

# Goooooal! Messi scores in EU court battle to trademark name (Update)

April 26 2018, by Danny Kemp

---



A court rules that Lionel Messi is too famous to be confused with a company with a similar name

Lionel Messi, the world's top earning footballer, won a legal battle Thursday to register his name as a trademark to sell sports goods after an

EU court ruled that he is too famous to be confused with other businesses.

The Barcelona and Argentina attacker rode out a seven-year challenge by a Spanish cycling gear manufacturer called Massi, which protested that his trademark was too similar to its own.

"Lionel Messi may register his trade mark 'MESSI' for sports equipment and clothing," said a ruling by the General Court of the European Union, the bloc's second-highest court.

"The football player's fame counteracts the visual and phonetic similarities between his trade mark and the trade mark 'MASSI' belonging to a Spanish company," the Luxembourg-based court said.

The ruling comes days after it emerged that Messi has overtaken Cristiano Ronaldo as the highest earner in world football, according to France Football magazine.

The Barcelona attacker is making 126 million euros (\$154mn) in salary, bonuses and commercial revenue for the current season while his great Real Madrid rival is making 94mn euros.

Messi first tried in 2011 to trademark his own name with the EU's intellectual property office for use on "sports and gymnastics clothing, equipment and protective equipment and instruments".

The boss of the Massi cycling goods company filed an appeal the same year, saying there was a "likelihood of confusion" with its own trademark.

The trademark office agreed, and dismissed an appeal by the five-time world footballer of the year in 2014.

## 'Public figure'

But while judges admitted that the trademarks "are very similar phonetically", they said the IPO was wrong to assume that Messi was only known by people who were interested in football or sport.

"Mr Messi is, in fact, a well-known public figure who can be seen on television and who is regularly discussed on television or on the radio," the court said.

"It seems unlikely that an average consumer of those goods will not directly associate, in the vast majority of cases, the term 'Messi' with the name of the famous football player."

It is not the first time that Messi's business interests have ended up in court.

In 2016 a Spanish court sentenced him to 21 months in jail and fined him more than two million euros for tax evasion, although the prison sentence was later commuted to another fine.

He was found guilty of using companies in Belize, Britain, Switzerland and Uruguay to avoid paying 4.1 million euros in taxes on income he earned from his image rights.

While Messi's finances go from strength to strength, despite the Spanish case, he is at risk of missing out on a sixth Ballon d'Or this year.

He has locked down the footballing award in duopoly with Ronaldo for a decade, but Egypt's Liverpool star Mohamed Salah threatens to break their stranglehold after a stunning year.

But Messi's fame keeps soaring—he has been unveiled as the subject of

a painting modelled on Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel on the ceiling of a football club in Buenos Aires.

In it he features as Adam being touched by the "Hand of God"—belonging to Argentina football legend Diego Maradona.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Gooooal! Messi scores in EU court battle to trademark name (Update) (2018, April 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-04-messi-scores-eu-court-trademark.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.