

## Ghanaians Resort to Shrink and Prayers While Getting Ready for Brazil

Contributed by O.Ch.  
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Defending champion Brazil is bracing for a tricky match against Ghana in the second round of the World Cup.

"It's a dangerous, risky match," Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said Monday. "In the round of 16, we have to deal with the ghost of elimination (for the first time)."

Brazil will meet Ghana, which survived a tough group in the first round, on Tuesday for a spot in the quarterfinals.

"The responsibility Ghana is facing cannot be compared to ours. They are straight shooters," Parreira said. "All the pressure is on the Brazilian national team. We will have to keep our heads in place not to lose control."

Playing in their first World Cup, the Africans finished second to two-time champion Italy in Group E, which also included the United States and the Czech Republic.

"It's a team that needs to be respected. It played three good games in a very difficult group," Parreira said. "It eliminated the Czech Republic, which was one of the favorites to advance to the next round."

Parreira, whose first coaching job was with Ghana in 1967, said the African team is the "biggest surprise of the World Cup."

Still, the defending champions were confident of advancing to the next round from the match in Dortmund.

"If Brazil plays what it knows, it shouldn't have any problems getting past them," Brazil defender Roberto Carlos said. "How many world titles has Ghana won? None. How many has Brazil won? It makes a difference."

Brazil is boosted by a convincing 4-1 win over Japan last Thursday, in which it improved considerably from lackluster victories against Croatia and Australia.

"Brazil is prepared to face anybody. There's no reason to fear any opponent," said Ronaldo, who scored twice against Japan and apparently regained his form after shaky performances in the first two matches.

Ghana coach Ratomir Dujkovic said a team psychologist and daily prayers at training were helping calm nerves before the Black Stars take on the five-time world champions.

"I will tell them ... Please don't be afraid of the shirt of Brazil, and don't stand and look at your idols and see how they are playing. Try to stop them," Dujkovic said.

While Brazil is seeking a record sixth title, Ghana is trying to become only the third African team to reach the quarterfinals of the World Cup. Senegal did it in 2002 in France and Cameroon made it in 1990 in Italy. No team has reached the semifinals.

"I think we've made history. It's our first time in the competition and we've made it to the second round," Ghana midfielder Sulley Muntari said.

Besides, Senegal and Cameroon, Morocco and Nigeria are the only other African teams to reach the second round.

"African soccer has improved a lot recently, with several players in top clubs around the world," Roberto Carlos said.

Dujkovic was not ruling out an upset against the Brazilians.

"The Black Stars are not afraid of anybody, including Brazil," he said. "We have excellent players ... (Brazil) will have to suffer to win this match."

The Brazilians were bracing for a physical match on Tuesday.

Ghana committed 76 fouls in its three first-round matches, the most by any of the 32 teams. Brazil committed 35, the fewest. In addition, Ghana players received 12 yellow cards, second only to Tunisia.

"I hope the referees are able to curb this, especially to protect the soccer played with quality," Parreira said.

Brazil struggled when it faced Croatia and Australia, which play similar to Ghana physically.

"(Our) players are stopping opponents, but they never, never have bad intentions, or (commit) fouls to cause injuries," Dujkovic said. "This is the difference between the Blacks Stars and some other players."

Ghana will get back Muntari and striker Asamoah Gyan from suspension, but playmaker Michael Essien will be out after picking up a pair of yellow cards.

Parreira said he will not announce his starting lineup until just before the match, as he did prior to Brazil's game against Japan. He fielded five reserve players then, leaving out some regular starters ahead of the match against Ghana.

He will not be able to count on striker Robinho, who injured his right thigh in Brazil's training session on Saturday.

Brazil beat Ghana 8-2 the only time the teams have met a 1996 friendly in Brazil.

"We'll play our game on Tuesday and see what happens," Ghana captain Stephen Appiah said.

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