Messi missing from Ballon d’Or nominees, Spanish stars dominate

AFP – Lionel Messi will not win another Ballon d’Or this year after being left out of the nominees revealed by organisers on Wednesday, as stars of Spain’s Euro 2024-winning team and Real Madrid’s Champions League victors feature heavily.
Messi claimed the eighth Ballon d’Or of his glittering career last year. Now aged 37, he is not among the 30 contenders this time despite winning another title with Argentina at the Copa America in July.

The former Barcelona supestar, now playing club football in MLS for Inter Miami, was also missing from the nominees in 2022 when Karim Benzema took the honours.

However, he returned to win last year after leading Argentina to glory at the World Cup in Qatar.

The most prestigious individual award in football is voted for by a jury of journalists from each of the top 100 countries in FIFA’s world ranking.

Brazil forward Vinicius Junior is among the favourites and is one of six members of the Madrid team that won La Liga and the Champions League last season to be nominated.

Jude Bellingham, Dani Carvajal, Toni Kroos, Antonio Ruediger and Fede Valverde are the others, while Kylian Mbappe – who left Paris Saint-Germain for Real over the close season – features too.

Carvajal is among the contenders from the victorious Spain team alongside Alejandro Grimaldo, Dani Olmo, Rodri, Nico Williams and Lamine Yamal.

Manchester City’s Norwegian star Erling Haaland and England and Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane are on the list as well, but there is no place for five-time winner Cristiano Ronaldo, now 39.

Xabi Alonso, who won the Bundesliga in an unbeaten season with Bayer Leverkusen, is among the favourites for best coach.

His rivals include Real Madrid’s Carlo Ancelotti and Spain’s Luis de la Fuente.

Meanwhile, Aitana Bonmati of Barcelona and Spain will hope to retain the women’s Ballon d’Or.

Former winners Ada Hegerberg and Alexia Putellas are also nominated, along with five members of the United States’ Olympic gold medal-winning team in Sophia Smith, Mallory Swanson, Trinity Rodman, Lindsey Horan and goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher.

The Ballon d’Or ceremony is due to take place in Paris on October 28.

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