Philip Lahm adidas Q n A

**This will be your third FIFA World Cup. Do you feel like the Mannschaft’s ‘old man’?**

If you put it like that I feel like an artefact from a football museum. But thankfully I am still only 30 and have plenty of energy. It helps having talented players around you too. The younger squad members can also carry us ‘oldies’ along. Joking aside, the way I train and live my life allows me to do the same things on the pitch now as I could ten years ago. Plus I have years of experience of UEFA Champions League and international football, which is priceless.

**You scored the first goal of the 2006 World Cup (against Costa Rica). Have you planned anything similar for the 2014?**

We have many players more qualified than me to score goals, but it would certainly be nice to score again. I remember that goal well, a lovely shot in the sixth minute of the tournament’s first game. It’s always nice to score for your country, I also scored in the Euro 2008 semi-final against Turkey. But I would never promise doing it again.

**Germany had very exciting young players at the 2010 World Cup. There is now a new group. Who have caught your eye?**

Obviously I work with Toni Kroos every day at Bayern Munchen and have seen him develop. He is the all-round midfielder, powerful and precise. I have been impressed by Andre Schurrle in the Premier League and UEFA Champions League with Chelsea, he has the finishing and movement to make an impact. Julian Draxler is also very encouraging for the future. He can play on the left but as he gets older and stronger he’ll be an important presence in the middle I think.

**Ghana are in your group, what are your memories of playing the Africans in the last World Cup?**

It was a very difficult game. The fact they nearly reached the semi-finals in South Africa showed how good they are. They have quality and are gaining in big tournament know-how every season.

**Portugal also feature in your group. The Mannschaft have a good record against them, don’t you?**

We beat them at the 2006 World Cup and Euro 2008 and Euro 2012, but that doesn’t mean the games weren’t demanding. The Portuguese are very quick, ruthless opponents. Their qualification was in doubt at one point, but the way they beat Sweden in their play-off was devastating and a warning to everybody.

**You made your name as a full-back who can play on either flank. But now you also operate in central midfield. FC Bayern coach Pep Guardiola called you one of the most intelligent players he has worked with. Where do prefer to play?**

It might sound a cliché but I’ll play where ever Mr. Guardiola at Bayern or Mr. Low of Germany ask me too. I like playing as an attacking full-back because you get a lot of space and can catch opponents out. But playing in front of the defence is also pleasurable. You receive a lot of the ball and can initiate attacks. Of course if you lose the ball in the middle it can be more damaging for the team, so you have to be alert and nimble.

**How much would you like to meet the Netherlands and pit your wits against your FC Bayern teammate Arjen Robben?**

Playing against Arjen in training can be very challenging, but at least I get to be on his team when the real action starts on a Saturday or Wednesday. Coming up against Arjen for my country would be a different proposition. Knowing what he is going to do is simple, but stopping it is another matter. I’d relish the challenge though- I am confident in my ability.

**How about your friends in the Spain squad, have you got any feelings on meeting them in Brazil?**

Javi Martinez was such an important player for us when we won the treble in 2012/13, I know all about his qualities. I have played against Xavi of FC Barcelona and Real Madrid’s Xabi Alonso many times in recent years. Sharing midfield with them at the World Cup wouldn’t be a picnic, but hopefully my knowledge of their styles would help me.

**Does the Germany team have ‘revenge’ on their minds for the defeats to Spain in the World Cup 2010 semi-final?**

I wouldn’t call it revenge but we have certainly been on the end of some painful defeats to them. Aside from the semi-final in 2010 we lost the Euro 2008 final. They are an incredible side who have taken football to a new level. Their ability to keep possession is terrifying. But hopefully, thanks to Mr. Guardiola’s influence at Bayern, some of the Germany players can emulate Spain’s success. We German footballers have our own values like determination and strong nerves. At Bayern we have blended those with the Spanish philosophy to good effect. Hopefully the Mannschaft can do the same.

**What are your memories of the 2010 World Cup?**

On a personal level I was so proud to be asked to captain my country at a World Cup. As a professional footballer it doesn’t get better than that. But losing in a semi-final is so painful. Thankfully we won the third-place decider against Uruguay. I have come third in two consecutive World Cups. It would be nice to go a couple of steps further this time!

**Do you like being captain? What are the main aspects to being captain of a national side?**

I take it very seriously and want to do everything expected of the skipper, and more. Off the pitch I aim to help new players and youngsters settle in and feel at home and comfortable so they can give their best in the white shirt. On the field I have to do my job as captain if things become difficult or go against us. I have to keep everyone calm and concentrated on the task in hand. It’s no good if the match becomes tricky or a few strokes of luck go against you, and the captain has lost his concentration or is involved in a row with an opponent or the officials.

**Can the fans get involved during the World Cup via social media? Are you and the other players aware of and interested what people back home are thinking?**

Of course, we always want to know what the supporters are thinking, good or bad. Applications like Twitter and Facebook can keep us grounded and motivate us. One of the best things about winning is celebrating, and if the fans can join in it makes it all the sweeter. Messages during big tournaments are always welcome. I love it when fans go to great efforts to send amusing or passionate tweets.

**Like many top level sportspeople you are adept at many different sports. Will you be taking any equipment form other games to your World Cup hotel?**

I play golf and darts and used to ski, but my favourite sport outside football is snooker. I have got a professional size table at home and love playing on it. It would be great if our residence in Brazil has snooker facilities. The sport is growing in popularity in Germany and I could propose a tournament among the players and staff. We’re all very competitive people so it could get very interesting.

**END**