



## **2021-22 Turkish Airlines EuroLeague MVP: Nikola Mirotic, FC Barcelona**

The leader of the team that rode atop the standings for most of the season, forward Nikola Mirotic of FC Barcelona has been chosen by fans, media, head coaches and team captains as the 2021-22 Turkish Airlines EuroLeague MVP.

Mirotic, 31, was awarded his highest honor yet in a career full of accolades during the 2021-22 Turkish Airlines EuroLeague Awards Ceremony in Belgrade, Serbia, on Wednesday, the eve of the 2022 Final Four. The ceremony was held at Stark Arena, where Barcelona will take on Real Madrid in the second semifinal on Thursday, right after Olympiacos Piraeus and Anadolu Efes Istanbul face off in the other.

Mirotic had another stellar season, ranking first among all EuroLeague players with an average performance index rating of 19.4 and second in scoring with 16.6 points per game. In both categories, he was the league leader on a per-minute basis, with a 32.1 PIR and 24.5 points prorated over 40 minutes. Mirotic shot the ball this season with historic efficiency, becoming just the second player in EuroLeague history to post 65-45-85 shooting percentages; he made 65.6% of his two-point shots, 45.5% of his three-pointers and 87.5% of his free throws.

Mirotic was chosen as the MVP of the Month in both October and December, which gave him a record seven such awards. He was MVP of the Round three times, too, tied for the most by any player this season. His early-season dominance led Barca to a 6-0 start and a season-long place among the top two teams in the standings. His December MVP award included the last five wins in a nine-game winning streak that propelled Barca to the best

record of the regular season, 21-7.

Mirotic also was recognized on Wednesday for his second consecutive selection to the All-EuroLeague First Team. He began winning EuroLeague awards more than a decade ago when he was the back-to-back Rising Star Trophy winner in 2010-11 and 2011-12 and was selected to the All-EuroLeague Second Team in the next two seasons. Only two other active players have more All-EuroLeague selections than Mirotic, who spent five seasons in the NBA before returning to Europe to sign with Barca in 2019.

Mirotic was the first choice of the head coaches, the team captains and the media in this season's MVP voting. Mike James of AS Monaco finished second in the overall voting and Sasha Vezenkov of Olympiacos Piraeus third. He is the second Barca player to be celebrated as the full-season MVP, following Juan Carlos Navarro in the 2008-09 season.

Born in Podgorica, Montenegro, Mirotic was a late-comer to basketball, introduced to the sport at age 13 by his grandfather. Within two years, after time spent at the Joker School in his hometown, Mirotic had signed his first contract with Real Madrid, joining its youth program. By 2008, he was on Real's senior roster and made his EuroLeague debut shortly after turning 18 in a road game against Barcelona. He would help Real make its Final Four return after 15 years in 2011. In two more Final Four appearances with Real, in 2013 and 2014, they finished as the runner-up.

Mirotic went on to play in the NBA before joining Barca at age 28, right in the prime of his career, and after the 2019-20 season was discontinued, led his new team last year to its first Final Four in seven years. They lost the championship game to Efes, but Barcelona comes into this weekend in Belgrade with the best overall record of all EuroLeague teams, 24-9, and now with the MVP of the season leading a quest to take one step further to the title.



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