

Laureus World Sports Awards, Barcelona 2007

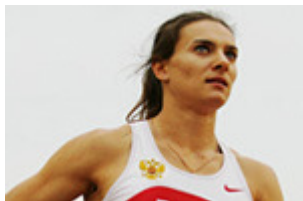
Laureus World Sportsman of the Year



Roger Federer

Tennis - Switzerland

Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year



Yelena Isinbayeva

Athletics - Russia

Laureus World Team of the Year



Italian Men's Football Team

Football - Italy

Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year



Amélie Mauresmo

Tennis - France

Laureus World Comeback of the Year



Serena Williams

Tennis - United States

Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability



Martin Braxenthaler

Alpine Skiing - Germany

Laureus World Action Sportsperson of the Year



Kelly Slater

Surfing - United States

Laureus Spirit of Sport Award



FC Barcelona

Football - Spain

Laureus Sport for Good Award



Luke Dowdney

Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award



Franz Beckenbauer

Football - Germany

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Laureus World Sportsman of the Year



Roger Federer

Tennis - Switzerland

Brilliant Swiss star Roger Federer continued his near total domination of world tennis by collecting three more Grand Slam titles in the Laureus qualifying year, a feat which has given him the opportunity to win the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award for a record third straight time.

His win in the Australian Open final against Fernando Gonzalez in January 2007 was his tenth career Grand Slam title. He is now joint fifth on the all-time list of Grand Slam winners, and is just one behind Bjorn Borg and Rod Laver – at the age of just 25. In Melbourne he became the first man to win a Grand Slam title without dropping a set since Bjorn Borg at the 1980 French Open. Federer played one of his greatest ever matches in the semi-final against Andy Roddick, beating the American 6-4 6-0 6-2 in one hour and 23 minutes. Federer said: "It was one of those days where everything worked. I've played good matches here, but that's a highlight of my career."

Federer won Wimbledon for the fourth straight year in July, beating Spain's Rafael Nadal in the final and losing only one set throughout the championship. He also won the US Open for the third year, beating Roddick in the final. Only Nadal's win in the French Open stopped him becoming the first man since Rod Laver to hold all four Grand Slam titles at the same time.

Away from the Grand Slams, Federer was just as dominating. In November he won his third Masters Cup in Shanghai, giving him 12 titles in the calendar year. He is the only player in the Open Era to win ten or more ATP titles in a season for three consecutive years.

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Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year



Yelena Isinbayeva

Athletics - Russia

Arguably the most dominant athlete in any discipline, Yelena Isinbayeva, at the age of just 24, is easily the best female pole vaulter in history.

In 2006, she won the gold medal at the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg to give herself a remarkable collection of five major championship victories – Olympic, World, European, World Indoor and European Indoor.

She also set a new indoor world record of 4.91 metres in Donetsk, Ukraine in February. To date she has created 18 world records.

In 2005 Isinbayeva became the first woman to break the five metres barrier and also won the World Championship gold medal in Helsinki. In 2004 she won the Olympic gold medal in Athens with a then world record of 4.91 metres. She was elected Female Athlete of the Year in both 2004 and 2005.

From the age of five to 15, Isinbayeva trained as a gymnast in her hometown of Volgograd, but subsequently switched to pole vaulting when she became too tall. She was born to a family of modest means and her parents had to make financial sacrifices in her early career. Her father is a member of a small ethnic group of Tabasarans, while her mother is an ethnic Russian.

This is the third straight year in which Isinbayeva has been nominated for the Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year Award.

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Laureus World Team of the Year



Italian Men's Football Team

Football - Italy

Fireworks exploded and car horns blared in Milan and Rome as excited Italians celebrated their nation's World Cup victory in Germany in July.

Led by coach Marcello Lippi, Italy beat France in a penalty shootout in Berlin after scores were tied 1-1 in the final. It was Italy's fourth FIFA World Cup title - their first for 24 years

Italy progressed through the tournament with a strong defence and a balanced attack. They only conceded two goals - an own goal and a penalty kick - and ten different players scored their 12 goals.

Their best win was a dramatic 2-0 victory over hosts Germany in the semi-finals, with goals from Fabio Grosso and Alessandro Del Piero in the last two minutes of extra time.

Captain Fabio Cannavaro, who was presented with the FIFA World Cup on the night of his 100th appearance for Italy, was named FIFA World Player of the Year and European Footballer of the Year as a result of his performances. During the tournament he played immaculately and did not receive a single yellow or red card in 690 minutes.

Seven players - Gianluigi Buffon, Fabio Cannavaro, Gennaro Gattuso, Andrea Pirlo, Luca Toni, Francesco Totti and Gianluca Zambrotta - were named to the 23-man World Cup All Star Team. Buffon also won the Lev Yashin Award, given to the best goalkeeper of the tournament.

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Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year



Amélie Mauresmo

Tennis - France

Despite being one of the top tennis players in the world for several years, France's Amélie Mauresmo had no success in winning Grand Slam events. Her talents were never questioned, but she was criticised for her mental strength after succumbing to nerves in Grand Slams. In consecutive Wimbledons she lost to Serena Williams and Lindsay Davenport after leading comfortably.

However her big breakthrough came in 2006 when she won not just one, but two Grand Slam singles titles. In January 2006, just before the start of the Laureus qualifying year, she captured her first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, although there was a degree of fortune in this when her semi-final and final opponents, Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin-Hardenne, both withdrew in their matches with injury and illness.

However she followed this up with a superb victory at Wimbledon in July when she beat Maria Sharapova in the semi-finals and Justine Henin-Hardenne in the final. When she lost the first set 6-2 to Henin-Hardenne, it looked as if her old Grand Slam problems had returned, but she turned the match around to win 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 and take the title.

During 2006, she also won tournaments in Paris and Antwerp to take her career total of singles wins to 23.

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Laureus World Comeback of the Year



Serena Williams

Tennis - United States

Serena Williams amazed the tennis world when she upset top seed Maria Sharapova in a one-sided final to win her third Australian Open and eighth Grand Slam title, just days before the end of the Laureus qualifying year. The victory marks a remarkable comeback for Williams who slipped out of the top 100 in the world rankings last year and missed both the French Open and Wimbledon after a serious knee injury. The unseeded American's speed and power overwhelmed Sharapova 6-1, 6-2 in little more than an hour.

Williams' injury problems forced her to take a break during the final quarter of 2005 and although she returned for the 2006 Australian Open she went out in the third round. After withdrawing from the Charleston, South Carolina, Family Circle Cup in the spring, Williams fell out of the top 100 players in the world for the first time in almost a decade. Shortly after, on May 3, she announced that she would miss both the French Open and Wimbledon as a result of her chronic knee injury.

Williams made a return to tennis earlier than expected in late July, accepting wild cards into events in Cincinnati and Los Angeles and she was granted a wild card into the US Open, but went out in the fourth round.

She began the year saying she could be No.1 again, but few could have predicted the events in Melbourne. The unseeded Williams defeated fifth seed Nadia Petrova in the third round, 11th seed Jelena Jankovic in the fourth, 16th seed Shahar Peer in the quarter-finals and 10th seed Nicole Pietrangeli in the semi-finals, before her moment of glory against Sharapova.

Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability



Martin Braxenthaler

Alpine Skiing - Germany

Germany's Martin Braxenthaler was the toast of the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Turin after he took gold medals in three of the four Alpine skiing disciplines – Slalom, Giant Slalom and Super G. As well in 2006 he was the winner of the overall World Cup, the World Cup Slalom and was German champion in Slalom and Giant Slalom. In a glittering Olympic career he also won a clean sweep of four Alpine gold medals in the 2002 Paralympics in Salt Lake City and a bronze in Nagano in the Super G.

His successes over the years, both in and out of Olympic competition, have made him the most successful mono-skier in the history of the Paralympic movement. His roll of honour includes overall World Cup titles in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, as well as 2006, and two gold medals and a silver medal in both the 2000 and 2004 World Championships. Braxenthaler, who became paraplegic after an accident at work, has become a great role model for young athletes who benefit from his knowledge and skill.

Laureus World Action Sportsperson of the Year



Kelly Slater

Surfing - United States

Kelly Slater established himself as the greatest surfer in the history of the sport after an amazing 2006 in which he won an unprecedented EIGHTH World Championship.

The amazing man from Florida became the youngest ever world champion in 1992 at the age of 20. And in 2006 he became the oldest at 34. Slater's dominance has spanned a generation and made him an icon to Action Sports lovers. It is doubtful if anyone will ever match his unbelievable record.

He is now four world titles ahead of his nearest rival Australia's Mark Richards, who won his four titles back in the 1980s when surfing was just an embryo sport.

In his sport, Slater has set new standards just as Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan and Tony Hawk have in theirs. While sportsmen usually fade away towards the end of their careers, Slater just gets stronger. He says 2006 was probably his most consistent season since his first World Championship

He kicked off the year with wins in the Quiksilver Pro on Australia's Gold Coast and the Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach Victoria, Australia. His event stats then read: 3rd in the Billabong Pro Tahiti; no show at The Globe WCT Fiji; 5th in the Rip Curl Pro Search; 3rd Billabong Pro Jeffreys Bay; 2nd Boost Mobile Pro; California; 3rd Quiksilver Pro France; and 2nd in the Billabong Pro Mundaka.

Slater has not just racked up titles, he has left an amazing legacy to his sport, demolishing the status quo, snaking and sliding to victory with astonishing speed and precision. Slater is lightning fast, fluid, and wonderfully creative. He set an ASP Men's World Tour record by scoring two perfect 10s in a final and was the first to have a perfect heat since the two-wave scoring system was introduced.

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Laureus Spirit of Sport Award



FC Barcelona

Football - Spain

For years football clubs have been cashing in by having commercial logos on their shirts, but in 2006 Spanish club FC Barcelona turned that thinking on its head.

Under a deal bearing the slogan 'Barcelona, more than a club, a new global hope for vulnerable children', the Catalan team announced that it will annually contribute €1.5 million (US\$1.9 million) to UNICEF and that it will wear the humanitarian organisation's logo on their shirts.

Barcelona's ground-breaking step was saluted by Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director. She said: "Barcelona shows us that sport can be a powerful, positive force for children. This partnership will help push open a door of hope to thousands of children. For UNICEF this is a priceless donation."

The five-year collaborative agreement with UNICEF was signed in September by Barcelona President Joan Laporta at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Until now, Barcelona, the current Champions League winners and one of the great football clubs of the world, were the only major European team not to wear advertising on the front of their shirts.

The first beneficiaries will be vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in Swaziland. Education and sports programmes will be strengthened to provide better protection, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children. Those same programmes and other outreach efforts will raise public awareness to limit the spread of AIDS. Children and their mothers will have improved access to life-saving drugs to prevent transmission of HIV and dangerous opportunistic infections of the virus, including access to life-prolonging anti-retroviral treatment.

"For me it's perfect that the team is wearing this charitable logo and I hope people will take it as an example," said Barcelona's Brazilian star Ronaldinho.

And Barcelona President Joan Laporta said: "At FC Barcelona, we are aware of the global dimension of soccer. The increasing number of FC Barcelona supporters and fans around the world in the last few years has been spectacular. The club has an obligation to respond to this enormous positive wave. The best way to do so is by using soccer as a tool to bring hope to millions of vulnerable children in need around the world."

The sporting club's philanthropic history includes its foundation, Fundació Futbol Club Barcelona, which is committed to social, cultural, educational and humanitarian activities in Catalonia and has expanded internationally during the last few years under its motto "More than a Club."

Barcelona are the only team to have played in Europe in every season since European competitions began in the 1950s and during that time they have won 11 trophies. In addition to the Champions League last year, Barcelona also won Spain's La Liga and the Supercopa de Espana in 2005 and 2006.

FC Barcelona was founded in 1899 by a group of Catalan, English and Swiss football enthusiasts and has become a Catalan institution. Its motto is 'Més que un club' (More than a club). They were founding members of La Liga in 1928 and have never been relegated. The club has over 150,000 members and 1,782 supporters clubs worldwide.

For 60 years UNICEF has been working on the ground in 156 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through to adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.



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Laureus Sport for Good Award



Luke Dowdney

Boxing - England

Luke Dowdney is an inspirational community worker who has pioneered research into youth gang violence in Brazil and created the Luta Pela Paz (Fight for Peace) project in Rio de Janeiro.

Fight for Peace is based in Complexo da Maré, a favela where there has been a decade of territorial drug wars between two of Rio's largest trafficking factions. Here openly armed children and adolescents patrol the streets and alleyways to 'defend' the community from rival factions or police raids. According to statistics from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, the firearms related mortality rate of 15-17 year olds in the Complexo da Maré is over 150 per 100,000 inhabitants, a statistic rarely seen outside war zones.

Through its focus on boxing, Fight for Peace has maintained regular contact with young people from the favela most affected by violence and drug trafficking, offering free access to sports and education courses. The project also offers training in wrestling and capoeira. The project helps to create real alternatives to crime, armed violence and the drug trade for children and adolescents in Maré. This is fundamental if the number of young people dying unnecessarily is ever to be reduced.

Fight for Peace, which is supported by the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, is a sanctuary in the midst of an area where drug trafficking and organized armed violence dominate. Dowdney says: "Boxing is showing these kids another path, added to which our educational programmes and social support seek to provide a real hub for the community and a chance for young people to develop in ways that would otherwise be impossible for them."

Dowdney first came to Brazil when studying for a master's degree in social anthropology at Edinburgh University, to write his dissertation on violence and Brazilian street children. And he decided to stay to help.

He is also the author of the book, 'Crianças do Tráfico' ('Children of Trafficking') based on a study conducted in 2001 in which he interviewed 300 people in 25 favela neighbourhoods in Rio de Janeiro. Among them, police, youths, representatives of neighbourhood associations, and protagonists of drug-trafficking and violence.

A respected boxer at Edinburgh University, winning the 1995 light-middleweight British Universities championship, he fought as an amateur boxer in Scotland, England, Nepal and Japan and is now certified as a trainer by the Rio de Janeiro State Boxing Federation.

Thanks to its focus on a rigorous sport like boxing, Fight for Peace can maintain regular contacts with youngsters most affected by violence and drug trafficking. It offers the ability to change lives for the better and gives children and young people a sense of self-worth as well as a strong incentive to live a healthy and a positive life. It actively encourages participants to return to school or provides alternatives for those that cannot access formal schooling. The project seeks to enhance the potential of each and every child.

Fight for Peace works with local businesses, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations to place participants in paid part-time internships and jobs. This provides access to the formal job market and allows them to develop important skills for their future.



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Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award



Franz Beckenbauer

Football - Germany

Pelé, Maradona, Cruyff, Charlton and Beckenbauer are the undisputed greats of World Cup football, but only one of them has won the trophy as a player, led his national team to success as a coach, and now organised a highly successful World Cup finals in his own country - Franz Beckenbauer. A unique achievement to crown a glittering career in sport.

He was given the nickname 'der Kaiser' - the Emperor - as a player because of his elegant style and his leadership qualities, but this was never more apparent than when he became President of the Organising Committee of the FIFA World Cup 2006. From the first presentation in the bidding process through to the final in Berlin in July, Beckenbauer worked nine years on the tournament, which was hailed as one of the most enjoyable ever. It was fun loving and friendly, a summer carnival, all backed by great organisation.

Germany's best-selling newspaper Bild said: "The 31 days of the World Cup have changed Germany and the Germans more than politicians have managed in years. And the whole world suddenly has a thoroughly positive picture of us. Because the signals we sent can no longer be misunderstood. Germany is a happy country. Germany is a peaceful country. Germany is modern, innovative and creative." It was a view echoed abroad. "Never mind the final, Germans are the real World Cup winners," wrote Britain's Times newspaper.

And at the heart of this amazing sporting success was Beckenbauer, who seemed to be everywhere. He criss-crossed the country by helicopter, taking in 46 of the 64 matches. The day before the last 16 matches began, he even found time to fly to his home in Kitzbühel to marry his long time partner Heidi.

As a player and a coach, Beckenbauer was universally admired and respected. He began his international career as an impressive midfield player, but he eventually became known as one of the greatest defenders of all time. He was a versatile player, who adapted to different roles on the pitch, and is often credited as having invented the role of the modern sweeper or libero. Voted as one of the 11 European Players of the Century in 1999, he became the first footballer to captain and then coach his country to triumph in the World Cup. Beckenbauer earned the coveted European Footballer of the Year award twice, in 1972 and 1976. He was voted Germany's Player of the Century in November 1998.

The young Beckenbauer began his career representing his schoolboy team FC1906 Munich, aged 10, in 1955 and, after signing up with Bayern Munich in 1962, he made his international debut in a 2-1 World Cup qualifying win in Sweden in 1965. He played as a midfield player in Germany's 4-2 World Cup final defeat by England in 1966 and by the next year he was captaining Bayern Munich to victory over Glasgow Rangers in the final of the European Cup-Winners' Cup.

In 1970, he took part in his second World Cup and scored the goal, which ignited a German revival against England in the quarter-finals. However, West Germany went on to lose to Italy in the semi-finals. He captained his country to the European Championship title in 1972 and then led Bayern Munich to European Cup success in 1974. That same year, he achieved the pinnacle of his playing career as he captained West Germany to victory in the final of the World Cup against Holland.

Beckenbauer earned a record 103rd cap for his country in 1976 before moving to New York Cosmos in the North American Soccer League where he won the NASL Soccer Bowl in 1977, 1978 and 1980.

In 1984, he replaced Jupp Derwall as West Germany's coach and two years later, he coached the team to the World Cup final where they lost 2-3 to Argentina. Then, in 1990, he made footballing history when he coached West Germany to the World Cup final in Rome where they beat Argentina 1-0. He also coached Bayern Munich to the German League title in 1994 and then became Club President the following year.