

Kyriakos Dourekas Wins Mandela Award For Sport

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RICHBORO , PA, UNITED STATES, November 19, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When the spotlight

“

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Sports Talk Florida

illuminated the Mandela Awards 2025 gala in Bari, Italy, one figure drew particular intrigue from the world of football: Kyriakos Dourekas, the newly appointed sporting director of NEOM SC in Saudi Arabia. His presence signaled much more than a glamorous appearance on an international stage—this was a declaration of intent from a man now at the center of one of global sport’s most ambitious transformations.

Dourekas has spent his career inside the engine rooms of elite European football. He played a pivotal role in helping Olympiacos F.C. remain a powerhouse in Greece before

moving to England, where he joined [Nottingham Forest](#) as director of football. During his tenure, the storied club returned to the Premier League after decades away from top-flight competition. In 2024, Dourekas took on a dramatically different challenge: steering the sporting vision of NEOM SC, a club emerging inside a futuristic megaproject rising on the Red Sea coast.

Mandela Award for Contribution to Sport

The Mandela Awards recognized him for “Contributions to Sport,” an acknowledgment that his work represents more than league standings or transfer strategy. The honor underscored his role in a broader movement—sport deployed as a tool of creativity, cultural exchange, economic development and social purpose. It was a symbolic nod to the idea that football’s growth now extends well beyond Europe’s capitals and now into the deserts of Saudi Arabia.

The awards are the brain-child of Ndelika Mandela, Nelson Mandela’s eldest grand-child and former vice chairmen of the Nelson Mandela Museum.

This year for the first time the award ceremony was tied to the Puglia Creative Economy Forum

in Bari.

Last year sports personality Caroline Dubois, the WBC world champion won an award in a similar category last year in London. Other honorees this year included photographer Richard Young, filmmaker Sixx King, and Dr. Ezekiel Adamu the CEO of Balmoral Group, a global sports and music promotions group.

NEOM SC embodies this shift. The club is embedded within Saudi Arabia's sweeping transformation of both its sporting landscape and its global image. Under Dourekas, it is importing European expertise and operational rigor while rapidly developing the infrastructure and ambition to compete with the region's giants. In its first full season, the emerging team exceeded expectations, pushing into

the top ranks of Saudi competition and signaling that the project is serious, and accelerating. For Saudi leaders linking sport to tourism, culture and brand identity, this is precisely the point.

Shifting World of Global Football

The implications stretch far beyond the Middle East. As football's center of gravity continues to globalize, influence and opportunity are moving with it. Executives like Dourekas—alongside star players—are becoming agents of that shift, taking knowledge built in Europe into markets investing heavily in sport as a strategic asset. For Western fans and businesses accustomed to football's familiar hierarchy, this represents a re-drawing of the global map.

With his achievement in Puglia, his career now stands at the intersection of legacy and reinvention, where traditional football culture meets a future fueled by investment, technology and ambitious nation-branding.

Kyriakos Dourekas award shows that in places like NEOM—places that until recently were not part of the global football conversation. And the world is beginning to watch.

You can read more about this story [here on Sports Talk Florida](#).



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