

# MERIT REPORT

## ON MEDIA VALUE IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

The logo for MERIT, featuring the word "MERIT" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small red triangle is positioned above the letter "I".

**MERIT**

Season 2017/18





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## Presentation

MERIT (*Methodology for the Evaluation and Rating of Intangible Talent*) is part of an academic project with vast applications in the field of business and company management. This methodology has proved to be useful in measuring the economic value of talent in professional sports and in other entertainment industries. In the estimations and elaboration of rankings we take into account two elements: the popularity (degree of interest aroused between the fans and the general public) and the media value (the level of attention that the media pays).

The measurements can be made at specific points in time over the season, or accounting for the news articles generated in a certain period: weeks, months, years, etc. Additionally, the homogeneity of our measurements allows for a comparison of the media value status of individuals, teams, institutions, etc.

In addition to calculations and rankings, our databases permit analysing a wide variety of economic and managerial problems: estimates of the market value (or “fair value”) of players’ transfer fees; calculation of the brand value of individuals, teams and leagues; valuation of the economic return from alliances between sponsors; etc. The usefulness of these rankings is clear, given the growing number of companies whose business relies on media exposure and popularity as sources of potential income.

The approach adopted by MERIT allows us to reach where others cannot. Often the crucial point is not to have more information at one’s disposal but to be able to rely on the appropriate methodology and capabilities for analysis. Our team includes analysts that apply a methodology verified in academic forums, providing valuable data for decision-making in professional sport.

More information can be found at:

[www.meritsocialvalue.com](http://www.meritsocialvalue.com) | [www.uic.es/merit](http://www.uic.es/merit)

**Our estimations  
and rankings  
are based on  
ratings of media  
visibility and  
popularity**

## Main Results Season 2017/18



**Lionel Messi**

1<sup>st</sup> position in the MERIT ranking of **Players**



**Real Madrid**

1<sup>st</sup> position in the MERIT ranking of **Teams**



**Premier League**

Football league with the highest media visibility



**Neymar**

Player with the biggest growth in media exposure



**Kylian Mbappé**

Player under 21 with the highest media visibility



**“Dream Team”**

6 players o “La Liga” in the media value “Dream Team”



**Paris Saint Germain**

Team with the biggest growth in media exposure of the year



## 1. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Football Players

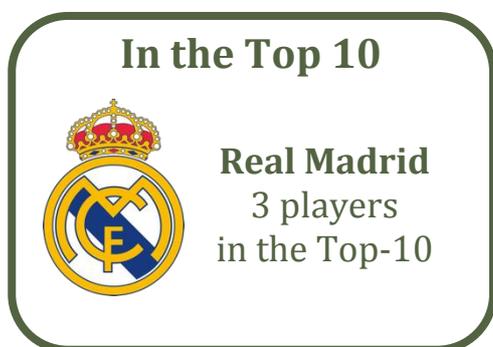
The following table reports the MERIT media value index the Top-10 most popular football players in season 2017/18. The values of the MERIT index are expressed with respect to a reference value: the average of some 2,500 players with the highest media value of a database of more than 5,000 players. Individual indexes are the number by which the number of news articles of a player multiplies the figures of the normal representative (average) player in our database.

Rank		Player Season 2017/18	Team	MERIT Index
1		<b>Lionel Messi</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>95.36</b>
2		<b>Cristiano Ronaldo</b>	Real Madrid	<b>81.44</b>
3		<b>Neymar</b>	Paris Saint Germain	<b>67.27</b>
4		<b>Luis Suárez</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>35.35</b>
5		<b>Paul Pogba</b>	Manchester United	<b>26.88</b>
6		<b>Harry Kane</b>	Tottenham Hotspur	<b>26.42</b>
7		<b>Gareth Bale</b>	Real Madrid	<b>25.69</b>
8		<b>Sergio Ramos</b>	Real Madrid	<b>24.89</b>
9		<b>Romelu Lukaku</b>	Manchester United	<b>22.41</b>
10		<b>Eden Hazard</b>	Chelsea FC	<b>20.12</b>

According to our results, Lionel Messi achieved in season 2017/18 a presence 95.36 times greater in the media than the average player. The other worldwide media superstar, Cristiano Ronaldo, came second with 81.44 points in the MERIT ranking. Then, we find Neymar Junior holding the third position, while the fourth and fifth place are respectively for Luis Suárez and Paul Pogba.

As it happened in the previous season, La Liga concentrates the largest number of players in the Top-10: three of them playing for Real Madrid and another two for FC Barcelona. Besides Messi and Ronaldo, other players who enter in the Top-10 include: Suárez, Bale and Ramos.

The media value leaders belonging to the Top-10 are competing in seven different football clubs: Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, PSG, Manchester United, Tottenham and Chelsea FC. Additional information can be found in Annex 1, where we show the Top-50 professional football players with the highest media value.



## 2. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Young Players

The following table shows the results of a similar analysis applied to just players younger than 21 years old. The calculations follow the same procedures we used to derive the regular MERIT media value ranking, with the difference that we only report here a selection of young players. The analysis is very informative in order to identify prospective global superstars in professional football.

Rank		Player Season 2017/18	Team	MERIT Index
1		<b>Kylian Mbappé</b>	Paris Saint Germain	<b>17.8</b>
2		<b>Anthony Martial</b>	Manchester United	<b>8.8</b>
3		<b>Marco Asensio</b>	Real Madrid	<b>8.1</b>
4		<b>Marcus Rashford</b>	Manchester United	<b>8.1</b>
5		<b>Leroy Sané</b>	Manchester City	<b>6.4</b>
6		<b>Dele Alli</b>	Tottenham	<b>6.2</b>
7		<b>Gabriel Jesús</b>	Manchester City	<b>5.9</b>
8		<b>Thomas Lemar</b>	AS Mónaco	<b>2.6</b>
9		<b>G. Donnarumma</b>	AC Milan	<b>2.5</b>
10		<b>O. Dembélé</b>	FC Barcelona	<b>2.4</b>

The table identifies some 10 top young football players. Among this group we should expect to find the main protagonists, both in terms of media value and sport performance, in the years to come.

At the top of the ranking we find the forward Kylian Mbappé, currently playing for Paris Saint Germain, who completed an astonishing season and reached a degree of visibility in the media 17.8 times higher than the reference player in our database. Anthony Martial, one of the most promising players in the English Premier League, holds the second position with a MERIT Index of 8.8. The third position is for the Real Madrid player, Marco Asensio, whose media value amounts to 8.1 points.



The results of our analysis unveil the superiority of the Premier League concerning future football superstars. The 50% of the players in the Top-10 ranking under-21 are currently playing for English teams, such as: Manchester United and Manchester City. Other leagues that also stand out in terms of future football superstars' concentration are the Spanish league, the French league and the Italian league, respectively.



### 3. MERIT Media Value Rank – Players of the winning teams of each European domestic league.

This section offers information on the MERIT media value indexes for the players in the roster of the winning teams of each domestic league. In the case of the Spanish La Liga, the winner was FC Barcelona, where two of the top worldwide media leaders play: Messi and Suárez.

In England, the winning team that conquered the Premier League was Manchester City. Among the players with higher records on media value we find: Sterling, David Silva and Kevin De Bruyne.

In the Bundesliga, Bayern Munich won its sixth consecutive title. The principal media references (James, Vidal and Lewandowski) achieve lower values in terms of media value.

#### England Premier League



1.	R. Sterling	16.0
2.	David Silva	10.8
3.	K. De Bruyne	9.1
4.	Leroy Sané	5.8
5.	Gabriel Jesús	5.1
6.	Sergio Agüero	3.3
7.	V. Kompany	3.0
8.	John Stones	2.8
9.	Danilo	2.5
10.	Kyle Walker	2.1

#### Spain La Liga



1.	Lionel Messi	90.3
2.	Luis Suárez	33.9
3.	Gerard Pique	16.6
4.	Andrés Iniesta	14.4
5.	J. Mascherano	5.9
6.	Iván Rakitic	5.8
7.	Samuel Umtiti	5.5
8.	Sergio Busquets	4.9
9.	Jordi Alba	4.2
10.	Paulinho	4.0

#### Germany Bundesliga



1.	J. Rodríguez	4.2
2.	Arturo Vidal	4.1
3.	R. Lewandowski	4.1
4.	Thiago	2.4
5.	Manuel Neuer	2.3
6.	Franck Ribéry	2.1
7.	Thomas Müller	2.0
8.	Arjen Robben	1.9
9.	Mats Hummels	1.6
10.	J. Boateng	1.4

Italy		JUVENTUS
Serie A		
1.	Paulo Dybala	11.0
2.	G. Buffon	10.6
3.	G. Higuaín	9.9
4.	M. Mándzukic	4.9
5.	G. Chiellini	4.5
6.	M. Pjanic	4.1
7.	Sami Khedira	3.9
8.	J. Cuadrado	3.1
9.	Alex Sandro	2.7
10.	Douglas Costa	2.6

France		
Ligue 1		
1.	Neymar	54.4
2.	K. Mbappé	16.1
3.	E. Cavani	11.9
4.	Lucas	9.0
5.	A. Di María	7.3
6.	Thiago Silva	4.9
7.	M. Verratti	4.8
8.	Dani Alves	4.0
9.	H. Ben Arfa	3.2
10.	Javier Pastore	2.8

Regarding the Italian competitions, the powerful Juventus of Turin conquered the Scudetto again, thereby consolidating its dominance. Among the main stars of the Serie A championship we see: Paulo Dybala, Gianluigi Buffon and the Argentine, Gonzalo Higuaín.

Finally, in the French league the main protagonist was Paris Saint Germain. After a summer with important players signing PSG, including Neymar and Mbappé, the French capital's team won the domestic championship. The main players, in terms of media visibility, are precisely three attackers: Neymar Jr., Kylian Mbappé, and Edinson Cavani.

#### 4. MERIT Media Value Ranking - Teams

In this section, we gather the results of the media value analysis by teams. The clubs' records are obtained by aggregation of individual ratings of media value for the 15 most popular players in each team roster. The following table displays the MERIT ranking of the principal football clubs in Season 2017/18.

Rank		Team Season 2017/18		League	MERIT Index
1		Real Madrid		La Liga	213.7
2		FC Barcelona		La Liga	202.8
3		Paris Saint Germain		Ligue 1	129.8
4		Manchester United		Premier League	121.7
5		Liverpool		Premier League	95.9
6		Chelsea		Premier League	89.5
7		Arsenal		Premier League	76.5
8		Manchester City		Premier League	72.3
9		Juventus		Serie A	68.5
10		Tottenham		Premier League	51.2

Real Madrid, with an index of 213.7 points, leads the MERIT media value ranking of teams in season 2017/18. Behind the giant Spanish team, we find: FC Barcelona, Paris Saint Germain, Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea FC, respectively.

Notice that, while there is a strong concentration of Spanish players in the MERIT ranking for individuals, the teams' ranking is lead by English football. Actually, the Premier League includes up to six teams in the world's Top-10: Manchester United, Liverpool, Chelsea FC, Manchester City, Arsenal FC and Tottenham Spurs.

Regarding Italian football, we observe that up to five italian teams are found on the top 20 worldwide media ranking. As expected, PSG and Bayern München are the leading teams in terms of media visibility of their corresponding leagues.

**60% of the teams in the media value Top-10 belong to the English Premier League**

### Media Value Ranking - "Big-5" Domestic leagues



1. Man. United
2. Liverpool
3. Chelsea
4. Arsenal
5. Man. City



1. Real Madrid
2. Barcelona
3. Atl. Madrid
4. Sevilla FC
5. R. Sociedad



1. Juventus
2. AS Roma
3. Napoli
4. Inter Milán
5. AC Milán



1. Bayer Múnich
2. B. Dortmund
3. RB Leipzig
4. Schalke 04
5. FC Köln



1. PSG
2. AS Mónaco
3. O. Lyon
4. OGC Nice
5. O. Marseille

## 5. Media "Dream Team" (2017/18)

This section shows the "Dream Team" of football, where two Spanish clubs stand out: Barcelona and Real Madrid. Most of the field positions are occupied by individuals playing in these two teams, a hint of their current global hegemony. The figure illustrates the composition of a team's squad with the most popular players in each position: Goalkeeper, Defenses, Midfielders and Forwards.



The following players are part of the “Dream Team” of season 2017/18:

**Goalkeeper:** Gianluigi Buffon  
**Defenders:** Marcelo – Sergio Ramos – G. Piqué – A. Valencia  
**Midfielders:** Mesut Özil – Paul Pogba – Andrés Iniesta  
**Forwards:** Cristiano Ronaldo – Lionel Messi – Neymar Jr.

The previous selection of players collects the individuals who enjoyed a greater presence in the media by field positions. In goal we find the legendary Italian keeper Gianluigi Buffon. In defense the Real Madrid’s centre-back Sergio Ramos stands out, with a MERIT index of 24.89; followed respectively by Marcelo, Pique and Antonio Valencia.

In the midfield, the French Paul Pogba (with a MERIT index of 26.88 points) takes the lead ahead of Mesut Özil and Andrés Iniesta. Then, in attack, the first place is for Lionel Messi, whose extraordinary performance during the season leads him to achieve the highest score in the ranking, beating his historic opponent: Cristiano Ronaldo.

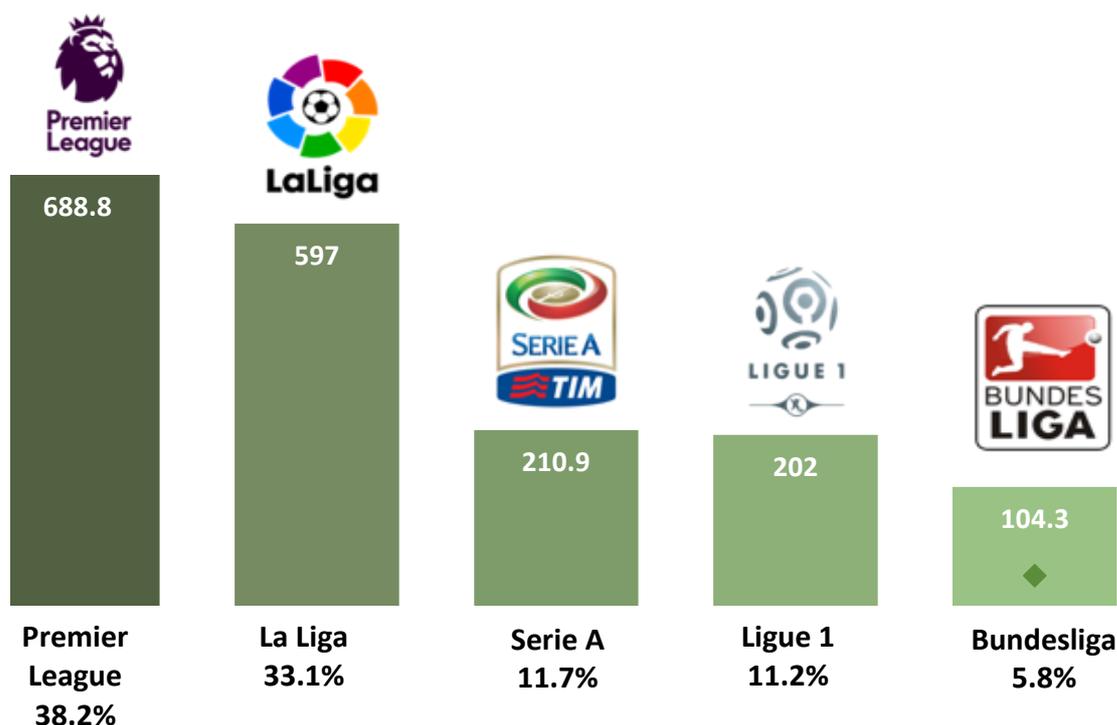
**Up to 6 players  
of the media  
visibility  
“Dream Team”  
play in teams of  
the Spanish  
league**



## 6. Media Value Ranking of the “Big- 5” domestic leagues

The hierarchy of the domestic leagues is calculated by adding individual MERIT indexes of the 400 most popular players (those with the greatest visibility figures) in each league. Similar results are obtained if calculations are applied to groups of 300 or 500 players of each league.

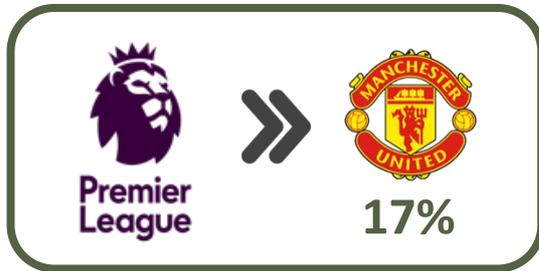
The graph summarizes the results obtained by performing these calculations. We indicate along with the aggregate MERIT index, the relative weight (in percentage) with respect to the total accumulated by the "Big-5" European leagues.



In the 2017/18 season, the Premier League, with a MERIT index of 688.8, conquered the first place in the ranking of football leagues. This figure means that the English competition has a level of global media attraction more than 6 times higher than that of the Bundesliga. The second place is for the Spanish La Liga that, boosted by the media figures of the two giants: Real Madrid and Barcelona, also reached very high levels of interest. Then, there appear the Serie A, Ligue 1 and the Bundesliga, respectively. For the first time the French league surpasses the German domestic league, becoming the fourth league, in terms of media impact, in Europe.

**For the first time, the French Ligue 1 overtakes the Bundesliga in the ranking of football leagues'**

The increased visibility of the French Ligue 1 is a consequence, mainly, of the incorporations made by PSG, with the signings of Neymar Jr. and Mbappé. These two world stars have awakened many expectations inside and outside the French competition.



This section also shows the weight that the main team of each league represents within the added media value of the corresponding league. As can be seen, the English Premier League enjoys a more balanced distribution than the rest of European competitions. Manchester United attracts 17% of media attention in the Premier League; a low percentage compared to other leagues.

Regarding La Liga, Real Madrid accumulates 36% of the total national competition. The Spanish giant, along with its eternal rival (FC Barcelona), account for almost 70% of the total of the championship. It is a fact that brings to light the great media dependence of the Spanish competition with respect to these two clubs.

As for the Italian and German leagues, both live a similar situation. The reference team of each league has a weight of around 30% of the total. However, the rest of the teams are not too far from this percentage, indicating that the media distribution is somewhat more balanced.

Finally, in the case of the French league, the PSG represents an example of the "Winner-take-all" effect, a phenomenon implying that the predominant team attracts most of the spotlights in the media, drawing a disproportionate share of media attention compared to the rest.

The PSG attracts 64% of the total of the Ligue 1, a percentage far above from the rest of the main teams in the main domestic leagues in Europe.

## Annex 1

Rank 2017/18	Player	Team	MERIT Media Value Index
1	Lionel Messi	FC Barcelona	95.36
2	Cristiano Ronaldo	Real Madrid	81.44
3	Neymar	Paris Saint Germain	67.27
4	Luis Suárez	FC Barcelona	35.35
5	Paul Pogba	Manchester United	26.88
6	Harry Kane	Tottenham	26.42
7	Gareth Bale	Real Madrid	25.69
8	Sergio Ramos	Real Madrid	24.89
9	Romelu Lukaku	Manchester United	22.41
10	Eden Hazard	Chelsea	20.12
11	Mohamed Salah	Liverpool	19.59
12	Philippe Coutinho	Liverpool	19.56
13	Marcelo	Real Madrid	19.04
14	Kylian Mbappé	Paris Saint Germain	18.59
15	Alexis Sánchez	Arsenal	18.13
16	Gerard Piqué	FC Barcelona	17.83
17	Raheem Sterling	Manchester City	17.82
18	Karim Benzema	Real Madrid	16.09
19	Álvaro Morata	Chelsea	15.58
20	Andrés Iniesta	FC Barcelona	15.27
21	Edinson Cavani	Paris Saint Germain	14.96
22	Mesut Özil	Arsenal	14.62
23	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Manchester United	14.54
24	Roberto Firmino	Liverpool	14.09
25	Antoine Griezmann	Atlético de Madrid	12.80
26	Paulo Dybala	Juventus	12.76
27	Isco	Real Madrid	12.34
28	Gianluigi Buffon	Juventus	12.33
29	David Silva	Manchester City	11.84
30	Gonzalo Higuaín	Juventus	11.54
31	Olivier Giroud	Arsenal	11.13
32	Luka Modric	Real Madrid	11.03
33	Kevin De Bruyne	Manchester City	10.90
34	Wayne Rooney	Everton	10.88
35	Lucas	Paris Saint Germain	10.58
36	David de Gea	Manchester United	10.45
37	Diego Costa	Chelsea	10.11
38	Sadio Mané	Liverpool	9.82
39	Anthony Martial	Manchester United	9.32
40	Marcus Rashford	Manchester United	8.85
41	Marco Asensio	Real Madrid	8.42
42	Pedro Rodríguez	Chelsea	8.16
43	Keylor Navas	Real Madrid	7.99
44	Luke Shaw	Manchester United	7.68
45	Ángel Di María	Paris Saint Germain	7.30
46	Antonio Valencia	Manchester United	7.17
47	Cesc Fàbregas	Chelsea	7.09
48	Emre Can	Liverpool	6.98
49	Jack Wilshere	Arsenal	6.81
50	Leroy Sané	Manchester City	6.71

## Annex 2

<b>Rank 2017/18</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>League</b>	<b>MERIT Media Value Index</b>
1	Real Madrid	La Liga	214.4
2	FC Barcelona	La Liga	203.0
3	Paris Saint Germain	Ligue 1	130.5
4	Manchester United	Premier League	121.8
5	Liverpool	Premier League	96.2
6	Chelsea	Premier League	89.9
7	Arsenal	Premier League	76.9
8	Manchester City	Premier League	72.6
9	Juventus	Serie A	68.7
10	Tottenham	Premier League	51.4
11	Atlético de Madrid	La Liga	37.5
12	Bayern Múnich	Bundesliga	31.5
13	Everton	Premier League	26.7
14	AS Roma	Serie A	21.3
15	Borussia Dortmund	Bundesliga	20.5
16	Nápoles	Serie A	16.5
17	Inter Milan	Serie A	14.9
19	Sevilla FC	La Liga	14.1
20	AS Mónaco	Ligue 1	13.8
21	FC Porto	Liga Nos	13.8
22	SL Benfica	Liga Nos	13.6
23	AC Milan	Serie A	13.5
24	Sporting CP	Liga Nos	13.5
25	West Ham United	Premier league	12.9

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