

Champions League Final 2017/18

Real Madrid v Liverpool, 19:45 Saturday 26th May

Real's presence in the final once again means that one of the 'Big Three' of Real, Barca and Bayern has participated in each of UEFA's blue-ribbon events since 2008/09. Those finals are detailed below, together with the other eight Champions League finals since 2000/01 and the Football Form Labs gradings of each of the finalists over this period. We use our grading system, which is loosely based on ELO, to rate all European domestic clubs.

Season	Team	Versus	FT Score	AET score	Pens	Grade	Opp Grade	Grade diff
2017/18	Real Madrid	Liverpool				184.19	168.00	16.19
2016/17	Real Madrid	Juventus	4-1	-	-	186.61	179.04	7.57
2015/16	Real Madrid	Atl. Madrid	1-1	1-1	5-3	184.06	175.98	8.08
2014/15	Barcelona	Juventus	3-1	-	-	186.30	174.64	11.66
2013/14	Real Madrid	Atl. Madrid	1-1	4-1	-	185.87	177.37	8.50
2012/13	Bayern	B. Dortmund	2-1	-	-	187.41	173.88	13.54
2011/12	Bayern	Chelsea	1-1	1-1	3-4	176.34	170.95	5.39
2010/11	Barcelona	Man Utd	3-1	-	-	188.65	179.51	9.14
2009/10	Inter Milan	Bayern	2-0	-	-	176.15	173.00	3.15
2008/09	Man Utd	Barcelona	0-2	-	-	181.66	179.45	2.21
2007/08	Man Utd	Chelsea	1-1	1-1	6-5	181.29	176.37	4.92
2006/07	AC Milan	Liverpool	2-1	-	-	172.89	170.78	2.11
2005/06	Barcelona	Arsenal	2-1	-	-	181.07	171.90	9.17
2004/05	AC Milan	Liverpool	3-3	3-3	2-3	176.46	165.37	11.10
2003/04	FC Porto	Monaco	3-0	-	-	169.09	164.73	4.36
2002/03	Juventus	AC Milan	0-0	0-0	3-2	173.48	167.50	5.97
2001/02	Real Madrid	Leverkusen	2-1	-	-	178.08	170.00	8.08
2000/01	Bayern	Valencia	1-1	1-1	5-4	179.70	174.71	4.99

What is immediately evident from this table is that Barcelona were the only lower graded side to have beaten a team with a higher grade in 90 minutes since 2000/01. However, that game was one of the closest matched finals in recent times according to our gradings and the other two instances when a lower ranked side lifted the trophy were after penalty shootouts in extraordinary finals. The first saw Chelsea stun the Allianz Arena crowd with an 88th minute equaliser having been on the back foot for most of the game against Bayern in 2012 and the other saw Liverpool come back from 3-0 down at half time in 2005 in Istanbul. This current Liverpool side is rated better than the one that triumphed against Milan but history suggests another Herculean effort will be required to topple a dominant Real side as these two have the biggest grade difference of any of these finals.

Other observations worth making about these finals are that seven of the last 17 have been draws and both teams have found the net in 11 of the last 13. In terms of match goals there's a fairly even split as eight of the last 17 saw fewer than three strikes, but if we only focus on instances where the

grade difference was greater than 7.5, then seven of nine had more than two goals with the two exceptions finals involving Diego Simeone's stubborn Atletico Madrid side. Interestingly the record of the higher graded sides in these encounters was W6-D3-L0, with both teams finding the net in all nine of these games.

Real Madrid Path to the Final

Team	Versus	H/A/N	Round	Gp match	FT res	FT Score	H/T res	H/T Score
Real Madrid	Bayern	H	SF	2nd leg	D	2-2	D	1-1
Real Madrid	Bayern	A	SF	1st leg	W	2-1	D	1-1
Real Madrid	Juventus	H	QF	2nd leg	L	1-3	L	0-2
Real Madrid	Juventus	A	QF	1st leg	W	3-0	W	1-0
Real Madrid	Paris St-G	A	Last 16	2nd leg	W	2-1	D	0-0
Real Madrid	Paris St-G	H	Last 16	1st leg	W	3-1	D	1-1
Real Madrid	B. Dortmund	H	GS1	6	W	3-2	W	2-1
Real Madrid	Apoel Nicosia	A	GS1	5	W	6-0	W	4-0
Real Madrid	Spurs	A	GS1	4	L	1-3	L	0-1
Real Madrid	Spurs	H	GS1	3	D	1-1	D	1-1
Real Madrid	B. Dortmund	A	GS1	2	W	3-1	W	1-0
Real Madrid	Apoel Nicosia	H	GS1	1	W	3-0	W	1-0

Real showed signs in the group stages that all was not well as they struggled in their clashes with Spurs and those games coincided with a poor start to their league campaign that effectively ruled them out of the title race fairly early on. They eased past PSG in the Last 16 stage but they had to work much harder in the last two rounds and were perhaps fortunate that Bayern spurned so many chances. They've kept only three clean sheets in this competition all season and two of those were against Apoel Nicosia, highlighting their defensive vulnerability this term and Liverpool certainly have the ammunition to take advantage of it. This feels like a Real Madrid side that are slightly on the decline after a remarkable spell of dominance that has seen them win this trophy four times in the last five seasons. Benzema and Bale haven't had the best of seasons whilst Asensio hasn't kicked on after the promise he showed at the start of the campaign. The left half of their defence is also ageing and whilst Marcelo remains excellent going forward that space he vacates doing so resulted in Joshua Kimmich bagging a goal in both legs of the semi-final, while Suarez capitalized on such a situation in the recent El Clasico. Keylor Navas can certainly be beaten at his near post and given Liverpool are ruthless in exploiting teams on the counter, Salah should fancy himself playing on that side to wreak havoc.

Liverpool Path to the Final (excluding qualifiers)

Team	Versus	H/A/N	Round	Gp match	FT res	FT Score	H/T res	H/T Score
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Liverpool	Roma	A	SF	2nd leg	L	2-4	W	2-1
Liverpool	Roma	H	SF	1st leg	W	5-2	W	2-0
Liverpool	Man City	A	QF	2nd leg	W	2-1	L	0-1
Liverpool	Man City	H	QF	1st leg	W	3-0	W	3-0
Liverpool	FC Porto	H	Last 16	2nd leg	D	0-0	D	0-0
Liverpool	FC Porto	A	Last 16	1st leg	W	5-0	W	2-0
Liverpool	Spartak M.	H	GS1	6	W	7-0	W	3-0
Liverpool	Sevilla	A	GS1	5	D	3-3	W	3-0
Liverpool	NK Maribor	H	GS1	4	W	3-0	D	0-0
Liverpool	NK Maribor	A	GS1	3	W	7-0	W	4-0
Liverpool	Spartak M.	A	GS1	2	D	1-1	D	1-1
Liverpool	Sevilla	H	GS1	1	D	2-2	W	2-1

Liverpool have been prolific in front of goal in the Champions League, netting 40 goals in their 12 games (3.3 gpg) and they were most impressive in beating favourites Man City in the quarter-final stage. Whilst English teams have struggled in this competition in recent times, there's a chance that the Premier League is the strongest source this term with Barcelona well ahead of Real Madrid in the league but going out to Roma, whom Liverpool easily disposed of but for a nervy last few minutes and it could well be that their strength of their 5-1 aggregate defeat of Premier League champions is the strongest in the competition. Their front three is arguably stronger than Real's this term and unlike recent finalists Juventus and Atletico Madrid, who are sides built largely on a solid defence and rely on playing on the counter, Liverpool have the firepower to go toe-to-toe with the two-time reigning Champions.

History suggests that Liverpool will have a hard job getting the job done in the 90 minutes though and so we could be set for an epic encounter. The strong goals trend in finals and the attacking nature together with the vulnerable defences of these two sides makes both teams to score look like a banker at 1.46. Two of Real's three finals ended up 1-1 and we wouldn't be surprised to see that again, with the draw the one we like most in the match outcome market at 3.8, whilst dutching the 1-1 and 2-2 correct scores is a tempting 5.0 shot. We'll also be dutching the Liverpool win in extra time and on penalties at 7.2 in the hope that Klopp's men can emulate the 2004/05 team and Chelsea in 2011/12 by upsetting what was deemed the European superpower at the time in a dramatic final. Given that we're expecting Mo Salah to be the main man for Liverpool, as he has been all season, he's worth siding with in the goalscorer markets, whilst we're also backing him to be the man of the match, with five of the last eight players receiving this award in the final being forwards.

Recommendations: [Both Teams to Score Yes at 1.44](#)

[Liverpool to Lift The Trophy at 2.35](#)

[Draw at 3.95](#)

[Dutch Liverpool Win on Penalties and ET at 7.2](#)

[Mo Salah MOTM at 7.0](#)