



Quantitative analysis of the shortlist contenders for The Best FIFA Men's Football Award 2019, and why Messi is still 'The Best' and should beat Van Dijk to the award

Jack Smith¹, Jack Morris²

1. Who are the contenders?

The shortlist for The Best FIFA Men's Football Award - which will be announced on 23 September 2019 in Milan - includes:

- **Cristiano Ronaldo**
- **Frenkie De Jong**
- **Matthijs De Ligt**
- **Harry Kane**
- **Eden Hazard**
- **Sadio Mane**
- **Kylian Mbappe**
- **Lionel Messi**
- **Mohamed Salah**
- **Virgil Van Dijk**

The Award is partly decided by supporters - equally weighted alongside the votes of 'other key members of the footballing community' (including journalists, national team coaches and captains). The bookmakers' early favourite is **Virgil Van Dijk**.

The Award is still somewhat eclipsed by the Ballon D'Or - which is announced in December each year - and FIFA are perhaps seeking to take the initiative by allowing fans to be involved with the vote for the Best FIFA Award.

Nevertheless, in all instances the voting is completely subjective - it represents a person's opinion, rather than an objective analysis of the contribution that a player has made to his team winning football matches.

The Carteret Analytics team have undertaken a full quantitative analysis of all the contenders - including a few players that have not made the shortlist - to determine who, objectively, should really win the Award.

2. A little bit of science...

At Carteret Analytics we have developed the quantitative analysis utilised to good effect in investment banking for trading strategy, portfolio optimisation, derivatives pricing and hedging, and risk management by our sister corporate finance firm, Carteret Capital - and applied it to football.

¹ Jack Smith, Corporate Finance Analyst - Carteret Capital, London. T: +44 20 3876 2414. E: jsmith@carteretcapital.com

² Jack Morris, Corporate Analyst - Carteret Analytics, London. T: +44 20 3876 2414. E: jmorris@carteretcapital.com

In particular, our work provides an objective measure of how good a football player really is - removing all the subjective noise and opinions.

An integral part of the analysis is to calculate a **Carteret Rating**³ for every football player, which rates and values a player's contribution to his team winning football matches. It is incredibly accurate at predicting a player's capabilities. Indeed, we always start with the premise that a professional football club's primary objective is to win matches - and therefore the more a player contributes to his team winning matches, the better the player.

Carteret Analytics has also extended the *Carteret Rating* to give each player an **Intrinsic Value** (in monetary terms). This is essentially the value of the player 'in use' - the monetary value of his contribution to his club winning football matches. It is a sophisticated financial calculation - utilising proprietary algorithms - and which can be applied to and by other clubs. This enables, for example, a prospective buying club to virtually (yet objectively) 'transplant' a player into its own team to determine his potential *Intrinsic Value* for the buying club. Once the prospective buying club has this information, it can help inform them of the appropriate transfer fee to offer to the player's current club.

4. The headlines

- **Messi** is the clear winner. His performances were **21.6%** better than the next highest rated player (**Mbappe**), and a massive **36.2%** better than the bookmakers' favourite, **Van Dijk**.
- Where are the Manchester City players? **Raheem Sterling** certainly merited an inclusion in the Top 10, with a *Carteret Rating* higher than the favourite, **Van Dijk**.
- The second best performing player of the 2018/19 season was **Neymar** (*Carteret Rating*: **446.2**) and he did not even make the shortlist.
- Last year's winner - and, incidentally, also the winner of the Ballon D'Or 2018 - **Luka Modric** - registered the lowest *Carteret Rating* of anybody on our assessment list (**295.4**).

5. Carteret Rating - the data analysis

The table below outlines the *Carteret Ratings* for each of the Top 10 shortlisted players for The Best FIFA Men's Football Award:

	Name	Carteret Rating		Name	Carteret Rating
1.	Lionel Messi	518.4	6.	Mohammed Salah	364.2
2.	Kyllian Mbappe	426.4	7.	Sadio Mane	353.3
3.	Eden Hazard	388.3	8.	Matthijs De Ligt	341.8
4.	Cristiano Ronaldo	384.3	9.	Harry Kane	336.7
5.	Virgil Van Dijk	380.6	10.	Frenkie De Jong	303.3

³ *Carteret Rating*: this is a proprietary method of determining how good a player really is. It is a significant and leading-edge algorithm. We assess a player by identifying every match in which he has been involved (for which we have data) and identifying the key events in each and every one of those matches. These Key Match Events ("KMEs") are events that led to a goal being scored; could have led to a goal being scored; led to a goal being conceded; or could have led to a goal being conceded. Then, for each and every KME, in each and every single match, we analyse that player's contribution to each of those KMEs. This is a substantial piece of analysis, and one which produces a unique *Carteret Rating* for the player. It is a dynamic rating, and it changes with each additional match played.

The following table outlines the *Carteret Ratings* for a selection of other players that might have been considered for the Award shortlist, and also the *Carteret Rating* for last year's winner, **Luka Modric**:

	Name	Carteret Rating		Name	Carteret Rating
1.	Neymar	446.2	4.	Sergio Aguero	336.6
2.	Raheem Sterling	382.6	5.	Luka Modric	295.4
3.	Bernardo Silva	338.9			

As mentioned above, these *Carteret Ratings* measure each player's contribution to their teams winning matches in their respective leagues and other relevant competitions during the 2018/19 season. These *Ratings* are dynamic and change with each game they play.

Statistically speaking, **Lionel Messi** should ultimately be the clear standout winner out of the players selected in the Award shortlist. His *Carteret Rating* of **518.4** is much higher than the next best player in our analysis (**Neymar** - **446.2**), and **Neymar** was not even included in the Award shortlist. The performances of the next best player in the shortlist, **Mbappe**, were **21.6%** lower than **Messi's** over the course of the season.

The lowest-rated player to be included in the nominations is **Frenkie De Jong** with a *Carteret Rating* of **303.3**. This is an illustration of common divergence between subjective opinions and objective analysis. Many commentators consider **De Jong** to have had an excellent 2018/19 season with Ajax, and in many respects he did. However, in the rarified group of players included in the Award shortlist, his rating illustrates that he still has some distance to go to match the performances of the very best players in the world.

Despite Manchester City winning the Premier League, FA Cup and the EFL Cup in season 2018/19, none of the club's players have been included in the Award shortlist. It is certainly arguable that **Raheem Sterling** should have been included based on his performances, and possibly also **Bernardo Silva**.

Another perfect example of how subjective opinions can cloud objective ability is highlighted with **Neymar**. Not included in the Award shortlist, **Neymar** has attracted much media attention off-the-pitch, but this does not appear to have adversely impacted his performances on-the-pitch. His *Carteret Rating* of **446.2** illustrates how an analysis of a player's ability needs cut through the media 'noise'.

About Carteret Analytics

Carteret Analytics is part of the Carteret Group of companies, based in the City of London, New York and Geneva. It provides leading-edge quantitative analysis and commercial analytics to clients worldwide, with particular expertise in the sports sector. In football our work includes player rating and valuation, head coach assessment, team performance analysis, and applying proprietary analytics to transform commercial revenues.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions, or would like to enquire about further services provided by the Carteret Group, then please feel free to contact one of the team members listed below. We would be delighted to hear from you and discuss our work in more detail.

James Powell - CEO, Carteret Group

E: jpowell@carteretcapital.com - T: +44 20 3876 2414

Stephen Metcalfe - COO, Carteret Group

E: smetcalfe@carteretcapital.com - T: +44 20 3876 2414

Jack Smith - Corporate Finance Analyst, Carteret Capital

E: jsmith@carteretcapital.com - T: +44 20 3876 2414

Jack Morris - Corporate Analyst, Carteret Analytics

E: jmorris@carteretcapital.com - T: +44 20 3876 2414