

'Some people enjoy all the exposure but I never liked it'

Football

FIFA.COM

Tired of terrorising goalkeepers, beating records and appearing on the front page of sports papers around the world, Argentina's Gabriel Batistuta decided to call time on his career in the relative peace and quiet of Qatar.

Question (Q): Gabriel, it is now three months since your retirement. How do you feel?

Answer (A): Great. I'd been thinking about retiring for a while, and the fact is I don't regret it at all. Now I can do the things I never could before.

Q: There has been a lot of conjecture in the press, but what was the real reason for retiring?

A: My injury problems were getting worse, particularly my ankles, and I just found it harder and harder to motivate myself.

Q: Do you think you made the right decision in finishing your career in Qatar?

A: My family and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I'd never been there before, although I did go to check out some schools for my children.

Q: Is it true to say you were tired of the limelight?

A: It's all so professional now and I was getting a little tired of it. Some people enjoy all the exposure but I never liked it.

A: All the time. My family and friends are there, all my people. Luckily, though, I've always managed to settle down wherever I've been.

Q: And your plans for the future?

A: I'm taking a coaching course run by the Argentine Football Association and I'm studying hard. More than anything else I'd like to find out what they teach managers, but I'm not desperate to start coaching right away.

Q: So you would like the Argentina job at some point?

A: Look, if they rang tomorrow and asked me to take over, I'd do it - it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I can't really see it happening, though

[laughs]. Seriously though, why not? One thing's for sure: if they ever did call me, I'd have to think long and hard about it.

Q: You have often said you are not a big football fan. Something of a paradox, no?

A: I know, but it's true. I could easily make a living doing something else. I really enjoy studying and reading, and I'm also a qualified pilot, but I wouldn't kill myself if I couldn't go and fly. It's the same with everything else.

Q: Who did you most enjoy playing with?

A: It's hard to say. I was lucky to play with some great footballers like Rui Costa, Francesco Totti, and many more.

Q: You scored all sorts of goals. Which one do you remember most?

A: That's a difficult question. There are so many I can't pick just one. Every goal has a story to it that people don't know.

Q: You have taken up golf. I would imagine you would be happy if you achieved ten percent of what you achieved in football.

A: I play a lot but not as much as I'd like. My football career may be over but I can carry on playing and enjoying golf until I'm 70.

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Q: Did it hurt being left out of the squad for the 2004 Olympics in Athens?

A: That's water under the bridge and I don't like looking back on things. Of course, I would have loved to have been part of it.

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The 'Beast' not moving

LONDON

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has been dealt a hammer blow to his preparations for the new campaign after Sevilla striker Julio Baptista turned his back on a move to Highbury.

The Brazilian, dubbed 'Beast of Seville' for his physical presence, looked set to make the switch to England after confirming his desire to join either the Gunners or Manchester United.

Arsenal chief David Dein flew out to Spain last week to finalise the deal, but it now seems all the hard work will come to nothing.

"I want to stay with Sevilla for one more season," he told the Daily Mail.

"Then I will be able to gain dual nationality and become a European citizen. If I went to Arsenal now, I would not be able to."

Baptista was also being tracked by Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona, but they'll have to wait at least one more season before moving for the 23-year-old. Internet Source

Junaid Miandad weds on July 23

REUTERS, Islamabad