

Task: Construct Two All-Time Football Teams for the Greatest Possible Dream Match

Create two football teams composed of the greatest players in the history of men's association football, considering every era up to the present day.

Select:

- 22 players in total
- 11 starters for Team A
- 11 starters for Team B
- One head coach for each team

The objective is **not** to place the eleven highest-ranked individuals on one team and the next eleven on the other. The objective is to construct two coherent, balanced and stylistically contrasting teams that would produce the highest-quality, most competitive and most compelling football match imaginable.

Assume that:

- Every player appears at the absolute peak of his career.
- Every player is fully fit and physically prepared.
- The players and coaches require no training or tactical preparation before the match.
- Every player immediately understands the coach's system, tactical instructions and teammates.
- Communication and language barriers do not exist.
- Players from different eras are adapted fairly to the match conditions without losing the qualities that made them historically exceptional.
- Contemporary laws of the game apply.
- The match is played on a perfect neutral pitch, in neutral conditions, with neutral officiating.
- The selection must reflect all football history up to today.

Primary objective

Optimize the selections for the **ideal dream game**, defined as a match displaying the highest possible combination of:

1. Individual technical excellence
2. Tactical sophistication
3. Competitive balance
4. Attacking creativity
5. Defensive quality
6. Midfield control
7. Contrasting football philosophies
8. Elite one-on-one matchups
9. Strategic uncertainty
10. Dramatic and aesthetic appeal

Do not optimize solely for fame, awards, statistics, trophies or historical reputation. The final teams should be close enough in quality that neither is a clear favourite. Each side must have a realistic tactical route to victory.

Selection principles

1. Evaluate players at their peak

Judge each player according to the highest sustained level he demonstrated, rather than career longevity alone.

Consider:

- Peak technical ability
- Peak physical condition
- Tactical intelligence
- Decision-making
- Performance under pressure
- Ability to dominate elite opponents
- Influence on major matches
- Consistency during the player's prime
- Ability to perform against different tactical systems

Longevity, total career achievement and historical influence may be considered, but peak match performance should receive greater weight because this is a single dream match.

2. Make fair comparisons across eras

Do not assume that modern players are automatically superior because contemporary football is faster, more athletic or more tactically developed.

Do not assume that older players are automatically superior because of historical reputation or mythology.

Account for differences in:

- Pitch quality
- Ball technology
- Footwear
- Medical treatment
- Sports science
- Training methods
- Tactical organization
- Defensive structures
- Refereeing
- Permitted physical contact
- Competition formats

- Match tempo
- Statistical documentation
- Global talent distribution

Assess how dominant each player was relative to his contemporaries and how transferable his defining qualities would be under neutral elite conditions.

Raw statistics must be contextualized. Do not compare goals, assists, clean sheets or trophies across eras without adjustment.

3. Select functional teams, not collections of stars

Every player must have a clear tactical function.

Each team must contain an appropriate balance of:

- Ball progression
- Possession control
- Defensive protection
- Width
- Penalty-area presence
- Movement behind the defence
- Creativity between the lines
- Press resistance
- Counterattacking threat
- Defensive recovery
- Aerial ability
- Set-piece quality
- Leadership

Do not overload a team with players who all require the same zones, freedoms or volume of possession.

A less celebrated player may be selected over a more famous player when the former creates a stronger collective structure or a better match.

4. Compare players according to roles

Do not evaluate all players through the same criteria. Assess them according to the demands of their position and intended role.

For goalkeepers, consider:

- Shot-stopping
- Positioning
- Command of the penalty area
- One-on-one ability
- Distribution

- Sweeping
- Handling under pressure
- Communication
- Penalty-saving ability

For central defenders, consider:

- Defensive positioning
- Anticipation
- Marking
- Tackling
- Aerial ability
- Recovery speed
- Physical duels
- Ball progression
- Press resistance
- Leadership of the defensive line

For full-backs and wing-backs, consider:

- One-on-one defending
- Recovery ability
- Width
- Overlapping and underlapping movement
- Crossing
- Ball progression
- Positional intelligence
- Ability to invert into midfield when appropriate
- Transition defence

For midfielders, distinguish between:

- Deep controllers
- Defensive midfielders
- Ball-winning midfielders
- Box-to-box players
- Tempo setters
- Progressive passers
- Dribbling progressors
- Advanced creators
- Goalscoring midfielders
- Hybrid midfielders

For attackers, consider:

- Chance creation
- Finishing
- Movement
- Dribbling
- Combination play

- Ability to attack space
- Ability to receive between the lines
- Width
- Pressing
- Off-ball work
- Positional versatility
- Performance against elite defenders

5. Prioritize complementary profiles

For every proposed combination, determine whether the players enhance or restrict one another.

Specifically assess:

- Which players require the ball most frequently
- Which players control tempo
- Which players provide width
- Which players attack depth
- Which players occupy central creative spaces
- Which players make supporting or decoy runs
- Which players protect against counterattacks
- Which players perform defensive work
- Which players can contribute without being the central figure
- Which players can adapt their normal role for the benefit of the team

Avoid selecting several players who all require complete positional freedom or expect the entire attack to be structured around them.

6. Give the teams distinct tactical identities

Team A and Team B must represent different but equally credible football philosophies.

Possible contrasts include:

- Positional possession versus vertical attacking
- High pressing versus controlled mid-block defending
- Patient territorial dominance versus rapid transitions
- Collective combination play versus greater individual freedom
- Central overloads versus aggressive use of width
- Structured buildup versus direct progression

Do not create a crude contrast such as “attacking team versus defensive team.” Both sides must be complete and capable in every phase.

Each team should be able to:

- Build from the back
- Progress through midfield
- Create chances against an organized defence

- Defend sustained possession
- Manage transitions
- Press selectively or aggressively
- Protect a lead
- Recover from falling behind

7. Maintain competitive balance

The two teams must be as evenly matched as possible.

Compare the sides in:

- Goalkeeping
- Central defence
- Full-back play
- Midfield control
- Ball-winning
- Creativity
- Dribbling
- Goalscoring
- Aerial strength
- Transition play
- Press resistance
- Tactical flexibility
- Leadership
- Set pieces
- Penalty-taking

Do not place all of the strongest candidates in one category on the same team. After selecting both teams, conduct a balance audit. If one side has a substantial advantage, revise the selections or tactical structures.

8. Create elite but organic matchups

Construct teams that naturally produce exceptional contests, such as:

- An elite winger against an elite one-on-one defender
- A great striker against a great central defender
- A dominant playmaker against an intelligent defensive midfielder
- A possession-controlling midfield against a transition-oriented midfield
- A high defensive line against attackers with exceptional movement
- A sweeper-keeper against forwards capable of exploiting space behind him

Do not select players solely to manufacture famous rivalries. Matchups must arise naturally from coherent team construction.

9. Give substantial weight to off-ball performance

Do not overvalue highlights, goals, assists or visible actions in possession.

Consider:

- Defensive positioning
- Pressing intelligence
- Counter-pressing
- Tracking runners
- Covering teammates
- Space creation
- Decoy movement
- Rest defence
- Transition reactions
- Communication
- Compactness
- Discipline
- Willingness to sacrifice individual freedom

Every team must remain functional when its most famous players do not have the ball.

10. Include tactical flexibility

Each team should possess at least one viable alternative structure without changing personnel.

For example, a team might be able to shift:

- From 4-3-3 to 3-2-5 in possession
- From 4-2-3-1 to 4-4-2 when pressing
- From a high press to a compact mid-block
- From controlled possession to direct transition play
- From a back four to a situational back three

Select players capable of interpreting multiple roles when necessary.

11. Consider mentality and personality compatibility

Assess:

- Leadership
- Competitive temperament
- Emotional control
- Response to adversity
- Decision-making under pressure
- Tactical discipline
- Willingness to accept a secondary role
- Compatibility with other dominant personalities
- Ability to perform in a unique, high-pressure occasion

Do not construct a team containing so many ball-dominant or authority-dominant personalities that collective function becomes implausible.

Each side should have leadership in defence, midfield and attack.

12. Select the coaches for the specific assignment

Choose each coach according to his suitability for the selected players and tactical identity, not simply by total trophies.

Consider:

- Tactical sophistication
- In-game adaptability
- Ability to manage elite personalities
- Ability to integrate players from different football cultures
- Flexibility rather than rigid adherence to one system
- Capacity to maximize creative players without sacrificing structure
- Defensive organization
- Attacking design
- Substitution quality
- Performance in major one-off matches
- Ability to respond to the opposing coach

The two coaches should be of approximately equal quality and should produce an interesting strategic confrontation.

Do not select a coach whose normal methods would suppress the defining qualities of several chosen players.

Suggested weighting model

Use the following framework as guidance rather than as a mechanical formula:

Criterion	Weight
Peak individual level	20%
Tactical suitability for the selected team	20%
Technical quality	15%
Compatibility with teammates	15%
Performance in major matches	10%
Off-ball contribution	8%
Positional dominance relative to era	5%
Tactical adaptability	4%

Leadership and mentality	3%
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The collective score of a team must not be calculated merely by adding individual scores. Apply a separate compatibility adjustment for combinations that improve or weaken the overall system.

Match-quality constraints

The selections should encourage an open but tactically credible match.

Avoid:

- A team with too many attackers and insufficient defensive structure
- A team designed only to prevent the opponent from playing
- Excessive duplication of playmaking roles
- Midfields lacking defensive coverage
- Defences incapable of playing against elite pace or movement
- Attacks dependent on only one creator
- Teams that are overwhelmingly superior in one or more departments
- Selections made primarily for nostalgia, popularity or controversy
- Deliberately introducing structural weaknesses merely to generate goals

The ideal match need not be extremely high-scoring. Defensive interventions, tactical adjustments, goalkeeping and midfield control are part of the spectacle.

Aim for a match in which both teams can create sustained periods of superiority, but neither can control the entire contest.

Required output

Part 1: Selection methodology

Briefly explain:

- How cross-era comparisons were made
- How peak performance was defined
- How tactical compatibility was evaluated
- How competitive balance was maintained
- How fame, recency and nostalgia biases were controlled

Part 2: Team A

Provide:

- Team name or descriptive identity
- Head coach
- Base formation
- In-possession formation
- Out-of-possession formation
- Starting eleven

- Exact role of every player
- Captain
- Primary penalty taker
- Direct free-kick taker
- Corner takers
- Tactical identity
- Buildup method
- Chance-creation method
- Pressing and defensive approach
- Transition strategy
- Main strengths
- Potential vulnerabilities

Part 3: Team B

Provide the same information for Team B.

Part 4: Individual selection justifications

For each of the 22 players, explain:

- Why he belongs in an all-time dream match
- Why he suits this particular team
- How his role complements his teammates
- What alternative candidates were considered
- Why he was chosen over the strongest alternative

Keep each justification focused on match function, not merely career achievements.

Part 5: Coaches

For each coach, explain:

- Why he suits the selected squad
- How his tactical philosophy would work with the players
- How he might approach the opposing team
- What adjustments he could make during the match
- Why he was selected over other all-time coaching candidates

Part 6: Tactical matchup analysis

Analyze:

- Team A's buildup against Team B's press
- Team B's buildup against Team A's press
- Midfield numerical and positional battles
- Wide-area matchups
- Central attacking matchups
- Defensive transition risks
- Set-piece advantages
- Goalkeeper involvement
- Likely areas of territorial control
- How each team could exploit the other
- How each coach might adjust during the match

Part 7: Competitive-balance audit

Rate each team from 1 to 10 in:

- Goalkeeping
- Defence
- Midfield control
- Creativity
- Finishing
- Width
- Transition threat
- Pressing
- Press resistance
- Aerial ability
- Set pieces
- Tactical flexibility
- Leadership

Explain any meaningful disparity.

If one team appears clearly stronger overall, revise the selections before presenting the final result.

Part 8: Match narrative

Describe the type of match these teams would probably produce without declaring a definite winner.

Explain:

- Expected tempo
- Likely possession pattern
- Key tactical tension
- Most important individual matchups
- How momentum could shift
- What would make the game historically exceptional

Do not provide a final score unless specifically requested.

Final governing rule

For every player and coach, ask:

Does this selection improve the quality, competitiveness and tactical richness of this particular match, or does it merely make the list more prestigious?

Select the candidate only when the answer is that he improves the match.

The final result should represent two complete football teams, not two collections of famous names, and should be optimized to produce the greatest single football match that could theoretically be played.