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

***Marcelo, defender, Brazil***

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**A World Cup back home in Brazil. Describe exactly how excited you are about it the prospect of this…**

It would be impossible to be more excited. It feels like the nation has been building up to this summer forever. As soon as we won the right to host the cup, I just thought ‘woah, you’ve got to be a part of that’. Playing in any World Cup is the ultimate honour for any Brazilian, but to be part of the side who play it on your own turf, that is something holy, beyond a gift.

**As a Rio de Janeiro-born boy, what do you think about the new Maracana Stadium?**

It is wonderful, a church of football, the ultimate place to play the game. As a boy growing up in Rio with absolutely nothing. you look at that place in total awe. And of course I was very lucky that as a boy I signed for Fluminese, who play at the Maracana, and I got to play for the club there. That is something holy for any Brazilian. But now it has been brought into the 21st century, it should be the envy of the entire world. I just hope and prey that I can be part of it, and play in a World Cup final there.

**Is it a problem that everyone in Brazil expects so much from the home side? Could you crumble under the pressure?**

It is true that the nation will accept nothing else but victory, but neither will we as players. If we do not win, if we go out in the semi finals in front of a huge crowd of Brazilians, then we will have failed. It is harsh to set our standards so high, but it is the only place that we can set them. And we are all used to dealing with pressure. We all play at big clubs.

**You must have been walking on eggshells trying not to get injured before the tournament…**

I know. To have that taken away from you would just be the worst, so you have to stay injury free. Of course, you still play the game at 100%, because if you start pulling out of tackles, that is where you get injured.

**You’ve been hailed by your predecessor Roberto Carlos as the best left back in the world. He also says that you have better technical ability than him. Must be pleasing…**

It is surreal to hear him say that. He is a hero to me, a hero to Brazilian footballers and football fans. He was a huge player at Real Madrid too, so to have him say things like that is overwhelming for me. I remember him bombing forward for Brazil for so many years – that position was his for nearly 15 years. And the free kicks he would hit so hard, they were so impressive. I am a different player to him, but I love to attack, love to defend, and that is like Roberto. I’m happy for any comparison.

**What is it like playing at Real Madrid surrounded by Spaniards with World Cup winners’ medals?**

It is great. I love being in the same team as them, they are extraordinary people and outstanding players. They are lovely guys too, so humble, they are not egotists. You find that in true champions, they carry themselves in a humble way. They understand not to brag. But naturally as Brazilians we want to be where Spain are now. We are the number one and two ranked sides, but they are the ones who have won the World Cup recently. There may be a little talk in the dressing room at the end of this season. ‘See you at the Maracana!’

**You even have Spanish nationality…**

Yes, that allows me to be registered in Spain as a national rather than a non-EU player, which they have limits on. I love Spain. The food, the people, the culture – it feels like home to me. But I will always be a Brazilian, and it will always be my true home. I am a Rio boy and that is with me forever.

**At least you have some insider knowledge on how the Spaniards play.**

Yes, and to be in La Liga every week I have to play defence against some of the best of them. So sometimes it is nicer to play against players that you have already faced in competitive games, or in training. You know their strengths, their weaknesses. If you already know how they can beat you as a defender, if they’ve done that in the past, it is something you can predict and prepare for. That knowledge is power.

**So in a way, the sides like group opponents Croatia and Cameroon, who have fewer players you’ve faced before, could be more difficult.**

This is a worry, yes – if you don’t know an opponent, they can surprise you. But we are doing our research, so we will not go into any of these games short of knowledge, not knowing who their best players are, how they can harm us. Our coach is very prepared and he knows how to face up to all manner of different opponents. You can’t win the World Cup just by beating Spain. You have to defeat all kinds of different opponents who play in many different ways. That’s why it is difficult.

**You also face Mexico in group A, who you scored a wondergoal against in a 2010 friendly…**

Yes, that was one of the best goals I have ever hit. I ran and ran and I just kept beating defenders, then I found myself in front of goal. It was crazy. I’d love to do that in a World Cup. Mexico will be an interesting match. They are a strong team, and they will like the climate, the conditions in Brazil. I think they will back themselves to get out of group A, and I wouldn’t be surprised if they made the final 16. We just need to make sure we beat them so we can come top of group A, because whoever comes second is looking at maybe facing Spain.

**You’ve had a few run-ins with Leo Messi over the years. Would you like to face him in Brazil?**

Brazil vs Argentina is the biggest possible fixture for this whole World Cup, so of course I would say yes, bring on Messi. We all know what an incredible player he is, but one incredible player isn’t a whole team. I have faced Messi and we have had some great battles in the Clasicos. But this would be a whole other Clasico, the biggest match in the history of South America, I would say, should it happen. The whole continent would be stuck to their TVs.

**You have a tattoo of your grandfather on your arm. What is the story behind that unique piece of ink?**

Yes, the tattoo is of my grandfather, Pedro. He gave me money when I was a youngster back in Brazil, and I used that money to support myself while I tried to become a footballer. Without that money, I would have given up the game and got a regular job. So I owe everything to Pedro. If it wasn’t for him, no Fluminense, no Real Madrid, no Brazil, no World Cup. I’ll always love him for that.

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