

# We're not meant to be here, but we are



Vivid as it still is, that extraordinary semi-final night in Amsterdam now seems so long ago.

The final consumes ever more of our vision. By the time it kicks off, three weeks will have elapsed since Lucas Moura's last-gasp winner against Ajax.

"Have you ever seen anything like it?" one commentator asked in the heat of the moment. Well, we haven't.

This is new territory for Spurs fans, and the three weeks will be savoured.

This is the best bit, where the dreams take over.

Only 22 teams have won the European Cup. Spurs could be

the 23rd in this elite band. And if they succeed, they will be one of only six clubs to have won all three major Uefa club competitions.

And, of course, Spurs were the first British club to win a European trophy.

Back in 1963, against Atlético Madrid. Whose stadium hosts tomorrow's final?

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That's one of a number of omens seized upon – we fans like our sprinkling of magic, our signs and superstitions.

Like the date of the game. 1/6/19. Run those numbers back to front. 1961.

And we all know what happened then. It's a sign I tell you. A sign.

Liverpool have been here before. Five-times winners, three times losing finalists. Familiar grounds if not a familiar ground.

It's one of a number of reasons why they are favourites. But this is one game. Anything can happen.

Will the team that knows the taste of success in this competition want it more than the team that never has?

Much will depend on attitude, just as much as tactics and skill.

After the initial euphoria had died down, Spurs fans pretty quickly pushed aside the idea that our achievement was just in getting to the final.



We want to win it and we believe we can. Because we've seen what this team and this manager can do.

We've seen their sheer belief and determination pull us through an extraordinary season.

Six times we looked to be going out of the tournament, six times we've dragged ourselves back.

We're determined to enjoy it as well as aching to win it. But boy does Uefa do its best to suck the joy out.

Talk to regular travellers to Champions League games and

they'll tell you the fans get tested to the limit.

Travel, pricing, policing, being stuck in some pretty squalid away sections – yes Barcelona we're talking about you.

For all the 'for the fans' sloganeering, the truth is the fans at the games too often get a rough deal.

For the final, and it's not the first time it's happened, fans have faced extortionate pricing, scrambled for fewer than 50% of the tickets that have gone on sale, and been subject to the worst of the travel industry's sharp practices as hotel and travel prices have been ramped up.

And yet tens upon tens of thousands will travel. Because you have to be there, if not in the stadium, then in a bar, just somewhere near to where the magic is being played out.

For Spurs fans, it is the best of times. We can't claim to be a small team living a fairy tale, but in the big bad world of the modern football business, we're not really meant to be here.

We are, though. Standing on the verge of greatness again.

And all the more satisfied because this team has been coached rather than bought, because these players seem to really care, because this manager is, well, he's magic, you know.

Liverpool will make much of their European Cup pedigree, drawing deep on the history.

But Spurs fans know all about history, and we know how we've been accused of living in the past.

There's a feeling that it's time, not just to know our history, but to create it.

And that, the chance to break new ground, is what's putting a spring in our step as we begin the march to Madrid.

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