

DJOKOVIC WINS FIFTH LAUREUS SPORTSMAN AWARD SPANISH FOOTBALL CELEBRATES BONMATÍ, TEAM DOUBLE BELLINGHAM HONOURED AT SPORT'S TOP AWARDS

- Twenty-fifth edition of sport's most prestigious global Awards brings the world's greatest athletes to Madrid
- Spain's 2023 World Cup winners make history to take home Laureus Team of the Year
- Jude Bellingham recognised for incredible early impact at Real Madrid
- Gymnastics Comeback queen Simone Biles picks up fourth Laureus Statuette
- Arisa Trew becomes first female skateboarder to win Laureus Action Sports person of the Year
- Wheelchair tennis star Diede de Groot victorious after year of domination
- Laureus Sport for Good Award goes to Fundación Rafa Nadal
- Awards voted for by the ultimate sporting jury – the 69 all-time greats who make up the Laureus Academy

MADRID, April 22, 2024 – Novak Djokovic, Aitana Bonmatí, Jude Bellingham and Simone Biles were among the big winners in Madrid tonight, as Spain was at the centre of world sport with an unrivalled collection of sport's greatest talents celebrating the 2024 Laureus World Sports Awards.

On an unforgettable evening at the historic Palacio de Cibeles in the heart of Madrid, with media from across the world in attendance, Djokovic was named *Laureus World Sportsman of the Year* for a record-equalling fifth time.

This was the 25th staging of an event that has risen to the top of the sporting calendar – attended by some of the best athletes on the planet together with past sporting giants, plus influential figures from the world of fashion, film and entertainment. Hosted by Hollywood star Andy Garcia, the Awards were broadcast live to millions around the world, alongside blanket coverage across media and with the sporting world set alight on social channels by the unique gathering of athletes from across all sports only seen at the Laureus Awards.

It was the athletes who took centre stage tonight: from the representatives of the Laureus World Sports Academy – the 69 sporting greats whose votes decide these Awards – present in Madrid, to the heroes of today, for whom the Laureus is a coveted global prize known as the “athletes’ Award”.

And amongst the guests presenting those statuettes were three of the biggest names in global sport. Tom Brady, the seven-time Super Bowl champion, presented Djokovic with his Sportsman of the Year Award; Usain Bolt, the greatest sprinter of all time, presented the Sportswoman of the Year Award to Bonmatí; and last year's winner of the Breakthrough of the Year Award, Carlos Alcaraz, handed the Laureus for that

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category to Bellingham. That was an ‘Only at Laureus’ moment as Alcaraz, a passionate Real Madrid fan, congratulated Bellingham, the current talisman of that great football club.

Bonmatí took to the stage twice – and made history both times: firstly, to pick up *Laureus Sportswoman of the Year* and in doing so become the first footballer to win the prestigious Award; and again to represent the Spain team which won the FIFA Women’s World Cup in Australia and New Zealand – in the same city where that side returned to celebrate last summer. The world champions are now the *Laureus World Team of the Year* and the first all-female team to win the Award.

Bellingham, too, was on familiar territory. The English midfielder won the *Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year Award* – the first footballer to do so – after an electrifying start to his time with Real Madrid. Biles was honoured with the *Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award* after a sensational return to gymnastics following a two-year hiatus.

Newly crowned *Laureus World Sportsman of the Year* Djokovic ended 2023 in possession of three of the four major titles in men’s tennis – and only missed out on a Calendar Slam after a classic Wimbledon final against eventual winner Carlos Alcaraz. The Serb is now on a record-equalling 24 Grand Slams and was in Madrid to tie another all-time record, with his fifth *Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award* (he won in 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2019). Like the winner of this Award in 2023, Lionel Messi, Djokovic has displayed not just sporting greatness, but a longevity at the very top of his sport that sets new standards for those who follow him.

Laureus World Sportsman of the Year, **Novak Djokovic**, said: *“I am incredibly honoured to have won my fifth Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award. I think back to 2012, when I won it for the first time as a 24-year-old. I am very proud to be here 12 years later, reflecting on a year that brought me and my fans a lot of excitement and success.*

“It was thrilling to return to Australia last January and win my 10th title. It is a tournament that is so dear to my heart and set me up for an incredible 12 months. I could not have achieved so much success without an incredible team behind me, and inspirational rivals who have always pushed me to be the best version of myself.

“The Laureus Awards are so special because they represent recognition from the 69 world-class athletes who make up the Laureus World Sports Academy. To earn the votes of my sporting heroes is what makes these Awards so coveted in all of sport.

“I am truly blessed to be among sports greats as a winner, but also as a supporter and admirer of Laureus Sport for Good as I too believe in the power of sport to make a difference in the world.

“Finally, this Laureus Statuette stands alone because it represents more than sporting achievement. The Laureus mission of using sport as a power for good has been changing lives for 25 years and embodies the values of its founding patron, Nelson Mandela. I want to add my support to Laureus Sport for Good and the work they are doing to transform lives around the world.”

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Bonmatí has had a golden year. To the Liga F and Champions League titles she won with Barcelona; the World Cup with Spain; and the Golden Ball and Ballon d'Or prizes she won for her individual brilliance, the midfielder added the *Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year Award*, and was back on stage with her colleagues to be honoured as part of the *Team of the Year*. By doing so, she repeated the individual-and-team double won by Lionel Messi at the 2023 Laureus World Sports Awards – a mark of the rare heights to which the queen of women's football has ascended.

Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year, **Aitana Bonmatí**, said: *"I am honoured to receive the Laureus for Sportswoman of the Year – and I am also very happy that my international team-mates have been recognised as the Team of the Year by the Laureus World Sports Academy.*

"It is humbling to see the list of previous winners of this Award. From Serena Williams to Simone Biles, Lindsey Vonn, Naomi Osaka and last year's winner Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, they are all incredible athletes who have not only excelled in their chosen sports, but been incredible role models for younger generations of young women and girls. To be the first footballer to win this Award makes it even more special and I hope to represent my sport in the same way that those great champions have done.

"As the first women's team to win the Laureus, we are proud of our status as pioneers and as a group we are as committed to equality and representation as we are to what we do on the football pitch. I know these values are shared by the Laureus Academy and Laureus Sport for Good, and we support the work they do all over the world to improve the lives of at-risk girls and young women through sport.

"Our national team is a group like no other – our strength comes from every challenge we have faced, both on and off the field of play. I believe we have met them all, and I hope that we can be an inspiration to young girls in Spain and around the world, to not just take up football but participate in sport and enjoy all the benefits it brings. At this 25th Laureus Awards, the message of Laureus' founding Patron, Nelson Mandela, remains true: sport has the power to change the world.

"On a personal level, I would like to thank the Laureus Academy for the Sportswoman of the Year Award. To join a list of winners that includes such great sporting heroes is very special for me – more so because these Awards are voted for by the sporting champions of the Laureus Academy.

"Holding this Laureus caps a year that I could never have imagined, and one that I will never forget. With FC Barcelona and the national team we achieved so much. This honour is for everyone who supported me on this journey, and everyone who cheered me on. We proved that together, we can do anything."

The Awards took place a few kilometres from the Bernabeu, where Jude Bellingham has immediately become one of the figureheads of a young Madrid team that has the world at its feet. Following his summer move from Borussia Dortmund just before his 20th birthday, Bellingham scored 10 goals in his first 10 starts and has emerged as a focal point for *Los Blancos*. He is a leader on the pitch and a hero to the fans who fill the recently revamped stadium on matchdays – and those *Madridistas* who support from afar. That latter cohort includes the previous winner of the *Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year Award*, Carlos Alcaraz as well as the founder of the night's *Laureus Sport for Good Award*-winning programme, Rafael Nadal.

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Simone Biles left the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Antwerp, Belgium with four gold medals in her first global event since leaving the Tokyo Olympics and entering a near two-year break from the sport she had dominated. Her journey from an Olympic exit that stunned the sporting world, through a recovery that platformed the issue of mental health in elite athletics, to a triumphant comeback, has been as inspirational as anything Biles has done in competition. She is a three-time winner of *Sportswoman of the Year* (2017, 2019, 2020) and adds another statuette to her collection with the 2024 *Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award*.

Trew, the 13-year-old Australian skateboarding star, made history in 2023 when she became the first woman skater to land a 720 (two full rotations) in vert skateboarding. It was appropriate that she did so at the Tony Hawk Vert Alert in Utah. The event's host, Hawk, a Member of the Laureus World Sports Academy, was the first skateboarder to land the trick, back in 1985. The historic feat made her the first female skateboarder to win the *Action World Sportsperson of the Year Award*.

Diede de Groot became the second wheelchair tennis star – after Esther Vergeer's success in 2008 and 2002 – to pick up the *Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award*. De Groot was part of a six-strong shortlist of Nominees selected by the International Paralympic Committee. The Dutchwoman earned the Award following a historic 2023 in which she extended her run without defeat to 127 matches, claiming a third successive calendar Grand Slam – a feat unmatched in the history of tennis.

Laureus Sport for Good, which supports over 300 programmes all over the world using the power of sport to change the lives of young people in need, shared the stage with these legendary athletes – and the *Laureus Sport for Good Award* was presented to **Fundación Rafa Nadal**, which uses sport and education to inspire over 1,000 young people in economically-challenged communities in Spain and India. Rafa Nadal, the patron of the programme and himself a five-time winner in three different categories – Sportsman of the Year, Breakthrough of the Year and Comeback of the Year – was in Madrid to accept a different kind of honour on behalf of the foundation he has developed since its inception in 2010 to leave a legacy that goes far beyond the trophies he has lifted on the tennis court.

The Awards mark the start of a lasting relationship between Laureus and Madrid, with plans advancing to leave a legacy from the Awards to benefit young people through the work of new Laureus Sport for Good programmes in the City and Region of Madrid. Working closely with the Awards Host Partners, Madrid City Council and the Regional Government of Madrid, Laureus has committed to bringing its 24 years of experience and expertise to support the young people of Madrid and to use the power of sport to change their lives.

The full list of Winners is:

Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award: Novak Djokovic

Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year Award: Aitana Bonmatí

Laureus World Team of the Year Award: Spain Women's Football Team

Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year Award: Jude Bellingham

Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award: Simone Biles

Laureus Sport for Good Award: Fundación Rafa Nadal

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Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award: Diede de Groot
Laureus World Action Sportsperson of the Year Award: Arisa Trew

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