

FIFA World Player Gala 2008

A first for Cristiano Ronaldo and a hat trick for Marta

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Brazil's Marta were honoured at the FIFA World Player Gala as the 2008 World Player and Women's World Player, while the Presidential Award was collected by a representative of women's football in the USA. The decision to hold the gala in January for the first time paid off.

It was a bitterly cold January evening outside, but the atmosphere among the guests at Zurich's opera house was one of great warmth. The first-ever FIFA Development Award was presented to the Palestinian Football Association, whose President Jibril Rajoub was visibly touched as he accepted the honour from FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter and UEFA President Michel Platini. The USA's Heather O'Reilly collected the by now well-established Presidential Award on behalf of her national team, in recognition of the outstanding achievements of women's football in the USA.

The FIFA Fair Play Award was presented to the representatives of the football associations of Armenia and Turkey, whose national teams played an international match in 2008 despite the fact that their two countries do not maintain diplomatic relations.

The highpoint of the evening for most guests was the announcement of the winners of the 2008 World Player and Women's World Player awards. Cristiano Ronaldo was a first-time winner in the men's category, relegating the Argentinian Lionel Messi to second place. The Portuguese star was presented with his award by none other than Pelé. Marta won in the women's category, which is decided by the coaches and captains of the national teams, for the third year in a row. For the first time, the FIFA World Player Gala was held in January rather than December. The change of date paid off, as there was an unprecedented level of media interest in the event.



Pelé presents the World Player of the Year trophy to Cristiano Ronaldo.



The Palestinian Football Association receives the FIFA Development Award from FIFA Vice-President Michel Platini.



Executive Committee member Senes Erzik presents the Turkey captain with the FIFA Fair Play Award.