



Name

Marcos Antonio Falopa

Date and place of birth

2 April 1949, Sao Paulo (Brazil)

Clubs played for

1961-1966 Palmeiras

1970-1972 Associacao Desportiva Sao Caetano

1972-1975 Universidade de Santo Andre

Selected technical roles

1990 Palmeiras

1995-2002 CONCACAF

2002-2004 South Africa

2005-2006 Oman

2007-2009 Myanmar

2013 East Bengal FC

since 2014 Barbados

“Football in Barbados needs sustainable reconstruction.”

As technical director of the Barbados Football Association, Marcos Falopa has been charged with heading the nation's sporting development. We chatted to the Brazilian and discovered how he plans to put the holiday idyll on the world's footballing map.

Marcos Falopa, have you been to the beach today yet?

Marcos Falopa: (laughs) No, not yet but a few days ago I was with the U-17 side on Brownes Beach, which is close to Bridgetown. The players did running and coordination exercises. Training on sand is very intensive and the view from the beach over Carlisle Bay is pretty hard to beat.

Most people normally associate Barbados with holidays rather than football...

There's no denying that. Tourism and banking are without doubt the most well-known economic sectors on the island, and when it comes to sport then cricket is the favourite. But football is also popular, especially since the World Cup in Brazil. As a Brazilian I get asked about it constantly. Everyone still talks about the final between Germany and Argentina, and unfortunately also about the semi-final between Germany and Brazil *(laughs)*.

In the FIFA Ranking Barbados are in 169th position, behind Liechtenstein and Dominica. What attracted you to the role?

I love challenges like this. I've already been responsible for the national teams of South Africa, Oman and Myanmar either as coach or technical director. The current technical situation in Barbados is similar to how it was in Myanmar in 2007/08. The players weren't professionals but thanks to our work and FIFA's development programmes they improved considerably. Back then the first thing we had to do was convince the players that nothing is impossible. If you want to be successful out on the pitch you need a good psychological starting point and a development strategy. Club coaches are crucial when it comes to players' technical ability as they have to lead the youngsters to a higher level and offer them opportunities. The main problem in Barbados is that the most talented young players move abroad very early on. Many of them go

to the USA or England, but some don't go as far afield and head to Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

Your contract is limited to six months. Is it possible to make any sustainable changes in such a short period of time?

Not really, six months aren't enough to be able to do so. But I'm working according to a mid to long-term strategy and am trying to lay a foundation that can be built upon. Besides, I'm assuming I won't only be here for six months. Randy Harris, the association president, has indicated to me that he wants to restructure football in Barbados with sustainable, target-oriented, long-term programmes.

Barbados' qualification for the 2014 World Cup ended with six defeats from as many games, leaving them bottom of the group and 10 points behind Bermuda.

The key thing is being able to gauge your progress against international teams. Next up we've got a tournament in Martinique with matches against Bonaire, Surinam and Martinique. For Europeans that probably sounds like a Caribbean cruise ship's itinerary but for us they're important opportunities to test ourselves and take small steps forward.

CONCACAF sides were among the teams to stand out most at the 2014 World Cup. To what extent can Barbados profit from the boom in the region?

The example set by Costa Rica in particular sent out a strong signal. It showed that through continuous development work even small nations can achieve great things. After qualifying for the World Cup for the first time in 1990, Costa Rica underwent an astonishing process of development – not least at youth level. That laid the groundwork for their present success. Here in Barbados we need to follow their example. I see a glint in the eyes of the young girls and boys I meet here and we need to channel that enthusiasm.

However, long-term progress is only possible if we work on bringing through coaches and offering them further training. That's why I view one of my most important projects here as being to raise the association's awareness of those aspects of development work. Only well-trained coaches can guarantee a sustainable development.

What are Barbados' chances of qualifying for a World Cup one day?

We've still got a very long way to go, but I know that football always throws up surprises. The game doesn't have a long history in Barbados; we need to write its history first.

As a Brazilian, what do you think was wrong with the Seleção at the World Cup?

Brazilian football needs new structures, especially in terms of training young players and coaches. In that sense the challenges are similar to the ones Barbados are facing, even if they are at a much higher level *(laughs)*. Brazilians need to rethink. We can't claim we always know better anymore and instead need to be open to new influences and show a willingness to learn from other footballing cultures. For example, I'm in favour of a coaching exchange programme. Our coaches can only learn from the systematic work being done in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and Holland. ☺

Marcos Falopa was talking to Thomas Renggli