

Brazil Bid to Host World Cup Is Rich in Rhetoric and Poor in Cash

Contributed by Francesco Neves
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Brazil has officially made public its intention of hosting the 2014 World Cup, 64 years after the only and last time the country had as guests the world's top soccer players. The Alchemist's author, Paulo Coelho, and controversial striker Romário were part of the team that went, yesterday, July 31, to Zurich, in Switzerland, to present to Fifa's (International Federation of Football Association) honcho, Joseph Blatter, Brazil's candidacy.

After Colombia withdrew its own candidacy in April Brazil became the sole candidate to the event. But this doesn't mean that the country will automatically get to host the games.

Blatter made it clear that Brazil will still have to prove its mettle. "For the time being," he said, "Brazil has not yet been given the World Cup. If something should happen to the Brazil bid, then we still have time to start again as we are a year in advance of the decision-making process for previous World Cups."

Ricardo Teixeira, president of the CBF (Brazilian Soccer Confederation) took with him a 900-page dossier including a letter from Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 11 documents from government ministries guaranteeing backing for the games and 18 agreements with stadiums and cities that would stage soccer's most important competition.

Lavish in words the Brazilian dossier seemed to lack, however, more specifics on the kind of money it will be invested and where this money will come from.

If Brazil wins the right to host the World Cup the games might happen in the cities of Belém, Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Campo Grande, Cuiabá, Curitiba, Florianópolis, Fortaleza, Goiânia, Maceió, Manaus, Natal, Porto Alegre, Rio Branco, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and São Paulo, besides Recife and Olinda, in the Northeast.

Four of these cities would need to build a new stadium for the event: Maceió, Natal, Salvador and Recife/Olinda. Fourteen other towns would just remodel stadiums they already have. From these 18 cities, only 12 would end up staging games, but Fifa would prefer a maximum of 8 to 10 cities in that list.

"This is a small ceremony, but 185 million people are here with us," said Teixeira in Zurich. And he went on to give Blatter assurances that Brazil has all it takes to hold the World Cup.

"The country," he said, "as far as infrastructure, technology and human qualification are concerned, has all the needed conditions and will overcome everything that is necessary to hold a top-level Cup."

Fifa's answer to Brazil's aspiration will come October 30. Brazil will have until October 29 to present its final proposal to the Fifa's executive committee. Before that, the country should be getting the visit of that entity's inspectors at the end of August, when they will check installations and other conditions.

"May other countries forgive us," said Romário, one of the architects of Brazil's victory at the US 1994 World Cup "but soccer was created for Brazil."

Coelho tried to pull some emotional string appealing to the unifying power of soccer: "I saw The World Cup in Germany and how it changed the soul of the country," said the writer. "In Brazil it will change the body and soul of my country, meaning that all the infrastructure we need will surely be put in place." The writer said that bringing the games to Brazil would give his fellow citizens a "chance for growing."

Among the venues offered in the proposal the mythical Maracanã, which was built for the 1950 World Cup, was preferred to the newly-built Engenhão stadium, erected for the just-concluded Pan American Games. This means that the old stadium would have to endure quite a radical makeover.

In São Paulo, the more modern Morumbi won over the Pacaembu, more traditional and closer to downtown.

The cities and the stadiums

Belém: Mangueirão

Belo Horizonte: Mineirão

Brasília: Mané Garrincha

Campo Grande: Moreirão

Cuiabá: Verdão

Curitiba: Arena da Baixada

Florianópolis: Orlando Scarpelli

Fortaleza: Castelão

Goiânia: Serra Dourada

Maceió: Arena Zagallo (new construction)

Manaus: Vivaldão

Natal: Estrela dos Reis Magos (new construction)

Porto Alegre: Beira-Rio

Recife-Olinda: Arena Recife-Olinda (new construction)

Rio Branco: Arena da Floresta

Rio de Janeiro: Maracanã

Salvador: Arena da Bahia (new construction)

São Paulo: Morumbi