

## The Promising Soccer Boys of Saudi Arabia Train in Brazil

Contributed by Marina Sarruf  
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Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr soccer team chose Brazil to promote a series of friendly games with local clubs. A group of 12 players in the under-20 category spent one month in Rio de Janeiro, where they practiced at the Zico Soccer Center (CFZ), a school whose objective is to train soccer stars.

"Brazilian soccer is famous worldwide and has many techniques," stated the coordinator and supervisor of the Al Nassr under-20 team, Nasser Kanaane, who returned to the Arab country last week.

This was the first time that the team came to Brazil. "We will return next year," stated the coordinator. To him, the season was excellent. "The treatment granted by the Brazilians was very good, the players gained in experience, the Zico school was excellent and the Brazilians who work there are very professional," he said.

The coach of the under-20 category at Al Nassr, Wilson Gonçalves, known as Guerreiro (Warrior), and who is Brazilian, recommended the Zico School. According to Kanaane, the idea is to promote exchange with Brazilian teams so that they may also go and play in Saudi Arabia. "We have already spoken to CFZ and Fluminense," he said.

The young Al Nassr players returned home pleased. They defeated Fluminense and CFZ 2x1. However, in the match against Flamengo, they lost 1x0. According to Kanaane, the managers of Fluminense were impressed with player Ibrahim Ghalib, aged 18. "If a good offer were made, I would certainly come to play in Brazil. Who would not like to play in a professional team in Brazil?" asked the Saudi player.

While the Saudis wait for proposals to come here, Brazilians are getting ready to go there. According to Kanaane, Al Nassr took on five Brazilian professionals for the team. Among them are coach Edgar Pereira, of the Fluminense Junior category, physical fitness coach Flávio Vignoli and goalkeeper trainer João Carlos. The press department at Fluminense, however, has not yet confirmed this information.

Kanaane made a point of recalling that Brazilian coaches Carlos Alberto Parreira and Mário Jorge Lobo Zagallo have already trained the Saudi national team, and have also been world champions with the Brazilian National Team. "All the Brazilians who go to practice in Saudi Arabia do well. They say that, apart from money, the country offers peace and security," stated the coordinator.

Currently, the idol of the Saudi players is Kaká, who plays for Milan, in Italy. "I would like to play like him, or better," stated Fahad Al Rashide, aged 17. According to him, his dream is to be a professional player at Al Nassr and to defend the Saudi national team. Most of the players dream of reaching the national team, but when the topic is leaving their country of origin to play in Brazil, the answer is immediate: "yes", said the 12 boys.

Before returning to Saudi Arabia, the players did a tour of São Paulo. They visited Luz train station, the Pinacoteca art museum, Sé square, Liberdade neighborhood, the São Paulo Art Museum (Masp) and Pacaembu soccer stadium.

In the city, the youths were met by the Public Relations at the Saudi embassy in Brasília, Fahad Alessa; the presidential advisor at the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, Rafael Frota, and the Foreign Trade advisor at the organization, Rafael Abdulmassih.

Anba