



# MERIT Report

## MEDIA VISIBILITY IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

SEASON 2022/23



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## Presentation

The approach adopted by MERIT (Methodology for the Evaluation and Rating of Intangible Talent) has proven to be useful in measuring the economic value of talent in professional sports and other sectors of the entertainment industry.

In the estimation and ranking process, two key elements are considered: media visibility (the level of attention received from media outlets) and popularity (the degree of interest generated among fans and the general public). The first element is calculated based on appearances in global press and media, while popularity is measured by online presence. These calculations are derived from the accumulated news coverage over a given period—whether weeks, months, or years.

Furthermore, the standardized measurement approach allows for comparisons of media status among individuals, teams, and institutions across different sports disciplines and over time.

Alongside rankings and measurements, our databases facilitate the analysis of various economic and business issues, such as player transfer price estimations, brand value calculations for individuals, teams, and leagues, assessment of economic returns from sponsorship alliances, and valuation of image rights contracts for athletes and teams, among many others.

The usefulness of these rankings and evaluations is evident, given the growing number of companies that base their business models on leveraging media exposure as a potential revenue source.

This report has been compiled using extensive databases, made possible through proprietary software and the capabilities provided by new information technologies. The findings are based on an analysis of millions of media references worldwide that publish content on the internet.

For more information, please visit our website:

**To carry out the estimations and rankings, both media visibility and popularity are taken into account**

[www.meritsocialvalue.com](http://www.meritsocialvalue.com)

## 1. MERIT Ranking of Media Visibility - Football Players

The following table shows the results of the MERIT ranking of media value for the top football players in the 2022/23 season. The MERIT index values are expressed relative to the average of the 2,000 most media-exposed players from our database of over 5,000 individuals.

The individual index is expressed as the factor by which the number of news articles generated by a player multiplies the number of news articles corresponding to the representative (average) player in the database of: *meritsocialvalue.com*.

Rank	Player Season 2022/23	Team	MERIT Index
1	 Cristiano Ronaldo	Manchester United	170.89
2	 Lionel Messi	PSG	107.27
3	 Vinicius Jr	Real Madrid CF	74.09
4	 Erling Haaland	Manchester City	64.89
5	 Neymar Jr	PSG	58.89
6	 Kylian Mbappe	PSG	51.92
7	 Mohamed Salah	Liverpool FC	49.89
8	 Gerard Piqué	FC Barcelona	47.34
9	 Karim Benzema	Real Madrid CF	46.30
10	 Robert Lewandowski	FC Barcelona	40.22

According to the results of our analysis, Cristiano Ronaldo is the player with the highest media value for the 2022/23 season, appearing in the media 170 times more than the average player.

Following him is Lionel Messi, who generates 107 times the media visibility of the reference player in our database. These two media giants are followed by Vinicius Jr., Haaland, and Neymar, respectively.

The Top 10 consists of players from only three European leagues, which are among the most popular in professional football. Although the two most media-exposed players belong to the English and French leagues, La Liga still has the highest number of superstars within the Top 10, with four players from Spanish clubs. It is followed by the Premier League and Ligue 1, with three players each.

Notably, the Top 3 players represent three of the five major European leagues—Spain, England, and France. Additionally, the individual media leaders (within the Top 10) play for six different clubs: FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester United, PSG, Manchester City, and Liverpool.



40% of players in the Top-10

30 %



20 %

20 %



10 %



10 %



10 %



30% of players in the Top-10





30% of players in the Top-10

## 2. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Young Talent

Below, we present a table that displays the results of the media visibility ranking for football players aged 22 or younger. The methodology used to create this table is identical to that applied in the previous ranking.

By analyzing their level of media exposure, this approach helps identify the players who appear to be the most promising talents for the future.

Rank	Player Season 2022/23	Team	MERIT Index
 1	<b>Rodrygo</b>	Real Madrid CF	<b>18,22</b>
 2	<b>Bukayo Saka</b>	Arsenal FC	<b>13,11</b>
 3	<b>Ansu Fati</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>10,24</b>
 4	<b>Pedri</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>7,38</b>
 5	<b>Alejandro Garnacho</b>	Manchester United	<b>6,46</b>
 6	<b>Bellingham</b>	Borsussia Dortmund	<b>5,78</b>
 7	<b>Enzo Fernandez</b>	SL Benfica	<b>5,67</b>
 8	<b>Greenwood</b>	Manchester United	<b>5,41</b>
 9	<b>Gavi</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>4,78</b>
 10	<b>Gabriel Martinelli</b>	Arsenal FC	<b>4,20</b>

We then analyze the Top 10 ranking of young players who seem to have the greatest potential for the future. At the top of the ranking is Rodrygo Goes, a Real Madrid player, who has 18.2 times the media value compared to the average player in our database. He is followed by Bukayo Saka and Ansu Fati, who complete the Top 3 with media values of 13.1 and 10.2, respectively.

From this, we can see that the two professional football leagues with the most promising talents are La Liga and the Premier League, as they account for 80% of the Top 10 young prospects.

It can therefore be concluded that these two leagues are likely to dominate other domestic competitions, unless transfers significantly shift the balance. In fact, it is possible that these two leagues will become even stronger, given the rumors that Bellingham and Enzo Fernández—the only two players in this ranking who do not currently play in La Liga or the Premier League—may soon transfer to one of these leagues, further reinforcing their dominance.

Regarding clubs, Barcelona has the highest number of young talents in the Top 10, followed by Manchester United and Arsenal FC, each with 20% of the players in the ranking.



40% of players in the Top-10



40% of players in the Top-10



10% of players in the Top-10

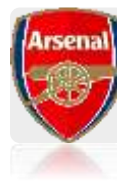


10% of players in the Top-10

30 %



20 %



20 %



10 %



10 %



10 %



### 3. Most Media Exposed Player from Each League Champion

REAL MADRID 168.3  
VINI JR 74.0



AC MILAN 56.2  
ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC 38.7



MANCHESTER UNITED 335.5  
CRISTIANO RONALDO 170.8



PARIS SAINT GERMAIN 224.6  
LIONEL MESSI 107.2



BAYERN MÜNICH 41.42  
SADIO MANÉ 15.4

Previously, we presented the teams that were crowned champions in each European domestic league, as well as the most media-exposed player from each champion club. The 2022/23 season has left several noteworthy aspects to discuss.

On one hand, this was a season in which several league titles were decided very late in the campaign. In the English Premier League, there was intense competition between Manchester City and Arsenal FC. Despite leading for most of the season, Mikel Arteta's Arsenal struggled in the final stretch, allowing Manchester City to claim the title, largely thanks to an outstanding Erling Haaland.

Meanwhile, the biggest surprise among the five major leagues came in Serie A, where Napoli secured the title for the third time in its history. In this case, it is the AC Milan player Zlatan Ibrahimovic who stands out.

In the Bundesliga, the title was decided on the very last matchday. Borussia Dortmund had the championship within reach, but a defeat in the final game allowed Bayern Munich to continue its domestic dominance. Sadio Mané emerged as Bayern's most media-exposed player, though the team's performance may have suffered due to internal struggles on the coaching staff.

In La Liga, Barcelona secured the title comfortably. The Catalan club ranked fourth in the overall club ranking, with Gerard Piqué being its most media-relevant player—even though he only played until November 3. His popularity has likely surged due to his retirement and his role in launching the Kings League.

Finally, in Ligue 1, PSG, a club full of superstars, once again fell short of expectations in terms of major trophies. The French league title was not decided until the final matches, with Lens finishing as runners-up, just one point behind the Parisian giants. Lionel Messi had the highest MERIT Index, largely due to speculation about his departure from the club, which further boosted his visibility on social media



#### 4. Merit Media Value Ranking - Clubs

Regarding the team results, the media visibility index for each club is calculated as the sum of the individual index scores of the 15 most media-exposed players in the squad.

This analysis helps establish the hierarchy of the top teams according to the MERIT ranking for the 2022/23 season. The following table presents the Top 10 clubs that have received the most media coverage. Additionally, the table indicates the domestic league each club belongs to and their respective media visibility index

Rank		Team Season 2022/23	League	MERIT Index
1		Manchester United		335.54
2		Paris Saint Germain		224.68
3		Real Madrid		168.34
4		FC Barcelona		150.86
5		Manchester City		138.32
6		Liverpool		107.39
7		AC Milan		56.23
8		Arsenal		51.78
9		Tottenham Hotspur		46.73
10		Bayern Múnich		41.42

The club that leads the MERIT ranking for the 2022/23 season is Manchester United, achieving a score of 335.5. It is followed by PSG, Real Madrid, and FC Barcelona, respectively.

Although La Liga no longer tops this ranking, it still has two clubs in the Top 4, demonstrating its continued media influence. At the same time, it is evident that the English Premier League is growing rapidly, solidifying itself as the leading professional football league in Europe. The Premier League not only tops this ranking but also accounts for 50% of the clubs in the Top 10.

***The Premier League has no limits.***

As for La Liga, it remains in second place, with a 20% representation in this ranking.

***CLUBS WITH THE HIGHEST MERIT VALUE IN THE BIG 5***



1. Man. United
2. Man. City
3. Liverpool



1. Real Madrid
2. FC Barcelona
3. Atl. Madrid



1. AC Milan
2. Inter Milán
3. AS Roma



1. Bayer Múnich
2. B. Dortmund
3. RB Leipzig



1. PSG
2. Olympique Lyon
3. AS Mónaco

### 5. Media “Dream Team” (2022/23)

In this section, the 11 most media-exposed players in each field position are gathered, as shown in the following image.



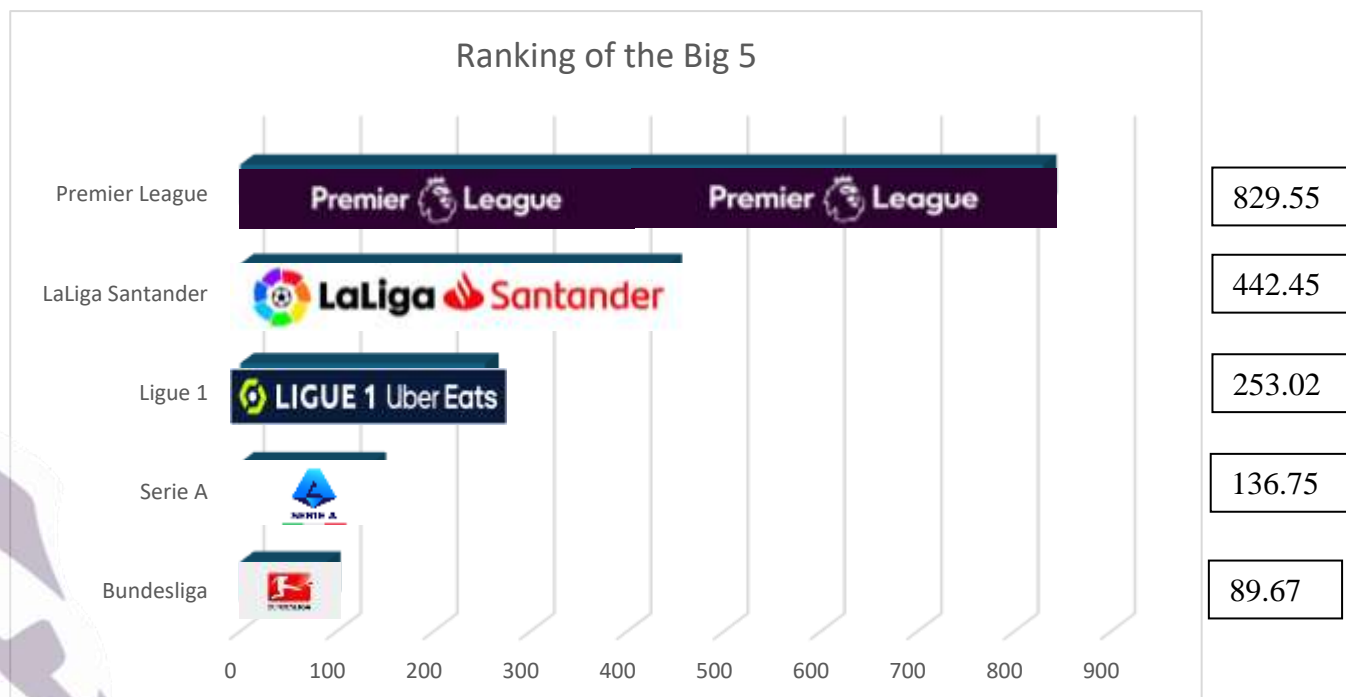
We observe that the Media Visibility “Dream Team” for the 2022/23 season is composed of players from two leagues, the English Premier League and La Liga, with the exception of Leo Messi, who plays in the French Ligue 1. Within this starting eleven, the Premier League stands out, as it includes 7 out of the 11 players, three of whom belong to Manchester United, the club with the highest media visibility. Additionally, Spanish players lead this elite lineup, with three representatives in the team.

The Premier League is making significant strides forward, as reflected in all the results obtained this season. It is currently the fastest-growing professional football league, a trend that becomes evident when comparing this season’s data with those from previous years.

## 6. Media Ranking of the “Big 5”

The media hierarchy of domestic competitions has been calculated by summing the individual MERIT index of the 400 most relevant footballers from each league. (If a similar calculation were performed using 300 or 500 players per league, the results would be very similar).

The following figure summarizes the results of this analysis applied to the five major European leagues.



Here, we can clearly see the undisputed dominance of the Premier League in European football. As has been demonstrated throughout this report, the English league attracts the most media interest, overwhelmingly surpassing La Liga, with a MERIT value nearly double that of the Spanish league.

At the same time, Ligue 1 has moved ahead of Serie A, largely due to the sheer number of superstar players at Paris Saint-Germain. Finally, the Bundesliga appears to have lost some media interest over time, ranking last among the Big 5 leagues.

As we can see, the gap between leagues continues to widen, which could be the result of rising transfer fees, making it increasingly difficult for all but a few clubs to remain competitive.

## Annex 1

Rank 2019/20	Player	Team	MERIT Index of Media Value
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	Manchester United	170.89
2	Lionel Messi	Paris Saint-Germain	107.27
3	Vinicius Junior	Real Madrid	74.09
4	Erling Haaland	Manchester City	64.89
5	Neymar	Paris Saint-Germain	58.89
6	Kylian Mbappé	Paris Saint-Germain	51.92
7	Mohamed Salah	Liverpool FC	49.89
8	Gerard Piqué	FC Barcelona	47.34
9	Karim Benzema	Real Madrid	46.30
10	Robert Lewandowski	FC Barcelona	40.22
11	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	AC Milán	38.72
12	Casemiro	Manchester United	34.85
13	Kevin De Bruyne	Manchester City	34.05
14	Harry Kane	Tottenham Hotspur	31.98
15	Marcus Rashford	Manchester United	31.35
16	Bruno Fernandes	Manchester United	24.84
17	Rodrygo	Real Madrid	18.22
18	Gabriel Jesús	Arsenal FC	16.97
19	Romelu Lukaku	Inter de Milán	15.68
20	Sadio Mané	Bayern Múnich	15.40
21	Antoine Griezmann	Atlético de Madrid	15.18
22	David de Gea	Manchester United	14.06
23	Bukayo Saka	Arsenal FC	13.11
24	Virgil van Dijk	Liverpool FC	11.32
25	Roberto Firmino	Liverpool FC	10.39
26	Ansu Fati	FC Bcelona	10.24
27	Jorginho	Chelsea FC	9.98
28	Kyle Walker	Manchester City	9.68
29	Harry Maguire	Manchester United	9.31
30	Thibaut Courtois	Real Madrid	8.66

## Annex 2

Rank 2019/20	Team	League	MERIT Index of Media Value
1	Manchester United	Premier League	335.54
2	Paris Saint-Germain	Ligue One	224.68
3	Real Madrid	LaLiga	168.34
4	FC Barcelona	LaLiga	150.86
5	Manchester City	Premier League	138.32
6	Liverpool FC	Premier League	107.39
7	AC Milán	Serie A	56.23
8	Arsenal FC	Premier League	51.78
9	Tottenham Hotspur	Premier League	46.73
10	Bayern Munich	Bundesliga	41.42
11	Chelsea FC	Premier League	32.31
12	Atlético Madrid	LaLiga	31.52
13	Inter Milan	Serie A	29.02
14	SL Benfica	Liga Nos	16.71
15	Borussia Dortmund	Bundesliga	14.93
16	AS Roma	Serie A	11.48
17	Newcastle United	Premier League	10.62
18	Athletic Club	LaLiga	10.43
19	Leicester City	Premier League	9.74
20	Everton FC	Premier League	9.48



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