

# 5 Things to Watch Out for in La Liga as the 2018/19 Season Approaches

After the exertions of the 2018 World Cup in Russia, a new La Liga season is almost upon us.

While Spain's national team may have crumbled on the big stage, Spanish clubs are dominating on a global spectacle.

The Madrid giants - [Atletico](#) and Real - are the current holders of Europe's top club trophies, which means that the UEFA Super Cup will see the Madrid derby commence earlier than anticipated at Estonia's A. Le Coq Arena in Tallinn on August 15th.

However this year, [Real](#) will have to take on their fierce counterparts without Cristiano Ronaldo, who departed for Italian Champions [Juventus](#) earlier this summer.

Here is a look at five things that fans can watch out for when the 2018/19 [La Liga](#) season kicks off on August 19th.

## 5. Expect the Newly Promoted Teams to Struggle

Last season, La Liga said goodbye to Malaga, Deportivo La Coruna and UD Las Palmas.

Taking their place, Rayo Vallecano, Real Valladolid and SD Huesca (a team who will be making their La Liga debut) after gaining promotion from the Segunda División.

The new boys have been strengthening as much as they can, with runners-up Huesca bringing in as many as 10 new players - all either on loan or free. Madrid-based Rayo will be returning to Spain's top flight after two years away after the Red Sashes were promoted as champions, but they will find it hard going this year.

A lot will depend on whether they can get another loan deal for Raul de Tomas from Real Madrid. The 23-year-old scored 24 goals in what was an impressive campaign for the talented youngster.

Meanwhile, Real Valladolid are yet to make a single signing and relied on plenty of luck last season, returning to La Liga via the playoffs.

## 4. The Battle for 4th Place Promises to Be Exciting

Last season, Valencia got the coveted final Champions League place as they claimed fourth spot.

*Los Che* have been on an upward swing since they came under new ownership in the form of Peter Lim. The team has strengthened with star midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia's signing, one of the main attractions.

However, Valencia will be pushed all the way by a couple of teams including Real Betis, who have had perhaps the most eye-catching transfer window outside the top four - bringing in talent such as Sergio Canales, Japanese baller Takashi Inui and Portuguese midfielder William Carvalho, just to name a few.

Villareal are another team who have credentials to be a top four side, with the recent signing of former [Arsenal](#) star Santi Cazorla on a free transfer - without question an absolute bargain if he can recreate just a little of his former form.

### **3. The Most Exciting Barcelona Side Since the Guardiola Era**

After the surprisingly downplayed domestic double of last season, it was crystal clear that Ernesto Valverde's side was in need of certain changes.

One of the all-time greats Andres Iniesta has left the club for a change of scenery in Japan, but the team has rebuilt with the signings of some exceptional talent. Clement Lenglet, Samuel Umtiti, Arthur Melo and Malcolm have all been brought in to add a different dimension to the team's attacking and defensive units.

The presence of Malcolm and Ousmane Dembele down the flanks promises a frightening set of pace, directness and precision, options that were missing severely in large parts last season.

For the first time since the magnificent Pep Guardiola era, [Barcelona](#) genuinely looks like they are well-stocked to brush aside all opposition with the likes of Lionel Messi, Philippe Coutinho and Luis Suarez all hungrier than ever to win even more silverware.

### **2. Atletico Madrid Will Be Deadly and Dangerous**

Following last season's Europa League win and runners-up spot in La Liga, it has been a summer of regeneration for Diego Simeone's side.

Long-term captain Gabi and much loved Fernando Torres have been moved on after years of admirable service and new up and coming stars like Rodri, Thomas Lemar and Gelson Martins have been brought in.

All of a sudden, the team looks younger, fitter, faster and capable of playing in unique ways and styles; and the long-term commitments of Antoine Griezmann, Jose Gimenez, and Lucas Hernandez all point to a huge belief in the team's direction.

And rumoured moves for France's World Cup winners Benjamin Pavard and Olivier Giroud show the team's seriousness. Expect Diego Simeone's men to seriously challenge for the big honours in not just Spain but abroad also.

## **1. No Zidane, No Ronaldo, and the New Real Madrid**

It has been a curious post-season for the defending European champions. Zinedine Zidane's sensational exit caught a lot of people napping - not least club president Florentino Perez.

Then came the unwanted surprise; all-time great Cristiano Ronaldo moving on from the Santiago Bernabéu in search of a new challenge.

Former Spain manager Julen Lopetegui has since been installed as the new man in the dugout, and how he will manage the team remains to be seen. It looks to be a season of recalibration at the Bernabéu. One thing is for certain though, it will be nothing short of thrilling.