# DYRÍGO

**PUBLIC SYSTEMS REVIEW**

# BEFORE THE VOTE

## Ballon d'Or
## Who gets the chance to be the best?

**Nomination • Opportunity • Judgement • Accountability**

**CENTRAL CONCLUSION**

The final vote can rank the shortlisted players. It cannot establish whether the shortlist captured the strongest candidates worldwide. The nomination decision and the comparison of individual contributions therefore deserve scrutiny alongside the count.

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26 October 2026 | Version 1.1

A review of published sources. Comparative testing remains open. This is not a completed autonomous ThinkLab assessment.

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## Research objective

Can the award credibly demonstrate that it recognises the world's best individual player, from observation and nomination through voting to an outcome the public can understand?

## Scope

The published 2026 process is the main object. The 2025 results provide a disclosure example and the 2024 winner provides a comparison. The 2026 result is outside scope. This review does not propose an alternative winner.

## Reading the conclusions

Process facts are linked to numbered sources. Logical implications are identified as analysis. Possible visibility effects remain hypotheses. Recommendations describe how accountability could improve; they do not imply that unpublished safeguards are absent.

## Main answer and system map

**The published process defines how to choose a winner from thirty nominees. A defensible claim to worldwide recognition also depends on how those thirty were identified.**

## The mechanism

### 1. Performance and opportunity

Players contribute within teams, roles and competition schedules.

### 2. Observation and nomination

Selectors determine the thirty eligible names. [1, 2]

### 3. Jury judgement

Eligible country representatives rank ten nominees. [1, 2]

### 4. Aggregation and dispute handling

Rankings become points; ties and disputes follow published rules. [1, 2]

### 5. Public interpretation

The ranking is presented as recognition of the world's best player.

## What this review establishes

Nomination is a necessary condition for receiving jury points. Published criteria give individual contribution priority, but their application requires judgement. The organiser and the party resolving voting disputes are institutionally connected. These are bounded process observations, not findings of manipulation. [1, 2]

## What remains unresolved

Whether comparable players receive comparable consideration; whether team success produces an additional recognition advantage after accounting for performance; and how operational safeguards work in practice. The present evidence does not quantify these effects.

# Nomination and recognition

### Finding 1 | The shortlist is a substantive decision

The rules restrict jurors to thirty selected players. Therefore, the jury cannot award points to an omitted player. This conclusion follows directly from the design; it does not depend on the eventual winner. [1, 2]

A correct count cannot compensate for an unexamined candidate pool. To assess the entire system, research must examine plausible exclusions alongside the nominees. The nomination decision deserves scrutiny in its own right.

### Counterargument | Selection is unavoidable

A global award needs a manageable field and informed editorial judgement. A finite shortlist is not evidence of unfairness. A credible test would compare nominated and players who were not nominated using a declared selection method, rather than cherry-picking one favourite omission.

### Finding 2 | Worldwide eligibility exists

The official 2026 list includes Lionel Messi at Inter Miami, Sadio Mané at Al-Nassr and Julián Quiñones at Al-Qadsiah. This contradicts a claim that players outside European clubs cannot be nominated. [4]

It does not establish equal opportunity. That would require a wider comparison of performances, positions, competition context and nomination outcomes. Three examples cannot establish a general rate or a causal explanation.

### Recommended improvement

Publish a nomination-method note: who participated, how comparisons were made, which conflicts were managed and how difficult inclusion decisions were resolved. Explain the approach without requiring disclosure of every private discussion.

### Evidence that could change the assessment

A documented, consistently applied comparison method could substantially strengthen confidence. A robust study of comparable players could support or weaken the visibility hypothesis. Neither has been established by this review.

# Individual contribution and opportunity

### The distinction the award needs to make

The criteria prioritise individual performance over collective achievements, with fair play also considered. This expresses an ordering, not a universal numerical definition of the best footballer. [1]

Our analytical hypothesis is that team strength and tournament progression can affect both the opportunities to perform and the attention those performances receive. Exceptional contribution may produce team success; team success may also provide more occasions for recognition. The direction and size of those effects require testing.

### The wrong shortcuts

Trophies alone do not isolate individual contribution. Goals per minute alone cannot compare positions, opposition, tactical responsibilities or defensive value. A study that replaces football judgement with one convenient statistic would introduce its own distortion.

### Counterexample | No automatic Champions League rule

Rodri won in 2024; UEFA's account highlights his Premier League season and Spain's European Championship success. This is inconsistent with a simplistic claim that the award necessarily belongs to a player from the Champions League-winning club. It does not settle the broader question of exposure or team effects. [6]

### What a meaningful test requires

Compare players in similar roles, document minutes and opportunities, account for opponent and competition context, and examine decisive contributions qualitatively. Compare multiple defensible definitions of excellence. Keep club affiliation during performance separate from affiliation when nominations were announced.

### Conclusion and practical improvement

A visibility mechanism is plausible, but systematic disadvantage has not been demonstrated here. Publish guidance on how jurors should separate individual contribution from collective achievement and illustrate difficult comparisons across roles and competitions.

## Accountability and practical improvements

### Finding 3 | Responsibility must be attributed correctly

France Football organises the vote. The partnership announcement assigns voting oversight to Groupe Amaury and commercial rights and gala organisation to UEFA. The current rules also name UEFA ambassadors among nomination contributors. Those roles should be distinguished; neither a FIFA ranking reference nor UEFA's gala role makes FIFA or UEFA the vote counter. [1, 3]

### Finding 4 | Disclosure exists; its coverage matters

UEFA published 2025 points including Dembélé's 1,380 and Yamal's 1,059. Any claim that no results are disclosed would be wrong. This review has not reconciled every individual ballot to those totals. Published totals alone do not establish that such reconciliation is possible or impossible. [5]

Voting disputes are assigned to France Football's editor-in-chief. That is an internal resolution arrangement. It is not evidence of an improper decision, and it does not tell us whether additional independent safeguards exist. [2]

### Four practical priorities

• Explain nomination. Document comparative judgement and conflict management before votes are cast.

• Enable reconstruction. Publish actual participation, validated ballots and totals together, with appropriate explanation of exceptions.

• Document corrections and challenge. Explain verification, error handling and any independent review, including its scope.

• Improve comparability. Give usable guidance on positions, playing opportunities and collective achievement.

## What we do not conclude

No finding of fraud, ballot alteration, national collusion or a wrongly chosen winner is made. Missing evidence in this review is not proof that a safeguard is absent. Historical allegations are excluded from the public conclusions because they were not independently re-examined for this edition.

# Evidence register and method

Six primary publications, checked on 26 October 2026. Organiser sources establish published rules and disclosures; they are not independent assurance of implementation. [1] and [2] overlap and do not count as independent corroboration.

[1] France Football | Full 2026 regulations

Articles 1 to 9: purpose, criteria, jury, nomination, scoring and disputes.

[2] Ballondor.com | Voting explained | 7 October 2026

Accessible process explanation; same institutional source family as [1].

[3] UEFA | Groupe Amaury partnership | 3 November 2023

Allocation of brand, voting oversight, commercial and ceremony responsibilities.

[4] UEFA | 2026 nominees | 8 September 2026

Counterexamples to a claim of categorical exclusion outside Europe.

[5] UEFA | Official 2025 points | 9 October 2025

Evidence that point totals were disclosed; not a full ballot audit.

[6] UEFA | Rodri wins 2024 | 28 October 2024

Comparison case; cannot estimate the causal weight of team achievements.

# Method and reproducibility

Read the rules and institutional role statement; derive only bounded process implications; check nomination and results counterexamples; state rival explanations and the missing tests. Recommendations are DYRÍGO proposals. The September project brief and repair note were used for research continuity, not as independent evidence.

No complete player dataset, record of nomination decisions, ballot reconciliation, causal model or independent assurance report was obtained for this review. The 2026 outcome is outside scope. Reopen this review when ballots, method explanations or contradictory evidence become available.

All source titles above are clickable.