

# Flawed Ballon d'Or unlikely to reward Mohamed Salah's stunning form



- While Liverpool's Egyptian star is arguably the world's best player at the moment, the award has reportedly already gone to Lionel Messi

Lionel Messi has been confirmed as the 2021 Ballon d'Or winner, according to the credible Portuguese television channel RTP.

It announced last week that Messi will receive the famous Golden Ball at this year's ceremony in Paris on Nov. 29 — a record-extending seventh award for the Argentine.

The report claimed the 34-year-old has already done the customary interview with France Football magazine, after beating Robert Lewandowski and longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo to arguably the most prestigious individual prize in

world football.

Should the news be confirmed as Portuguese television says, the award will mainly be attributed to the fact that Messi won the Copa América with Argentina, finally ending his long wait for victory in an international tournament. Not even his biggest fans can claim that his club form, for Barcelona last season and PSG now, is a contributing factor.

It's a decision I find surprising, as it shows a lack of coherence in the awarding of the prize.

Robert Lewandowski was instrumental during Bayern Munich's 2020-21 campaign, winning yet another Bundesliga and the SuperCup, and scoring a remarkable 48 goals in 40 games to win the Golden Boot for top scorer. The Poland international also started 2021-22 in similar fashion, scoring seven times in his first five league games and scoring twice at Camp Nou, when Bayern overcame Barcelona 3-0.

On the other hand, if the argument is that team trophies play a major part in the award, then the Ballon d'Or would have to be given to Jorginho after he won the Euro 2020 with the Italian national team and the Champions League with Chelsea.

My first question: why Messi and not Lewandowski or Jorginho for the prize?

And second: why not Mohamed Salah?

Sure, many people will argue that last season Liverpool ended up in a disappointing third place in the Premier League after winning it so comprehensively the previous year; that Salah lost the league's top scorer award and has been a peripheral figure for his country in the qualifiers for the African Nations Cup and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

These same people ask why Salah would have any hope of winning this year's Ballon d'Or.

For me the answer is simple. Because today Salah is the best player in the world and despite the various voting criteria, acknowledging that fact is, or should be, the main objective of the award.

Salah's current manager, Jurgen Klopp, also thinks the Egyptian is the best player in the world and he said so just three weeks ago.

However, Salah did not win any title with his national team, which seems to have been decisive for awarding the prize to Messi, according to Portuguese television and others opinion makers.

But surely here Salah is not to blame, as the Egyptian team has not participated in any tournament since 2019.

To be clear, if Ballon d'Or voters are to attribute their votes based on trophies won at individual and collective level, the main candidates must be Robert Lewandowski and Jorginho.

However, since both an overview of a player's career and current individual form are taken into account in the vote, there seems no doubt that the award should go to the Liverpool star.

Salah has so far scored 142 goals in 215 games for the Reds since his transfer from Roma in 2017. He has won two Golden Boots, a PFA Player of the Year award, the Champions League, Premier League, European Super Cup and Club World Cup.

As regards his current form, perhaps it was important that at the end of Liverpool's 5-0 demolition of Manchester United, Salah left Old Trafford holding the match ball after scoring a superb hat-trick.

It was a timely contribution from Salah, a fresh reminder of his stunning form only a day before voting for the award ended.

Past experience tells us that the main candidates are decided shortly before the deadline for voting.

Is there anyone in world football playing better than Salah right now? I'm sure not. The Egyptian international has been a star for years. It's time for him to receive the prize he richly deserves.

With all due respect to my journalist colleagues from Portuguese television, I hope the decision on Nov. 29 will be different from the one they have reported.

