of playing in several other offensive positions, and has been used on the wing, or even behind the main striker. In addition to his goalscoring, Benzema is indeed known for his willingness and ability to drop into deeper or wider positions, and either link @-@ up play with midfielders as a number 10, or use his strength and technical ability to hold up the ball to provide assists for teammates, courtesy of his vision, creativity, passing, and eye for the final ball. He has also been praised for his work @-@ rate and tactical intelligence off the ball, as well as his attacking movement as a forward, which often draws opposition defenders out of position, and in turn creates spaces for Cristiano Ronaldo to make attacking runs into the centre of the area from the left wing.

== Career statistics ==

=== Club ===

As of 28 May 2016

1Includes Coupe de France , Coupe de la Ligue , Trophée des Champions , Copa del Rey and Supercopa de España2Includes UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup

== International ==

As of 8 October 2015

== Honours ==

== Club ==

Lyon

Ligue 1 : 2004 ? 05 , 2005 ? 06 , 2006 ? 07 , 2007 ? 08

Coupe de France : 2007 ? 08

Trophée des Champions : 2006 , 2007

Real Madrid

UEFA Champions League : 2013 ? 14 , 2015 ? 16

UEFA Super Cup : 2014

FIFA Club World Cup : 2014

La Liga : 2011 ? 12

Copa del Rey : 2010 ? 11 , 2013 ? 14

Supercopa de España : 2012

== International ==

France

UEFA European Under @-@ 17 Football Championship (1) : 2004

== Individual ==

Bravo Award : 2008

Ligue 1 Top Goalscorer : 2007 ? 08

UNFP Ligue 1 Player of the Year : 2007 ? 08

UNFP Ligue 1 Team of the Year : 2007 ? 08

Étoile d 'Or : 2007 ? 08

French Player of the Year (3) : 2011 , 2012 , 2014

Fastest goal in an El Clásico on 10 December 2011 (21 seconds)

== Personal life ==

Karim Benzema was born in the city of Lyon , France to French nationals of Algerian descent . As a practicing Muslim , he observes fasting during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan . His grandfather , Da Lakehal Benzema , lived in the village of Tigzirt , located in the northern town of Beni Djellil in Algeria before migrating to Lyon , where he eventually settled in the 1950s . Benzema 's father , Hafid , was born in Tigzirt , while his mother , Wahida Djebbara , was born and raised in Lyon ; her family originated from Oran . Benzema is the third youngest in the family and grew up with eight other siblings in Bron , an eastern suburb of Lyon . His younger brothers Gressy and Sabri are also footballers . The former currently plies his trade at the amateur level with Vaulx @-@ le @-@ Velin in the Division d 'Honneur , the sixth division of French football , while the latter plays in the youth academy of a club in the family 's hometown of Bron . Since establishing himself as an international footballer , Benzema has been involved in numerous promotional campaigns . Since 2008 , he has

regularly appeared on the cover of the French version of the annual FIFA video game . Benzema is sponsored by German sportswear company Adidas and has , subsequently , appeared in several television advertisements for the brand .

On 3 February 2014 , his longtime girlfriend , Chloé de Launay , gave birth to his daughter , Mélia .

= = = Legal issues = = =

On 18 April 2010 , it was first reported by French television channel M6 that four members of the French national team were being investigated for their roles as clients in a prostitute ring operated inside of a Paris nightclub , with some of the women possibly being underage or transgender . The players were eventually revealed to be Franck Ribéry , Sidney Govou , Hatem Ben Arfa and Benzema . Benzema was alleged to have had a sexual rendezvous with a prostitute when she was 16 years of age , an act Benzema denied through his lawyer . On 20 July , Benzema was questioned by Paris police and indicted on the charge of " solicitation of a minor prostitute " . In November 2011 , prosecutors asked for the cases against Ribéry and Benzema to be dropped , saying that the players were not aware that the escort , identified as Zahia Dehar , was 16 years old . However , the case has gone on to trial . The first hearing was held in June 2013 .

On 4 November 2015 , Benzema was arrested by French police for his alleged part in blackmailing fellow France international player Mathieu Valbuena . During the investigation over the blackmail plot , French Prime Minister Manuel Valls stated , " A great athlete should be exemplary . If he is not , he has no place in the France team . There are so many kids , so many youngsters in our suburbs that relate to great athletes . They wear the blue jersey , the colours of France , which are so important in these moments . "