

7 takeaways from Juventus' clinical win over Monaco to book their spot in the Champions League final

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We have our first Champions League finalist: Juventus. The Old Lady knocked off Monaco 2-0 in the first leg and held firm at home with a 2-1 win to advance 4-1 on aggregate. They'll wait to see if they take on Atletico or Real Madrid on Wednesday.

Here are 7 takeaways from the victory for Juventus.

### **Monaco came out firing**

Down a pair of away goals, Monaco came into the match knowing they needed to show out on offense. In the opening 10 minutes, they certainly tried to. Monaco pressed Juventus all around the pitch, something that certainly isn't easy to do. They made the hosts look uncomfortable for at home for seemingly the first time in years. To their credit, Juventus did what they do best and weathered the storm, but the attitude from Monaco deserves recognition.

### **Tough scenes for Sami Khedira**

Khedira didn't start the first leg of the semi, and looked to assert his influence.

Unfortunately, the 30-year-old German midfielder wouldn't get much of a chance. He had to be substituted off 10 minutes into the match with what looked to be a hamstring issue. It's a recurring theme for Khedira, who can't seem to stay healthy no matter where he plays. Hopefully Tuesday's knock wasn't anything too serious, but it's a bummer to see such a talented player beset by injury after injury.

### **Paulo Dybala's fancy footwork**

Even if he didn't get on the goal-scorers sheet, Dybala put on a fantastic show in his abbreviated appearance. The 23-year-old showed his quality with crisp passing and hold up play, but he really flexed his might with some delightful footwork. On more than one occasion, Dybala threaded the ball through his opponents' legs. As some people say, a nutmeg is almost as satisfying as a goal. In that case, Dybala got his fill on Tuesday.

### **Mario Mandzukic finally got a goal for his efforts**

Playing in a new role further from the center of the pitch under Max Allegri, Mandzukic's scoring numbers have gone down. He's done what's being asked of him (and doing it well), but you know that he has a goal-scorers thirst to put the ball in the back of the net. After a number of failed attempts to get on the board, the Croatian finally got to wet his beak on Tuesday. The goal was his first in the UCL knockout stages since 2014, back when he played for Bayern Munich

### **Juventus should have won by even more**

Dybala didn't score, but he probably should have. Mario Mandzukic also missed a sitter against Monaco, but it didn't haunt Juventus in the end. It's tough to find causes for concern in a thorough victory, but the Old Lady will want to be sure to capitalize on those opportunities in the final. Atletico (or more likely, Real Madrid) could make them pay in a way that Monaco couldn't.

### **Dani Alves continued paying dividends**

A free transfer from Barcelona over the summer, Alves has been rejuvenated. The right back by trade enjoyed a dominant semifinals against Monaco. He had two assists in the 2-0 first leg and assisted on Juve's first on Tuesday. Not content to

just be a provider, though, he uncorked an earth-shaking volley to really put the tie out of reach. Not too shabby for a guy that was essentially an afterthought to start the season.

### **It had to be Kylian Mbappe**

Juventus' defense is undeniably one of, if not the, best in the world. The Old Lady had gone a whopping 690 minutes without conceding in the Champions League before Monaco's budding star continued his own remarkable run. The goal was largely of the consolatory variety for Monaco, but Mbappe can hold his head high. The tap-in saw him become the youngest player to score in a Champions League semifinal, which is no small feat.

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