

Lionel Messi named World's Most Marketable Athlete of 2023

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Argentinian football star Lionel [Messi](#) has been named the world's [most marketable](#) athlete for a second time by SportsPro, in the leading global sports media and events company's 14th annual list of the world's 50 Most Marketable Athletes (50MM).

The captain of Inter Miami and Argentina has returned to the top of the rankings having previously featured at number one in 2020, becoming only the second athlete in 50MM history to take top spot on two occasions.



SportsPro has once again compiled the list with the support of NorthStar Solutions Group, which has developed an enhanced methodology to deliver the most comprehensive assessment of athlete marketability ever undertaken.

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*Michael Long, Editorial
Director at SportsPro.*

Basketball great LeBron James is second in the rankings climbing two places from last year and edging out American Soccer player Alex Morgan, who rises five places from the 2022 list. Another NBA icon, the Greek-Nigerian Basketball player Giannis Antetokounmpo, has leapt 34 places to fourth, while Morgan's fellow US Women's National Team star Megan Rapinoe rounds off the top five, jumping 22 places from last year.

This year's list also underlines the growing commercial influence and value of women's sport. There are four women in the top 10, while female athletes make up nearly 50% of the top 50. 19-year-old US Open tennis champion Coco Gauff takes the title of the most marketable teenager, sitting just outside the top 10.

Soccer, Basketball, Tennis and Motorsport lead the way in terms of athlete numbers but other major international sports are less well represented, most notably with no rugby players featuring in the list.

US athletes account for 26% of the top 50 but there are no players from Major League Baseball, although there are nine in the extended list of 125. Two college sports athletes make the top 50 as the impact of name, image and likeness (NIL) rights continues to be felt.

Last year's number one, Cristiano Ronaldo, drops to 27 in the list, while former India cricket captain Virat Kohli falls out of the top 50 from number 7.

SportsPro and NorthStar Solutions Group's expanded methodology assessed hundreds of global athletes across three key scoring pillars: Brand Strength, Total Addressable Market, and ECON - Triple Bottom Line.

For the first time, sophisticated qualitative research was integrated with quantitative marketability measurements, while comprehensive mathematical and statistical formulas from multiple data sources were then applied to determine the final rankings according to each athlete's Total Marketability Score.

"This year's 50 Most Marketable Athletes list follows the most comprehensive assessment of athlete marketability we've ever undertaken in the 14-year history of SportsPro's annual ranking," said Michael Long, Editorial Director at SportsPro.

"NorthStar's robust methodology and rich, data-led marketability model has produced not only a compelling list in its own right, but a wealth of fascinating insights and storylines that highlight the ever-evolving trends shaping the sports marketing industry – from the gathering commercial momentum in women's sport to the growing importance of authenticity and shared purpose in athlete-brand relationships."

Chris Collins, President at NorthStar Solutions Group added: "This year, we've gone even further by introducing innovative additions such as the qualitative research approach, Social Media Ethnography, and a market research perspective that views athlete brands in a sports category similar to how we view brands in a product category. These enhancements have allowed us to unearth deeper athlete stories and broaden our understanding of marketability across entire sports ecosystems.

"As we continue to sponsor the 50 Most Marketable Athlete List, our commitment remains unwavering. We aim to adapt and evolve with the dynamic sports industry, constantly striving to set new standards in delivering a comprehensive understanding of an athlete's marketability."

SportsPro's dedicated 50MM content hub features the global top 50 athletes plus an extended

ranking of the top 125 available to download, as well as original features and further insights into the methodology and data behind the rankings. To view the full list of the World's 50 Most Marketable Athletes, visit <https://50mm.sportspromedia.com/>

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