

Transcript

Speaker 1

We haven't had you both together for a while, so while you're both here, we noticed you've been talking a lot. Do you miss him? Messi versus Ronaldo.

Speaker 2

There's simply been nothing like it in football history.

Speaker 3

Messi and Ronaldo completely changed the game.

Speaker 2

The strength The passion, the fierce polarization made this a unique rivalry.

Speaker 4

That gold scoring record is just phenomenal. Lionel Messi shows his genius bicycle
kick from Ronaldo.

Speaker 5

They had that obsession that lives and breathes inside of them.

Speaker 6

They made the impossible feel like it was possible. The Balandor became a private
competition.

Speaker 7

It's an unbelievable fighting with them.

Speaker 8

They became the most followed people on social media.

Speaker 9

For the first time, the world divided itself with players.

Speaker 5

You've got them over there for Messi, them over there for Cristiano.

Speaker 6

Messi's the goal.

Speaker 2

Messi and Ronaldo have achieved a level of fame that even presidents and popes have never matched.

Speaker 10

We shared this stage 15 years, the same two guys, so it's not easy.

Speaker 11

They are special.

Speaker 6

It's not normal to be on this level all these years.

Speaker 11

The question is, how have they shaped an entire era of football just by being at each other's throats?

Speaker 6

It will be difficult to see something like this ever again.

Speaker 4

Good evening from the Nou Camp, for what everyone hopes is a breathless night of excitement in the Champions League. It's Barcelona against Manchester United. Ronaldo and Rooney against Messi and Deco.

Speaker 2

Back in 2008, football was desperate for a superstar. The era of the Brazilian Ronaldo, David Beckham, and Zinedine Zidane had passed. We were waiting for a new generation of star to emerge. That's right when Messi and Ronaldo came along.

Speaker 9

In 2008 semi-finals of the Champions League, that was the first time Cristiano and Messi faced each other on the pitch.

Speaker 4

Rooney then with a corner, and it comes into the centre, diving header from Ronaldo, shouts for handball, it's a penalty.

Speaker 3

At 20 and 23, Messi and Ronaldo are already lauded as the best young players in the world, but we haven't yet reached that point at which they are incontestably the elite of world football.

Speaker 4

100,000 pairs of eyes looking down on Cristiano Ronaldo. Oh, and he's put it wide. He hit the stanchion and it's bounced away.

Speaker 2

We were stunned to see the beginnings of the rivalry in terms of how people talked about Ronaldo's physical prowess versus Messi's skill as a dribbler.

Speaker 1

They were such different characters. Two players who have absolutely everything in the world at their feet.

Speaker 4

Full time in the new camp, Barcelona nil, Manchester United nil.

Speaker 5

Cristiano was the first player that I saw take different components of what makes a footballer great. He had that obsession with being at the top, he wanted to be the best player in the world.

Speaker 6

Leo, he was one of our key players.

Speaker 7

We needed him at that time.

Speaker 2

In the second leg played at Old Trafford. horse goal, scored the only goal, and Manchester United went on to the final.

Speaker 12

Manchester United are through to their Champions League final, their dearest wish.

Speaker 9

You could see that Messi's already the best in La Liga, and Cristiano the best in the Premier League. And to see those two kids on the pitch together was the sign of something to come.

Speaker 12

I never met a young player that was so confident, knowing what he wanted. The moment he came to Manchester United, it was just for him, a logical step, to become the best footballer in the world.

Speaker 5

None of us had really played with anybody like that before. So I was focused and said to some... We're building a team now around the likes of myself and Wayne Rooney as well. And Cristiano was the heartbeat.

Speaker 1

Moving to Manchester United was huge for a young boy. You don't know the language, you don't know the culture, you've got these huge characters in a dressing room. For Cristiano, that was a massive challenge.

Speaker 5

There's enormous talent there. He's not fazed by anything.

Speaker 13

Every dressing room, particularly that Manchester United dressing room, is a school of hard knocks. The most common phrase would have been that he played as a something of a show pony.

Speaker 1

Sir Alex Ferguson was the key. He took him under his wing. It was tough love at times, but it was also, I really care about you.

Speaker 12

The most important message was, Christiane, you are... a special player. You can do special things. However, it is important that those special things are put towards the team, that we benefit from it all together.

Speaker 13

He changed his playing style and realised it wasn't about putting the camera on him and his step-overs all the time.

Speaker 12

He embraced everything that would make him a better player. Here he comes.

Speaker 4

It's absolutely magnificent.

Speaker 12

Bringing him from somebody that could score a goal to a goal scorer.

Speaker 13

He went from being a dorky, Bambi, not too sure on his legs, to being the dominant alpha male at Manchester United.

Speaker 5

2008, we won the Premier League, but you need to do it in the Champions League to be cemented as a great team. If you get your hands on that trophy, you elevate yourself then to be part of the elite.

Speaker 4

Brown and Scholes linking up down this near side. Brown with a left foot in... Oh! Cristiano Ronaldo heads Manchester United into the lead.

Speaker 5

And for Cristiano, on top of that, he wanted to be the best player in the world.

Speaker 4

Van der Zaal demise Anelka. Manchester United, once again, become champions of Europe.

Speaker 5

He didn't want us to be saying it, which we were. He's the best in the world. He's the best. He wanted it to be confirmed.

Speaker 4

It's very beautiful.

Speaker 5

To be part of history, which is that Ballon d'Or.

Speaker 9

The Ballon d'Or represents the confirmation that you are the best in the world.

Speaker 5

When he won that, you could see that it was like... I should win it. I deserve to win it. I'm the best.

Speaker 2

And that kick-starts the Messi-Ronaldo rivalry. For the next 10 years, the award is shared by either Ronaldo or Messi. Every year, the question is, will it be Messi or will it be Ronaldo?

Speaker 7

I'm not sure that I'm not a national. It's very fast.

Speaker 4

It's where it's the only thing you do.

Speaker 12

I don't believe that. Careful for the camp. Careful for the camp. Careful for the...

Speaker 11

Messi grows up in a town called Rosario. His father works an industrial job, and he comes from a very modest background. Very early on, the legend of Messi spreads unbelievably quickly. Everyone knows about this kid with, like, magnets in his boots. And pretty soon, he lands on the radar of Barcelona. .

Speaker 6

Before, it was not that normal seeing someone coming from so, so far away at such a young age. We all thought, Wow, this boy must be something really special.

Speaker 9

In 2008, Pep Guardiola became the manager of Barcelona, and the career of Messi changed from that moment on.

Speaker 7

I don't like too much to talk about building around one guy, but we had that Ronaldinho. He's the number 10 in Barcelona, the number 10. They are the leaders, and they are the top guys. We could see that Leo was coming, and there is only one number 10 in a team.

Speaker 9

Messi was completely no of Ronaldinho. Ronaldinho puts his come around Messi and says, Would you take the number 10 shirt for me? 'Cause I'm gonna leave. No, no, no, no, number 10, that's you. He.

Speaker 4

Just looks like a kid amongst his heroes. He's only 18 now.

Speaker 9

Yeah, tears in his eyes. That is a moment where he had to say goodbye to something that made him happy, but realized wasn't gonna make him the best that he could be.

Speaker 7

First season of Pep as a coach, he was thinking, He is the best, he's gonna make us win. And we could build a ranking. You look at every single player in every single position.

Speaker 1

And every single player on the bench in that Barcelona side, they all played this incredible system, but it was all about Messi.

Speaker 3

The last Clasico of Pep Guardiola's first season was set up almost as a final. The stakes couldn't be higher. And away win would pretty much clinch the league title for Guardiola and Messi.

Speaker 7

Pep and Diu, Sin Puga Spanak, Kavindra Leo, Kalibol commander, and I said it's a very good thing.

Speaker 9

Pep has got a eureka moment. There's a gap between the midfielders of Real Madrid and the centre-backs of Real Madrid.

Speaker 6

And he thought, what if we?

Speaker 7

Switch and put Messi not on the centre-forward, but in the midfield with 30 metres to run.

Speaker 6

That day, I think, changed the history of football, the history of FC Barcelona, and the history of Messi.

Speaker 3

Messi in midfield, falls nine. The 2008-2009 season ends with both Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo winning the league title, and this really cemented their place as star players at two of the world's biggest clubs.

Speaker 4

Everybody is calling this final Messi versus Ronaldo. What do you expect from that encounter?

Speaker 6

Both are marvellous players. For Manchester, Ronaldo is very important. For us, Messi are very important. So the most important thing is we're going to try to do a good game.

Speaker 9

In 2009, the Champions League final, you could see that was a game that could define an era. England versus Spain. Barcelona against the huge Manchester United. Messi and Ronaldo.

Speaker 12

At that particular time, I think there was, there was no other contest in the world of football than Messi or not.

Speaker 7

Bruni, Vanderzard, Herrina Neda, Giggs, Cristiano. The final, yeah, I remember. I was shaken with Cristiano the 1st 15, 20 minutes. He all said, oh my God, no.

Speaker 4

Here's the World Player of the Year, Cristiano Ronaldo, for the first time with a ball on his feet.

Speaker 7

Here it goes, Valdez, scrapes it out.

Speaker 4

And Ronaldo shoots from distance.

Speaker 3

Barcelona couldn't get control of Cristiano Ronaldo.

Speaker 7

Ronaldo shot right across the face.

Speaker 9

They decided to use again the false nine, but not from the beginning. After 10 minutes, Eto and Messi show up.

Speaker 4

Barcelona eased their way back into the match, and Iniesta is running at the United defence for the first time. Lays the ball off to Eto. Eto's gone through the challenge, Eto shot, and he's gone in.

Speaker 5

We were ready for Messi, yeah, we thought, but this was a different Messi.

Speaker 4

The smallest player in the pitch. Lionel Messi makes it Barcelona to Manchester United.

Speaker 3

There is a sense now that this establishes Messi as the best player in the world.

Speaker 7

In that final, we could see that Cristiano was there on the top, and Leo was coming. In that final is when the world realized, Oh, my God, what is going to happen here? Are you going to stay at Man United, or are the rumors about you going through? I don't know.

Speaker 5

I spoke to him a lot about staying at Man United, because he's that jewel in the crown. Come on, man, please. And he was like, I've dreamed about playing for Real Madrid.

Speaker 3

Manchester United's goal-scoring, money-making machine, Ronaldo, is sold for a world-record fee. He's heading to Madrid for 80 million pounds. He's A one-man business plan.

Speaker 1

The city was just... Buzzing, knowing that this mega star is coming in.

Speaker 4

He's the best of the world. More than Messi, more than Kaka, and more than anyone.

Speaker 13

80,000 people were allowed to flood into the Bernabeu.

Speaker 3

Ronaldo's move to Real Madrid is one of the most influential transfers in history. This has reached a level, an enormity that we've never seen before.

Speaker 7

There is no doubt that being in the same league changed everything. It was a motivation for all Barcelona players, no? To beat Real Madrid, to beat this Real Madrid with Cristiano.

Speaker 9

That's never, ever happened in the history of the game where the two best players in the world were actually in the same league, fighting for the same titles.

Speaker 1

In Spain, you've got two huge teams, Real Madrid and Barcelona. These two incredible arch-rivals, you knew that this rivalry was about to be turbo-charged.

Speaker 14

Sigra Cristiano, la, la, la, la, la, la. Marcabo Messi.

Speaker 9

Even though it was one of the best seasons of Real Madrid in the history of La Liga, it was just not enough to beat Barcelona.

Speaker 4

Messi calls it! Oh! Brilliant.

Speaker 13

Barcelona were playing a brand of football which was electric, and it was adored.

Speaker 4

Even Real Madrid fans would have made it that Barcelona.

Speaker 9

2008, 2010, it was impossible to stop.

Speaker 13

Messi seemed to be winning hands down to Cristiano Ronaldo, which, of course, Cristiano hated.

Speaker 1

That was a moment of recognition that Real Madrid had to act. They needed to do something big to be able to rival Barcelona and Messi.

Speaker 15

The self-styled special one. Jose Mourinho will be introduced as the new Real Madrid coach on Monday.

Speaker 13

Jose Mourinho had won the treble with Inter in 2010.

Speaker 6

He was a man who understood how to defeat that style of play that was so tremendous under Pep Guardiola.

Speaker 1

He knew that this was the moment where The excitement, the fun was about to begin. It was the perfect storm.

Speaker 3

When Barcelona play Real Madrid, it's called El Clasico. Towards the end of Mourinho's first season, we get an opportunity for Real Madrid to turn the tables on Barcelona. You get four Clasicos in just 18 days.

Speaker 6

This period of time became almost more important than politics, than culture, than anything. Everything was related to football, this big, fierce rivalry.

Speaker 7

For Cristiano it was Leo, and for Leo it was Cristiano. I need to beat this guy.

Speaker 4

Welcome to Ayra's splendid Bernabeu.

Speaker 7

The scene for tonight's El Classico encounter. .

Speaker 4

The referee has pointed to the spot, and it's a red card for Raul Albiol.

Speaker 9

Jose Mourinho wanted the Ramadi players to think Barcelona were the enemies.

Speaker 4

The first of four El Clasico is over 18 days, ends one apiece.

Speaker 6

Clasico is always a special game. When you go around the city, the fans say to you, We need to win, this match is too important for us. I remember being fed up of El Clasico because it became a bit toxic.

Speaker 3

Mourinho is there to try and create an environment that allows his team to compete, and that involves this kind of psychological warfare.

Speaker 6

Yes, Criticar el acerto del arbitro. A la manera en que Mourinho pretendiaga lentaya lambiente.

Speaker 14

What happened in the semi-finals of the?

Speaker 3

Champions League was that Pep Guardiola was drawn in.

Speaker 7

You're a competitor new instant.

Speaker 6

That time, I think it should have been more about the football players, and it was not. It was more about the managers. The Catalans against the Spaniards, the Madrid, Barcelona.

Speaker 7

For Adelpcampo, the Aganado, the regalos of champions particular for Adelpcampo. The second touches you with those, but it's also a very important moment.

Speaker 9

Game starts, Pepe gets sent off.

Speaker 4

Real drama here in this Champions League semi-final first leg.

Speaker 9

Justin Mourinho gets sent off.

Speaker 3

You've got this elevation of this rivalry, teams, managers, players. And of course, it's the goals that those players will score that will define them.

Speaker 4

Barcelona scored. It's Lionel Messi who scores from close range.

Speaker 3

Messi now runs through the entire defense into the penalty area.

Speaker 4

He shoots, he scores, it's two-nil.

Speaker 14

Lionel Messi shows his genius again. Iniesta, and there is space there, and he plays it through brilliantly for Pedro.

Speaker 4

Who scores for Barcelona. And that must be Barcelona going to Wembley.

Speaker 3

That drama of the four Clasco's in just 18 days really elevated the Messi-Ronaldo rivalry, not just in Spain, but everywhere.

Speaker 4

The ball played between Xavi and Iniesta once more. Messi's available, Messi gets the ball now, scurries forward.

Speaker 7

I remember standing on the picture.

Speaker 5

And just going, We just need to get off there, because they took our soul, basically. And Messi was the main ingredient.

Speaker 7

That year is the confirmation of Leo saying, Guys, I'm here.

Speaker 12

For so long, it was all about Barcelona.

Speaker 14

It was all about Lionel Messi winning all the Ballon d'Ors.

Speaker 6

Leo, Leo, Leo, Leo. It was time for Ronaldo to make a difference.

Speaker 11

Messi and Ronaldo are always presented as so different, but the things that forged them in their childhood are incredibly similar.

Speaker 9

Very early on, both Messi and Ronaldo realized that football is the best thing that they could offer to the world, to themselves, to their families, no matter what the consequences. That first year in Barcelona, because of red tape and injuries, Messi hardly plays that season. His brother, Matthias, he had a girlfriend back in Rosario. And the whole family sits around the table, and they say to 13-year-old, Messi, what do you want to do? And Leo said, I want to succeed. I want to be a professional player. The consequences of that... Mom has to take back to Rosario his sister and his two brothers, and his dad has to stay with him. So the family has to split. I'm not sure as a 13-year-old you realize what you just done there. Often he would go into his room and put his head under the pillow and cry. And he did that so his dad didn't hear him cry. Because of his decision, now it was his time to deliver.

Speaker 14

Cristian Ronald Fui. Dolores Cristiano Ronaldo's mom is a phenomenon.

Speaker 13

She didn't just show him love and protect him and give him the freedom to move to Lisbon at age 12. She demonstrated him that survival, that being the best version of yourself, is relentless. Morning, noon and night. Football for Ronaldo was a way out of poverty. I will use this skill I've got. I will use this ball. That brings a pressure, but it's not a crushing pressure. For Ronaldo particularly, it's an incentive.

Speaker 11

They both go to a place that tells them, We're going to take your talent and make you even greater. That promise seems appealing, but it's a huge gamble. So that moment of total commitment is when they realize, Okay, this is not kids' stuff anymore. If I'm going to be the greatest of all time, This is where it begins:.

Speaker 13

Ronaldo played an extra... an extraordinary role in Real Madrid's title victory in 2011-12.

Speaker 4

Giano Ronaldo's 42nd goal of the season.

Speaker 14

Real Madrid, La Liga...

Speaker 9

For Cristiano, beating Messi was certainly a target.

Speaker 3

The rivalry The desire for supremacy was again stepped up a notch.

Speaker 10

We play better than them this year. I'm sure about that.

Speaker 12

Every year, your numbers keep going up. Every year, Leo Messi's numbers keep going up. How tired, though, are you of being compared with Messi every day? You.

Speaker 10

Cannot compare Ferrari with the Porsche or, you know, it's different in Jane. So are you better than him now this season? Some people say I'm better, the other people say it's him. But, you know, the end of the day they're gonna decide who is the best player in the moment which is I thinking it's me.

Speaker 13

I'm very proud to give the Ballon d'Or 2012 to Leon Messi. Despite Real Madrid's title victory in 2011-12, Leon Messi won the Ballon d'Or again. Leo Messi had become not this upstart who'd been on the podium when Cristiano Ronaldo won his Ballon d'Or at Manchester United. He'd become dominant.

Speaker 12

At the time in the media, there was a very clear division in how they were seen. Messi is essentially the good guy and Ronaldo is the bad guy.

Speaker 8

At the same time, Facebook and Twitter and later Instagram are really starting to grow. If they do something special on the field, that can be shared instantly on social media. It really pushes this rivalry further.

Speaker 11

And so their legend can grow even among people who have never seen a complete match in La Liga. They see 30 seconds, and that is enough for them to know, okay, these guys are different, this is something for me, and I prefer this one.

Speaker 9

It wasn't so much, Oh, isn't it great that we have Messi and Ronaldo at the same time? It's more like, I'm a Ronaldo fan, or, I'm a Messi fan.

Speaker 1

Everyone had an opinion.

Speaker 8

This highlights that shift in modern sports, where people love supporting players, not just the club.

Speaker 2

Messi was sort of seen as the natural genius. Barcelona took on some of that characteristic as the sort of purveyors of football purity. Real Madrid took on a lot of Ronaldo's characteristics, which are his ambition, his striving for greatness. It was Real Cristiano against FC Messi.

Speaker 13

This arriving era of social media is literally perfect for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Speaker 16

Ronaldo joined Instagram first in 2012, and Messi followed them ten months later in 2013. But Ronaldo at that time is joining a platform that is simply photo sharing.

Speaker 13

Ronaldo began to rebrand himself. He looked at how much he allowed people to see his life, what aspirational values he shared.

Speaker 16

He's showing his personal life, his training regime. This was a glimpse into his real world in a way that footballers and athletes before had never really had the chance to express themselves directly to fans.

Speaker 13

It was specifically targeted at convincing people he was a good guy. Real Madrid became a perfect foil for the person Ronaldo wanted to be seen as.

Speaker 4

Messi was best before, but now it's Ronaldo time.

Speaker 13

The cumulus of the off-the-pitch marketing and his on-pitch exploits gave him that 2013 Ballon d'Or, and it was vital to him.

Speaker 5

The heartbeat of everything that he does is about the team. And he knows that something will come hand in hand with that. If he does produce the goods, he's the personal one of us. And he's not ashamed in saying that. He's a man who wants to be remembered forever, without any doubt.

Speaker 3

2014 was an opportunity for Ronaldo to take the upper hand with Madrid's Obsession, the Decima, the 10th European Cup.

Speaker 13

Real Madrid don't simply think they invented the Champions League. They think they own it. And so the 10th, the Decima becomes an absolute obsession.

Speaker 3

This was an opportunity, of course, for Ronaldo, not just to win the European Cup, not just to end Madrid's desperate search for this 10th European Cup, but to cement himself as the central figure. When it came to the final, it was Cristiano Ronaldo with a goal, with an assist. He was at the heart of.

Speaker 14

Everything, the image of Ramrid's European Cup success.

Speaker 13

People are celebrating in the dressing room, the trophy's getting passed around. Then I saw a small group of players, Marcelo, Pepe, Fabio Contrao and Cristiano. I had to ask Cristiano, what are you talking about? Because I don't speak Portuguese. And he said, we're talking about next year, we have to go and win it again. And I just thought, wow, that is the difference.

Speaker 3

Are you the best footballer in the world right now?

Speaker 10

I think so, yes. In my mind, I'm always the best. Maybe in your opinion, Missy's better than me, but in my mind, I'm better than him. It's very simple.

Speaker 11

When the entire world is telling you you're the greatest of all time, at some point, you start to believe it, and both of them believed it. There's a genuine animosity that begins to grow. They didn't acknowledge each other that much. They hated comparison.

Speaker 3

In 2014-15, with the arrival of Luis Enrique as manager, would be the moment that Messi came back to the fore. Messi is now playing with Neymar on one side, and Luis Suarez inside. And this is the beginning of what's known as the MSN.

Speaker 4

Messi into the penalty instruments, blocked by the goalkeeper, snap into the head. Luis Suarez has got the goal, and they have won the Champions League for Barcelona. It was all about Messi in the build-up.

Speaker 3

The season after Ronaldo has won a European Cup, what's the way to respond to that? There's only one way.

Speaker 7

Champions League is the most difficult competition in the world. To win that is when you can say, I'm the best in the world.

Speaker 2

Both of them, whether they would like to admit it or not, was fiercely driven by the idea of becoming the best.

Speaker 12

I'm the best person.

Speaker 7

Leo is a ultra-timido. He's a super introvert.

Speaker 6

He lived for football. He loved football. But in his private life, he's very humble. He doesn't seem like a star. I consider Leo a very humble guy. But when he crosses the white line inside, he's a different person. He just wants to win at any cost.

Speaker 12

When I was playing the national team with Leo, he always been a true leader. He always played with the same passion when he was 20. We all know what he's done in football, but the most important thing for me is always been a great human being.

Speaker 10

Madeira is special. Not because I born there, but all my family is there. My friends and uncles, everyone is there. This is why it's a special island for me.

Speaker 5

He was super proud of Madeira, and you couldn't speak badly of Madeira, even in just around him. He's a hero over there, and that's what he's driven by. He's driven to prove people. You don't need to prove nothing to no one. He's won more trophies than most. He's just built differently.

Speaker 13

He yearned for Portugal to win international tournaments.

Speaker 11

He wanted to put Portugal back on the football map.

Speaker 3

Despite huge success with their clubs, neither of them had won an international title yet. And given how important their national teams were for them, what it meant for them, that really hurt.

Speaker 11

Going into Euro 2016, Ronaldo wanted to make up for all the failures that he viewed as personal shortcomings with Portugal before then. The defeat in the Euro 2004 final, missing out in a World Cup final in 2006, penalty heartache in 2012. To.

Speaker 4

Cross, and Ronaldo's met it.

Speaker 13

He didn't play at the peak of his powers, but he was needed. He had to step forward.

Speaker 4

He turned into this great team player. He sort of dragged his country right through that tournament.

Speaker 3

Cristiano Ronaldo yearned for this trophy, I think, more than anything else.

Speaker 13

One of the key themes about Cristiano Ronaldo is that he's always thought that he can't be beaten.

Speaker 4

Tired him very strongly, Ronaldo's driving. Looks hurt. This is not how it was supposed to end in France this summer for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Speaker 5

Cristiano is unapologetic with his attitude and his demeanor on the football pitch, but he's emotional. The.

Speaker 4

Way he was trying to drive his team, his country, forward from the touchline, you could see he was kicking. every single ball.

Speaker 11

This is his time for, I can do more than be an individual legend. I can do something for my country here.

Speaker 5

He wants to be outright the best. Eda.

Speaker 4

Eda, shot! Super strike! Eda smashes Portugal! Onto the Burge of Glory.

Speaker 5

He knows if he wins the Euros of his national team, as Messi won anything with Argentina, it's another feather in his cap.

Speaker 6

It has been a monumental effort by Cristiano Ronaldo's team. For all Portugal donations, it was amazing. But for Cristiano, it was special because he tried all these years before and he achieved.

Speaker 11

What he wanted more than anything in the world, more than all of the Champions League, more than any of the individual accolades, was to win a major trophy for.

Speaker 6

Portugal. .

Speaker 9

At the same time, in the Copa America final, Messi misses a penalty.

Speaker 3

So I'm the cruelest of contrasts. You get Cristiano Ronaldo winning the European Championships. and Messi missing the decisive penalty in the final of the Copa America.

Speaker 6

That was the third final that we lost in a row.

Speaker 9

We came out of that tournament thinking, I don't want to be part of this. This hurts too much.

Speaker 7

He was suffering in the national team because he was not winning. ...

Speaker 11

I think it's hard to express just how much Messi wanted to do well for his country and how crushed he was every time he failed.

Speaker 3

Back in La Liga, Ronaldo's dominance continues. Real Madrid take the level. higher under Zinedine Zidane, and Messi hates that.

Speaker 9

At the Bernabeu, Barcelona wins 3-2, and Messi grabs his shirt and shows it to the Real Madrid fans. That was an iconic moment. People that are very close to him, including his family, they were surprised that he would actually do that. He's not a man of showing off, but there's something inside him saying, I've conquered you in your own place.

Speaker 11

In the popular narrative, Cristiano had been the diva, and Messi had been the humble servant of Barcelona. But this was a moment of Messi reasserting his own presence in that rivalry, saying, for the first time maybe in his entire career, Look at me.

Speaker 3

There's a coldness and a coolness about it.

Speaker 9

Must have heard Cristiano. Because in the Super Cup, at the Camp Nou, Cristiano does exactly the same. Shows the shirt. If you needed proof of how much it meant to each other, to beat each other, those are the pictures.

Speaker 13

Real Madrid began to overshadow Football Club Barcelona. In that era, 2016 to 2018, under Zidane, they won three Champions League trophies in a row.

Speaker 6

To win three in a row, I think, is history. This time was unbelievable, no, because we feel like we will win always, no.

Speaker 3

One of the key elements to it was the relentlessness of Ronaldo.

Speaker 13

Zidane knew that if he got the best out of Cristiano Ronaldo, they'd have a machine who won the finals.

Speaker 4

Bicycle kick from Ronaldo.

Speaker 6

He wants to reach every record. He wants to reach every single title. These three champions scored a lot of important goals. And without him, Was not possible, sure.

Speaker 8

After much speculation on a possible transfer... One of the world's.

Speaker 6

Greatest ever... Cristiano to join Juventus in a deal worth... Reported 100 million pounds. For us, it was a surprise, big surprise, because we want to keep with Cristiano a lot of more years. This moment was hard for the club, for the teammates, for everyone.

Speaker 9

Everybody knew an era was coming to an end.

Speaker 7

That period of time, the world, they were looking at La Liga.

Speaker 14

<i>La Liga</i> by the time Ronaldo.

Speaker 2

Leaves Real Madrid in 2018, both he and Messi have five Ballon d'Ors apiece.

Speaker 3

During the nine seasons they shared together in La Liga, Ronaldo scored 450 goals, in 438 games. And Messi scored 472 goals in 476 games.

Speaker 4

They've just taken it to levels that we've not seen. Their goal-scoring record is just phenomenal.

Speaker 2

Simply nothing like it in football history.

Speaker 8

Ronaldo joins Juventus and sells 520,000 shirts in 24 hours. Jump to 2021, and Messi arrives in Paris, shifting 150,000 shirts within seven minutes.

Speaker 11

Those are moves that, for the first time in their career, are more commercially motivated than by football.

Speaker 8

You're not buying sporting excellence. You're buying a one-man economy. Manchester United welcomes Ronaldo back in August of 2021, and what happens? Ronaldo sells almost double the amount that Messi did at PSG.

Speaker 16

They're able to pick up take and export fandom to a whole different place wherever they go.

Speaker 8

Messi and Renato aren't just athletes. We know them as a cultural phenomenon. They are the two most followed people on social media.

Speaker 2

Because of their global appeal, they have endorsed, signed, sponsored, hawked all manner of products that you could imagine.

Speaker 16

They are on either side of this sportswear rivalry as well, Messi with Adidas. Ronaldo with Nike. Fans are signing up for which values do they align with?

Speaker 11

They've become enormous global brands. And what's so amazing about them is they have to say almost nothing to become the world's biggest pitchman.

Speaker 8

The Louis Vuitton chess picture came out right before the 2022 World Cup. It's known as the picture that broke the Internet.

Speaker 16

People are seeing something they've never seen before, the ability to think about them, sat at the same table, what discussions they'd be having. At that time, people were wondering, would either of them ever win the World Cup?

Speaker 12

In Argentina, we are very passionate people about football. Football is like a religion. When Maradona and Argentina won the World Cup in '86, Diego brought so much joy to the Argentinian people.

Speaker 11

In Argentina, Diego is God, Messi with something else.

Speaker 15

For many years, There was enormous pressure on him to perform or be or behave to the expectations of some nebulous demand, to be more Argentinian, to be more passionate, to be more like Maradona. For a long time, he was uncomfortable with that. Winning the Copa America in 2021 liberated him. He broke free.

Speaker 10

Before everyone was expecting Messi to do everything, This young team, we understood how to play for him.

Speaker 14

But what the Argentina?

Speaker 12

Fans expect from Leo is to win the World Cup. And.

Speaker 4

They're all at sea suddenly here, Argentina, and they're now behind.

Speaker 14

It's one of the World Cup all-time shots. Messi for range! Argentina's savior.

Speaker 12

For people that we know, Messi from long time, we all know that he's the leader. In that World Cup especially, he was more than that. He was always a bit angry.

Speaker 7

Messi. The light shone on him just performing.

Speaker 4

Alvarez has got his second, made by the master.

Speaker 3

A driven, almost obsessed Messi. led Argentina all the way through to the final, elevating them with every game. Meanwhile, Ronaldo and Portugal were knocked out in the quarterfinals.

Speaker 15

Most of the world wanted Messi to win the World Cup. It wasn't Argentina favorites. It was just Messi. We want Messi to win it.

Speaker 3

We saw the madness of the final. We saw the madness of legacy and history being played out. And then being ripped up and rewritten. This is the conclusion of everything. There was a sense that this was about Messi.

Speaker 4

And the referee is pointed to the middle and set goal.

Speaker 10

One key missing from me was the World Cup. The final has gone to penalties.

Speaker 4

Saved by Martinez.

Speaker 3

It was as if the entire world was gathered in the Sistine Chapel, watching Michelangelo, waiting for him to apply the last brushstroke.

Speaker 14

It's Argentina, kings of football for the third time. It's Argentina.

Speaker 7

Messi deserves it. We want to win.

Speaker 14

It because of him.

Speaker 16

Leo Messi lifting the World Cup trophy is the most liked photo in the history of the internet. I think why many people loved it was because it felt like the culmination of a journey.

Speaker 11

There were no worlds left for him to conquer. Messi has the one thing that Ronaldo does not, which is a World Cup. Now, the question is, well, did Messi win? Did he win this entire era of football?

Speaker 3

The World Cup adds another dimension, another level to the Messi-Ronaldo rivalry. Who's the goat?

Speaker 12

Who's the goat, Messi? I think it's done.

Speaker 7

Ronaldo.

Speaker 12

Tell me it was never a debate.

Speaker 7

Messi's the goat. Ronaldo. Yo.

Speaker 5

Ronaldo.

Speaker 7

Messi's the best player in the history.

Speaker 3

I'm a Messi man, to be honest with you.

Speaker 6

What's the Spanish word for goat? La Cabra.

Speaker 3

The raging, the polarizing, never-ending debate over who is the best cements their rivalry as the greatest footballers ever seen.

Speaker 11

Their influence is so global that entire leagues use them to give themselves legitimacy. No one has done that more effectively than Saudi Arabia. They brought Cristiano Ronaldo to play in the Saudi league, had him back their World Cup bid to host in 2034.

Speaker 8

And of course, Messi coming to Inter Miami has completely changed things, right? It's had the impact that David Beckham really wanted to draw Americans into the sport.

Speaker 2

It is ubiquitous to see kids around the country wearing bright pink jerseys with Messi's number 10 on the back.

Speaker 8

The rivalry is pushing their wider reach. We're seeing attendance go up, sales go up, viewership go up, which is extremely powerful, and it just shows you the global impact that they have.

Speaker 2

They will sort of forever be inextricably linked in the annals of the game. They've come to appreciate each other as the co-star of the football drama that they appeared in for the best part of 20 years.

Speaker 9

The first connection they had was one of rivalry. They wanted to be better than each other. Along the way, They realized that, actually, the journeys were very similar.

Speaker 6

By chance, by destiny, they shared almost a decade in the same league. They were competing for the same titles. They wanted to achieve the same challenges.

Speaker 14

The consistency over so many years, I've never seen anything as relentless as it.

Speaker 4

We have been so lucky to live in an era where we've watched those two every single week. Marcabo Messi.

Speaker 16

Their legacy will be both on the pitch that people follow them and their techniques and their training, and then off the pitch that people are already looking to build their brands like Ronaldo and Messi have.

Speaker 6

It's not easy to be always at the peak of your game. It's basically impossible. But they made it feel like it was possible.

Speaker 1

100% they knew that they were rewriting the history books every time they took the pitch.

Speaker 10

He pushed me and I pushed him as well. So it's good to be part of the history of football. I'm there and of course he's there as well.

Speaker 15

Hear from the men behind the mic, the commentators view on Football Daily, listen on BBC Sounds and score more World Cup Insight on and off the pitch on iPlayer. Meet England's youngsters, watch football's newest generation, press red now.