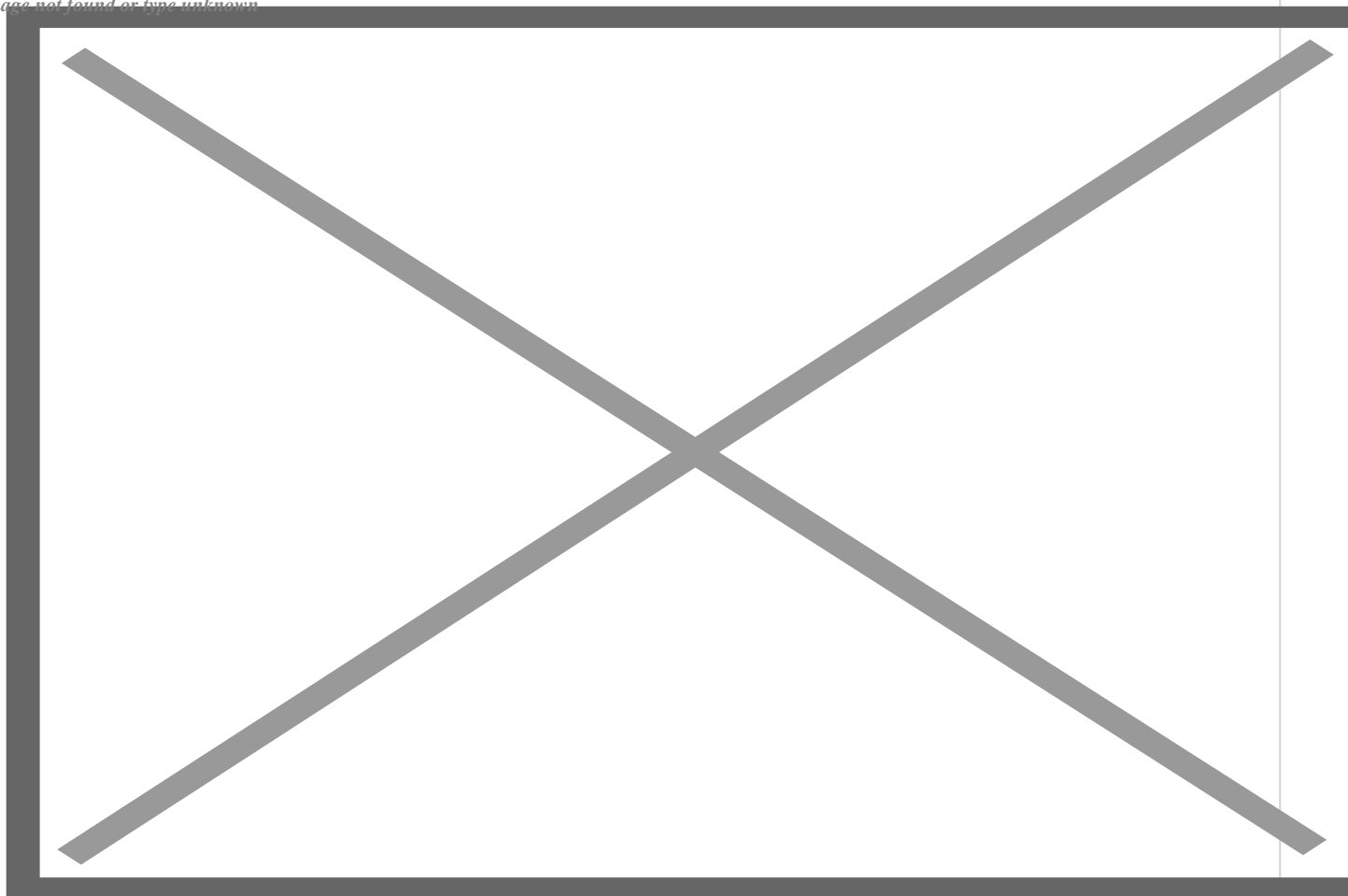


Gareth Bale announces his retirement

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Player Gareth Bale waves to fans at a 2022 FIFA World Cup match between the United States and Wales. EFE/EPA/Neil Hall

Havana, January 9 (RHC)-- Gareth Bale, former Real Madrid player, announced on Monday his retirement from professional soccer after 17 seasons in the elite.

The Welshman, whose last club was Los Angeles FC, is leaving soccer at the age of 33, after a successful career in which he won five Champions Leagues, three Spanish leagues and led his national team to the semifinals of Euro 2016 and its first World Cup since 1958.

"After careful consideration, I am announcing my immediate retirement from club and international soccer," Bale said in a statement posted on his social media.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have achieved the dream of dedicating myself to the sport I love. It has given me some of the best moments of my life. Very good moments and bad moments in 17 seasons that are impossible to repeat, whatever the future holds," he stressed.

Southampton, Tottenham, Real Madrid and LAFC

Bale's career took him from Southampton to Tottenham Hotspur, who paid 15 million euros for him in 2007. At 'Spurs' he became one of the most important players in the world, playing on the left flank, both on the wing and as a winger, which aroused the interest of Real Madrid, who in 2013 paid 100 million euros for him.

At the white club he reaped his greatest successes, with five Champions League titles, being decisive in two finals, in addition to three leagues, three Club World Cups, three European Super Cups and one Copa del Rey.

His eight seasons at the white club were marred by the last three, in which he was unable to take over from Cristiano Ronaldo and his disinterest and fall into injuries tarnished the record of one of the most important players in recent Real Madrid history.

"From my first touch with Southampton to my last with Los Angeles, and everything in between, it has resulted in a career that fills me with pride and gratitude. Playing for my country 111 times is a dream come true," he said.

In his farewell letter, Bale remembered his clubs, Southampton, Tottenham, Real Madrid and LAFC, as well as his coaches, teammates, agents and family.

"I now turn the page looking forward to the next chapter of my life. It's a time of change and transition, a chance for a new adventure," the Welshman said.

Real Madrid bids farewell to Bale with "gratitude", "admiration" and "affection".

Real Madrid has shown through a statement "gratitude", "admiration" and "affection" to its former player Gareth Bale, after the Welshman announced his retirement from professional soccer.

"In view of Gareth Bale's announcement of his retirement from soccer as a professional player, Real Madrid C.F. would like to show its gratitude, admiration and affection to a great legend of our club and of world soccer," begins the statement from the white club.

Real Madrid highlights the 19 titles won by Bale during his nine seasons at the club, since his arrival in 2013, and notes, "Gareth Bale has been part of our team in one of the most successful stages of our history and represents forever many of the most brilliant moments of the last decade."

Among them he highlights "his goal after a memorable run in the final of the Copa del Rey in Valencia in 2014, his transcendental goal in the final of the 'Champions League' in Lisbon in 2014 or his goals in the final of the 'Champions League' in Kiev in 2018, especially the Chilean that will be forever engraved in the memory of all soccer lovers".

"His figure will forever be linked to the history and legend of our club. Best of luck, Gareth, and our best wishes to you and your family," he concluded.



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