

---

Zinedine Zidane returns to coach Real Madrid

11/03/2019



Zinedine Zidane has made a surprise return to coach Real Madrid less than a year after leaving the Spanish giants in the wake of one of its great European successes.

The 46-year-old Frenchman led Real to three consecutive Champions League trophies during his first spell in charge at the Bernabeu, but then stepped down in May 2018.

Zidane replaces sacked former teammate Santiago Solari, who was promoted to the role of Real coach after Julen Lopetegui was dismissed following a poor run of form in October.

"Real Madrid appreciates the work done by Santiago Solari and the commitment and loyalty he has always shown to this house," said a Real Madrid statement on Monday.

"The Board of Directors has also agreed the appointment of Zinedine Zidane as the new coach of Real Madrid with immediate incorporation for the remainder of the season and the next three, until June 30, 2022."

Zidane was already a Real legend thanks to an illustrious five-year-period as a player at the club between 2001 and 2006.

He took over as Real Madrid coach in January 2016 and made a near immediate impact, winning the Champions League later that season.

Two more European titles followed before he abruptly left in May 2018, a matter of days after securing the hat-trick of Champions League titles as Real defeated Liverpool in Kiev.

No team had won three Champions League or European Cups in succession since Bayern Munich between 1973 and 1975.

Upon announcing his departure, Zidane said the team needed "a change after three years, another voice, another method of working."

A popular figure among Real's star players, Zidane lost just 16 times in his 149 games in charge.

He also averaged a trophy every 16 games, with Real picking up two FIFA Club World Cups, two UEFA Supercups, a La Liga title and a Spanish Supercup alongside the Champions League crowns.

Real have toiled in the period since. They are currently 12 points behind La Liga leaders and arch rivals Barcelona.

They also suffered a surprise Champions League exit at the hands of Ajax last week.

Spanish newspaper Marca labeled that defeat as the "failure of the century."

Zidane will take over with Real having little to play for except ensuring it qualifies for next season's Champions League.

Real is currently placed third in La Liga with the top three teams qualifying automatically to next season's group phase.

Barcelona also eliminated Real from the Copa del Rey, Spain's domestic cup competition, last month.

---