**ADIDAS 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP BRAZIL™ PLAYER Q&A**

***Javi Martinez, defender/ midfielder, Spain***

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**You’re a bit of a rarity: a Spanish player plying his trade in Germany. Does that give you a different perspective to your teammates?**

Yes, myself and Thiago are a couple of Spaniards in a sea of Germans, although the manager, Pep Guardiola, being Spanish certainly helps us a little bit. I think playing abroad, in different leagues, is very good for you as a player and as a person. You’re learning different cultures, a new language a new set of fans. The supporters in Germany are really passionate and I’ve enjoyed that. And of course to be playing for a side as historic and successful as Bayern Munich, that is something that any player will benefit from.

**Playing for Pep Guardiola can’t be a huge amount different to playing for Vicente Del Bosque?**

They are two very different men, but they like to play football in a similar way and they obviously admire each other. How could you not, they are both so successful. Their core philosophy always comes down to keeping the football, and that’s something Spanish players have had drummed into them for many, many years –hopefully it has become automatic for us.

**You must have become something of an expert on German football. How close are Germany to Spain, internationally?**

They are a very good side indeed and Spain should be very wary of the Germans. They are so professional, they are so organised, they are a unit, and they have so many skilful players in their line up. Would anyone be surprised if Germany won this World Cup? Not one person. So Spain may have the recent history of success, but if we let ourselves slip for a moment, Germany are there waiting to jump and take our place.

**Which Germany players do you most admire?**

I can’t speak for the whole squad, but in Philipp Lahm, my captain at Bayern, and his vice-captain Bastian Schweinsteiger, Germany have two of the best players on the planet. I never fail to be amazed at how smart and skilful those two guys are – they are very, very intelligent footballers, and their attitude is top class. It is a pleasure to play alongside them at Bayern, and you can see the determination they have to make Germany great again.

**How do those two compare to the Xavis and Xabi Alonsos of this world, the possession kings?**

I think the thing that runs through all these players is intelligence. They are all very smart and they play the game in their heads, even though they are obviously extremely fit, too. If you talk to the Spanish midfielders, you’ll often hear them say that they finish a match mentally exhausted, because they are constantly thinking about their next pass, the right tactics. The same is true of the best Germans – they are all about the right pass, the right move, not just trying to bludgeon their way to victory.

**But this is Spain’s tournament to lose, isn’t it?**

If we don’t win, the critics will come out because of our recent record. But that is ridiculous really. There are 32 sides starting this tournament and all of them pose some danger – to say Spain should just sweep them aside is not wise. We will have to be humble, not go out there arrogantly thinking we are the best. No Spanish side has been like that, though. We know about hard work and respecting the opposition, and that is what it’ll all be about again out in Brazil this summer.

**You’ve been on the fringes of the Spanish side over the last four years, what do you need to do to really seal a place in that midfield?**

It is a great midfield with great players in it, so it has been a question of waiting my turn and taking the chances when they come along. I love being out with the Spain side, we are a great group of friends and everybody supports one another, so it is not a hardship. But I am ambitious and as one of the younger Spain players I do want to step up and take my place in the team, playing more regularly.

**You played for 20 minutes at the last World Cup, replacing Xabi Alonso in midfield against Chile. How was that?**

To go on the field in the red shirt for Spain in the World Cup, I don’t have to tell you how much it means. It is the peak for any player. And to get a World Cup winners’ medal, that is amazing. But I want to play a tournament where I am more of a key player, it would be great to play every game in a tournament – then I would feel like a true champion.

**Vicente del Bosque has compared you to Patrick Vieira, how nice is it to hear that?**

Any complement from my manager is good, but to be compared to Patrick, that is a real honour. I remember watching him play for France when I was just a young boy, winning the World Cup as part of their great side. He was so good, running their midfield, breaking up moves, getting in the way and then driving forward and using the ball wisely. I try to do that in my game, so if I can establish myself like him, and win as much, I will be very pleased.

**You’re not a stereotypical Spanish player, being far more combative than the likes of Xavi…**

It has been said that I am the most German of the Spanish players and I suppose that is true! I suppose so, I am six foot three and I do enjoy the physical side of the game more than some Spaniards, perhaps. But no two players are the same, and there is a place for a strong player in the Spanish team, I think – as long as you can pass the football as well. That’s always got to be in your repetoire if you are going to represent Spain. But I think I bring more to the squad than just being able to fit in with that system.

**Has your versatility as a player, operating in midfield or as a centre back, helped or hindered you?**

It has definitely helped. Being able to play as a centre back helps you when you are in midfield, being able to pass like a midfielder helps you be a better centre back. I like the fact I can do both, and it helps you get into squads. You may be picked in one position, but if you can play in a couple, you act as cover as well. It’s useful for a coach.

**You Tweet a lot, in English, Spanish and the odd bit of German, can we expect to hear from you via @javi8martinez during the World Cup?**

Yes, I like to surf the web on my laptop when I’m not concentrating on football, it is a lot of fun. My written German isn’t so great though, so I’ll mainly be sticking to Spanish over the summer. Maybe I’ll send a message to my friends back in Munich if we end up playing Germany!

**How is your spoken German coming along?**

It is getting better. I sometimes watch my German teammates on TV, giving press conferences, over and over, so that I can pick up better on what they say. I am getting there!

**How would you feel returning to Germany with a World Cup winners’ medal – would your German teammates hate you?**

I don’t think anything I can do will make my teammates hate me, because we get on great. But maybe if I scored to knock Germany out, the dressing room might be a little bit quiet, with a few sad faces. I can dream!

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