

**Cristiano Ronaldo**



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Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro GOIH, ComM (Portuguese pronunciation: [kɾiʃ'tjɐnu ʁuˈnaɫdu]; born 5 February 1985) is a Portuguese professional footballer who plays as a forward for Spanish club Real Madrid and the Portugal national team. Often considered the best player in the world and widely regarded as one of the greatest of all time,[note 1] Ronaldo has four FIFA Ballon d'Or awards,[note 2] the most for a European player, and is the first player in history to win four European Golden Shoes. He has won 24 trophies in his career, including five league titles, four UEFA Champions League titles and one UEFA European Championship. A prolific goalscorer, Ronaldo holds the records for most official goals scored in the top five European leagues (372), the UEFA Champions League (109) and the UEFA European Championship (29), as well as the most goals scored in a UEFA Champions League season (17). He has scored more than 600 senior career goals for club and country.

Born and raised on the Portuguese island of Madeira, Ronaldo was diagnosed with a racing heart at age 15. He underwent an operation to treat his condition, and began his senior club career playing for Sporting CP, before signing with Manchester United at age 18 in 2003. After winning his first trophy, the FA Cup, during his first season in England, he helped United win three successive Premier League titles, a UEFA Champions League title, and a FIFA Club World Cup. By age 22, he had received Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player of the Year nominations and at age 23, he won his first Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player of the Year awards. In 2009, Ronaldo was the subject of the most expensive association football transfer[note 3] when he moved from Manchester United to Real Madrid in a transfer worth €94 million (£80 million).

In Spain, Ronaldo has won 13 trophies, including two La Liga titles, two Copa del Rey titles, three Champions League titles and two UEFA Super Cups. After joining Real Madrid, Ronaldo finished runner-up for the Ballon d'Or three times, behind Lionel Messi, his perceived career rival, before winning back-to-back Ballons d'Or in 2013 and 2014. He has scored a record 32 La Liga hat-tricks, including a record-tying eight hat-tricks in the 2014–15 season[note 4] and is the only player to reach 30 league goals in six consecutive La Liga seasons. In 2014, Ronaldo became the fastest player in history to reach 200 La Liga goals, which he achieved in 178 matches. In 2015, he became the club's all-time leading goalscorer. In 2016, Ronaldo won his fourth Ballon d'Or by a record voting margin after sealing La Undécima, Madrid's 11th European title, and winning Euro 2016.

A Portuguese international, Ronaldo was named the best Portuguese player of all-time by the Portuguese Football Federation in 2015. Ronaldo made his senior international debut in August 2003, at age 18. He is Portugal's most capped player of all-time with over 140 caps, and has participated in seven major tournaments. He is Portugal's all-time top goalscorer. He scored his first international goal at Euro 2004 and helped Portugal reach the final. He took over full captaincy in July 2008, leading Portugal to their first-ever triumph in a major tournament by winning Euro 2016, and received the Silver Boot as the second-highest goalscorer of the tournament. One of the most marketable sportsmen, he was ranked the world's highest-paid athlete by Forbes in 2016 and 2017, as well as the world's most famous athlete by ESPN in 2016 and 2017.

**Early life**

Ronaldo was born in São Pedro, Funchal, and grew up in the Funchal parish of Santo António,[3][4][5] as the youngest child of Maria Dolores dos Santos Aveiro, a cook, and José Dinis Aveiro, a municipal gardener and a part-time kit man.[6] His second given name, "Ronaldo", was chosen after then-U.S. president Ronald Reagan.[7] He has one older brother, Hugo, and two older sisters, Elma and Liliana Cátia.[1] His great-grandmother on his father's side, Isabel da Piedade, was from São Vicente, Cape Verde.[8] Ronaldo grew up in a Catholic and impoverished home, sharing a room with his brother and sisters.[9]

As a child, Ronaldo played for amateur team Andorinha from 1992 to 1995,[10][11] where his father was the kit man,[12] and later spent two years with Nacional. In 1997, aged 12, he went on a three-day trial with Sporting CP, who signed him for a fee of £1,500.[13][14] He subsequently moved from Madeira to Alcochete, near Lisbon, to join Sporting's other youth players at the club's football academy.[15] By age 14, Ronaldo believed he had the ability to play semi-professionally, and agreed with his mother to cease his education in order to focus entirely on football.[16] While popular with other students at school, he had been expelled after throwing a chair at his teacher, who he said had "disrespected" him.[16] However, one year later, he was diagnosed with a racing heart, a condition that could have forced him to give up playing football. He underwent an operation in which a laser was used to cauterise the affected area of his heart; discharged from hospital hours after the procedure, he resumed training only a few days later.

**Club career**

At age 16, Ronaldo was promoted from Sporting's youth team by first-team manager László Bölöni, who was impressed with his dribbling.[18] He subsequently became the first player to play for the club's under-16, under-17 and under-18 teams, the B team, and the first team, all within one season.[15] A year later, on 7 October 2002, Ronaldo made his debut in the Primeira Liga, against Moreirense, and scored two goals in their 3–0 win.[19] Over the course of the 2002–03 season, his representatives suggested the player to Liverpool manager Gérard Houllier and Barcelona president Joan Laporta.[20][21] Manager Arsène Wenger, who was interested in signing the winger, met with him at Arsenal's grounds in November to discuss a possible transfer.

Ronaldo came to the attention of Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson in August 2003, when Sporting defeated United 3–1 at the inauguration of the Estádio José Alvalade in Lisbon. His performance impressed the Manchester United players, who urged Ferguson to sign him.[23] Ferguson himself considered the 18-year-old "one of the most exciting young players" he had ever seen.[24][25] A decade after his departure from the club, in April 2013, Sporting honoured Ronaldo by selecting him to become their 100,000th member.

**Manchester United**

Ronaldo became Manchester United's first-ever Portuguese player when he signed before the 2003–04 season.[27] His transfer fee of £12.24 million made him, at the time, the most expensive teenager in English football history.[28] Although he requested the number 28, his number at Sporting, he received the number 7 shirt, which had previously been worn by such United players as George Best, Eric Cantona and David Beckham.[29][30] Wearing the number 7 became an extra source of motivation for Ronaldo.[30] A key element in his development during his time in England proved to be his manager, Alex Ferguson, of whom he later said, "He's been my father in sport, one of the most important and influential factors in my career."

"There have been a few players described as 'the new George Best' over the years, but this is the first time it's been a compliment to me."

Ronaldo made his debut in the Premier League in a 4–0 home victory over Bolton Wanderers on 16 August 2003, receiving a standing ovation when he came on as a 60th-minute substitute for Nicky Butt.[33][34][35] His performance earned praise from George Best, who hailed it as "undoubtedly the most exciting debut" he had ever seen.[32] Ronaldo scored his first goal for Manchester United with a free-kick in a 3–0 win over Portsmouth on 1 November.[36] Three other league goals followed in the second half of the campaign,[37][38] the last of which came against Aston Villa on the final day of the season, a match in which he also received his first red card.[39] Ronaldo ended his first season in English football by scoring the opening goal in United's 3–0 victory over Millwall in the FA Cup final, earning his first trophy.

At the start of 2005, Ronaldo played two of his best matches of the 2004–05 season, producing a goal and an assist against Aston Villa and scoring twice against rivals Arsenal.[41][42][43][44] After scoring four goals in United's run to the FA Cup final,[45][46][47][48] he played the full 120 minutes of the decisive match against Arsenal, which ended in a goalless draw, and scored his attempt in the lost penalty shootout.[49] Ronaldo scored three braces during the next campaign, the 2005–06 season, scoring two goals each against Bolton Wanderers,[50] Fulham,[51] and Portsmouth.[52] He scored Manchester United's 1000th Premier League goal on 29 October, their only strike in a 4–1 loss to Middlesbrough.[53] Midway through the season, in November, he signed a new contract which extended his previous deal by two years to 2010.[54] Ronaldo won his second trophy in English football, the Football League Cup, after scoring the third goal in United's 4–0 final victory over Wigan Athletic.[55]

During his third season in England, Ronaldo was involved in several incidents. He had a one-match ban imposed on him by UEFA for a "one-fingered gesture" towards Benfica fans,[56] and was sent off in the Manchester derby—a 3–1 defeat—for kicking Manchester City's former United player Andy Cole.[57] Ronaldo clashed with a teammate, striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, who took offence at the winger's showboating style of play.[58] Following a training ground fight in January 2006, the two again fought in May, with Van Nistelrooy telling Ronaldo to "go crying to your daddy", a reference to Ronaldo's relationship with assistant manager Carlos Queiroz.[59] Van Nistelrooy was left on the substitutes' bench for the final game of the season against Charlton Athletic—a 4–0 victory in which Ronaldo scored his ninth league goal.[60][61] Following the 2006 FIFA World Cup, in which he was involved in an incident where club teammate Wayne Rooney was sent off,[62][63] Ronaldo publicly asked for a transfer, lamenting the lack of support he felt he had received from the club over the incident.[64][65] United, however, denied the possibility of him leaving the club.

Although his World Cup altercation with Rooney resulted in Ronaldo being booed throughout the 2006–07 season,[68] it proved to be his breakout year, as he broke the 20-goal barrier for the first time and won his first Premier League title. An important factor in this success was his one-to-one training by first-team coach René Meulensteen, who taught him to make himself more unpredictable, improve his teamwork, call for the ball, and capitalise on goalscoring opportunities rather than waiting for the chance to score the aesthetically pleasing goals for which he was already known.[69] His upturn in form was showcased in November when he received a standing ovation from a section of Blackburn Rovers supporters as he was substituted.[70] He scored three consecutive braces at the end of December, against Aston Villa—a victory which put United on top of the league—Wigan Athletic, and Reading.[71][72][73] Ronaldo was named the Premier League Player of the Month in November and December, becoming only the third player to receive consecutive honours.

**Ronaldo during the 2006–07 season**

At the quarter-final stage of the 2006–07 UEFA Champions League, Ronaldo scored his first-ever goals in the competition, finding the net twice in a 7–1 victory over Roma.[76][77] He subsequently scored four minutes into the first semi-final leg against Milan, which ended in a 3–2 win,[78] but was marked out of the second leg as United lost 3–0 at the San Siro.[79] He also helped United reach the FA Cup final, putting them 2–1 up against Watford,[80] but the decisive match against Chelsea ended in a 1–0 defeat.[81] Ronaldo scored the only goal in the Manchester derby on 5 May 2007—his 50th goal for the club—as Manchester United claimed their first Premier League title in four years.[82] As a result of his performances, he amassed a host of personal awards for the season. He won the Professional Footballers' Association's Player's Player, Fans' Player, and Young Player of the Year awards, as well as the Football Writers' Association's Footballer of the Year award,[83][84] becoming the first player to win all four main PFA and FWA honours.[85] His club wages were concurrently upgraded to £120,000 a week (£31 million total) as part of a five-year contract extension with United.

Ronaldo scored a total of 42 goals in all competitions during the 2007–08 season, his most prolific campaign during his time in England. His first goal of the season came against his former club, Sporting, with a header in the first group match of the Champions League.[87] He missed three matches after headbutting a Portsmouth player at the start of the season, an experience he said taught him not to let opponents provoke him,[88][89] but still managed to score 13 league goals by the campaign's midway point.[90][91][92][93] At the end of 2007, Ronaldo was named runner-up to Kaká for the Ballon d'Or,[94] and came third, behind Kaká and Lionel Messi, in the running for the FIFA World Player of the Year award.[95]

"Ronaldo is better than George Best and Denis Law, who were two brilliant and great players in the history of United."

Ronaldo scored his first and only hat-trick for Manchester United in a 6–0 win against Newcastle United on 12 January 2008, bringing United up to the top of the Premier League table.[97] A month later, on 19 March, he captained United for the first time in a home win over Bolton, and scored both goals of the match.[98] His second goal was his 33rd of the campaign, which bettered George Best's total of 32 goals in the 1967–68 season, thus setting the club's new single-season record by a midfielder.[99] Ronaldo scored his final league goal of the season from the penalty spot in the title decider against Wigan on 11 May, as United claimed a second successive Premier League title.[100] His 31 league goals earned him the Premier League Golden Boot,[101] as well as the European Golden Shoe, which made him the first winger to win the latter award.

**Real Madrid**

"I have nothing but praise for the boy. He is easily the best player in the world. His contribution as a goal threat is unbelievable. His stats are incredible. Strikes at goal, attempts on goal, raids into the penalty box, headers. It is all there. Absolutely astounding."

Ahead of the 2009–10 season, Ronaldo joined Real Madrid for a world record transfer fee at the time, of £80 million (€94 million).[146] His contract, which ran until 2015, was worth €11 million per year and contained a €1 billion buy-out clause.[147][148] At least 80,000 fans attended his presentation at the Santiago Bernabéu, surpassing the 25-year record of 75,000 fans who had welcomed Diego Maradona at Napoli.[149][150] Since club captain Raúl already wore the number 7, the number Ronaldo wore at Manchester United,[151] Ronaldo received the number 9 shirt,[152] which was presented to him by the former Madrid player Alfredo Di Stéfano.

As his usual number 7 was unavailable, Ronaldo wore number 9 during his first season at Madrid. Following Raúl's departure, Ronaldo was handed the number 7 shirt before the 2010–11 season

Ronaldo made his debut in La Liga on 29 August 2009, against Deportivo La Coruña, and scored from the penalty spot in Madrid's 3–2 home win.[154] He scored in each of his first four league fixtures with the club, the first Madrid player to do so.[155] His first Champions League goals for the club followed with two free kicks in the first group match against Zürich.[156] His strong start to the season, however, was interrupted when he suffered an ankle injury in October while on international duty, which kept him sidelined for seven weeks. A week after his return, he received his first red card in Spain in a match against Almería.[159] Midway through the season, Ronaldo placed second in the running for the Ballon d'Or and the FIFA World Player of the Year award, behind Lionel Messi of Barcelona, Madrid's historic rivals. He finished the campaign with 33 goals in all competitions, including a hat-trick in a 4–1 win against Mallorca on 5 May 2010, his first in the Spanish competition. His first season at Real Madrid ended trophyless.