

The day the league title race began, Wojciech Szczęsny was sitting on the beach in Marbella, lighting up a cigarette, enjoying his retirement; the day it ended nine months on, he was on the pitch at the RCD Espanyol stadium, 1000 km north, celebrating alongside friends.

At 25, the Polish goal keeper had been convinced to come out of retirement for one last job, and what a job it was, a season he hadn't even expected to play ending with a league and cup double after a 2-0 win at RCD Espanyol.

He was joined at Barcelona by a stellar cast, a whole new generation that includes a kid 17 years his junior. A teenager at the other end of a career that might yet be one of the best there has ever been.