

DEAR FOOTBALL FANS

BY DFF STUDIO / THE BEAUTIFUL GAME. THE UGLY DRAMA. THE GLORIOUS BANTER.

BALLON D OR WEEK / THE AWARD EXPLAINED

ONE TROPHY. EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN RULES.

Dear Football Fans, welcome to the annual ceremony where everybody demands fairness, provided fairness arrives wearing their club shirt. Before we crown anyone, confiscate the outrage spreadsheet. We are discussing the men's Ballon d'Or: what it rewards, who decides, and which performances actually count.

The ceremony is on 26 October at London's Palladium. That leaves plenty of time to build a proper argument. Or, apparently, a 47-post thread explaining why every criterion except your favourite's strongest one should be illegal.



02 / THE CRITERIA

FIRST: PLAY FOOTBALL. BRILLIANTLY.

The criteria, in order: individual performances and decisive, impressive impact; team performances and honours; then class and fair play.

Goals matter. So do contributions beyond scoring. A trophy cabinet is evidence, not a substitute for examining the player. Your club scarf is excellent winter clothing. It is a terrible marking scheme.

03 / THE VOTERS

YOUR GROUP CHAT HAS NO BALLOT.

The men's jury has one specialist journalist from each of the top 100 FIFA-ranked nations. Each ranks ten of the 30 nominees.

Points run 15, 12, 10, 8, 7, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1; the highest total wins. A tie goes first to the number of first-place votes.

Typing ROBBED in capitals does not unlock an extra ballot. Neither does winning an argument against your cousin.

04 / THE JUDGING WINDOW

WRONG SEASON. NICE COMPILATION.

The judging window is 3 August 2025 to 19 July 2026, including international competitions. This October's goals belong outside that window.

Yes, even the outrageous one you have watched fourteen times. Sending this week's Champions League highlights as evidence is submitting next term's homework for last term's exam. Lovely finish. Wrong folder.

05 / MAX TURNER / OPINION

PICK A STANDARD. KEEP IT.

DFF's challenge: explain your criteria before revealing your winner. Then apply them to the rival you cannot stand.

If goals decide it on Monday, trophies on Tuesday and 'you had to watch him' by Wednesday, that is not analysis. That is a getaway route.

A strong case survives the shirt swap. A weak one suddenly remembers football is about feelings.

NEXT UP / THE GROUP CHAT IS OPEN.

FAN COURT: Which nominee has the strongest case under the actual criteria? Give us one reason for your pick AND one fair argument for a rival. No career montages. No changing the rules halfway through the reply.

Jade Cole's verdict: Your favourite can have a case without everyone else being a fraud. Bring the season's evidence. Leave the emergency conspiracy kit at home.