



## Exclusive Interview with Gareth Bale

**G**areth Bale: ‘Without Real Madrid, it would have been very, very difficult to have ever left Spurs’

He is one of the brightest stars in the Real Madrid galaxy, but off the pitch Gareth Bale has his feet firmly on the ground. Now happily settled in Spain, he tells the Telegraph that he has everything he could wish for.



By Charlie Parrish  
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**“Without Real Madrid, I would have loved to still be there playing for Spurs. But winning the Champions League shows exactly why I wanted to make the move.”**

I meet Bale outside downtown Madrid in a sprawling municipal sports centre. As word spreads of the unlikely visitor, gaggles of excited children fresh from PE classes gather. Eventually, we smuggle him into a changing room.

**Q > Are you fluent in Spanish yet?**

‘In swear words I am,’ he says, grinning. ‘But no, seriously, I’m taking classes every week and I understand so much more now. I certainly understand the team talk. As long as the manager doesn’t speak too quickly.’

‘It’s not great. I left school for a reason, and I’ve been dragged back! Not really, of course. Learning a language is something anyone would love to do and I’ve got a great excuse to do it.’

Despite his support network, uprooting to Madrid was not without its difficulties. After seven years at Tottenham, Bale was settled. He had an easy drive down the M4 home to Cardiff and had matured into the star of a team whose fans worshipped him.

**Q > There must be things you miss from home?**

‘Some good old British chocolate never goes amiss,’ he says. ‘A bit of Dairy Milk or Galaxy is fantastic. They have Milka here and it’s not the same.’ His eyes light up. ‘Oh, and Nando’s! I do miss a bit of Nando’s. It’s funny; it’s those tiny things you miss. We’ll bring English teabags over with us, and the chocolate. I can’t really move Nando’s over, though, unfortunately.’





**Q > And English football? Does the Premier League's former poster boy miss the cold Tuesday nights away at Stoke?**

'It's very interesting watching as an outsider,' he says. 'You find you're more into it when you're not playing in the league. You're only concentrating on your team then.'

**Q > And has it been strange to go to school again?**

'I really am enjoying everything out here,' he says. 'The team's doing brilliantly, and off the pitch it's a lot more relaxed. It's much warmer, which I love. Pre-season training in the summer is insane as it's so hot. You sweat just standing there, so you have to hydrate with Lucozade Sport so much more. That's so important in modern football and for any athlete. I'm just a lot more comfortable with myself in the surroundings now.'

**Q > And how's Ronaldo?**

'Learning off the best player in the world is just incredible,' Bale says. What's the best thing he's taught you? 'Where to find a house in Madrid, actually,' he laughs. 'He's been amazing since I've been there and I learn something new every day. He's helping me become a better player, which is my constant goal. I'm trying to get up to his level. In fact, I've been trying to improve my right foot [Ronaldo is right-footed], but I'm not doing that any more.'

**Q > Why not?**

'Because every time I try, I pull one of my glutes! So that's out of the window.' He's joking, of course. 'I can improve everything, and working on my weaker foot is the main thing,' he says.