

El Phenomenon calls time on soccer



"I wanted to continue, but I can't do it any more. I think of an action, but I can't do it the way I want to. It's time. It's the body that's hurting me"

FULL NAME: RONALDO LUIZ NAZARIO DE LIMA

Date of birth: September 22, 1976

Place of birth: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Position: striker

Club career: Cruzeiro (BRA/1993-94), PSV Eindhoven (NED/1994-96), Barcelona (ESP/1996-97), Inter Milan (ITA/1997-2002), Real Madrid (ESP/2002-2007), AC Milan (2007-2008), Corinthians (2008-2011)

International appearances: 97

International goals: 62

First cap: Brazil 2-0 Argentina, March 23, 1994

First international goal: Brazil 3-0 Ireland, May 3,

1994

Last cap: France 1-0 Brazil, July 1, 2006

Last international goal: Brazil 3-0 Ghana, June 27, 2006

INTERNATIONAL HONOURS

World Cup: 1994, 2002; 19 matches, 15 goals

Copa America: 1997, 1999; 13 matches, 10 goals

Confederations Cup: 1997

PERSONAL HONOURS

Golden Ball (best player): 1998 World Cup

Golden Boot (top scorer): 2002 World Cup

Ballon d'Or (European Footballer of the Year):

1997, 2002

FIFA World Player of the Year: 1996, 1997, 2002

World Cup finals tournaments when he scored his 15th goal at the 2006 tournament in Germany.

He was twice named European Footballer of the Year, in 1997 and 2002, and finished his international career with 62 goals in 97 appearances.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time, 'El Fenomeno' (The Phenomenon) won the World Cup with Brazil for the first time in 1994, though on that occasion the 17-year-old was part of the squad and did not play.

In 1998, he was among the losing finalists, beaten 3-0 at Stade de France by a rampant French side that included the inspirational Zinedine Zidane.

Brazil's star striker suffered a convulsive fit on the eve of the match and was removed from the starting line-up.

In a dramatic changing-room reshuffle, he was reinstated just before kick-off but was a shadow of the intimidating forward who had scored four goals in the run-up to the final.

But the 2002 tournament was where he made history.

Shrugging off injury in the tournament, which was hosted by Japan and South Korea, he played a key role in helping Brazil to the trophy, scoring both goals in his country's 2-0 win over Germany in the final in Yokohama.

At the 2006 World Cup in Germany he took his World Cup tally to 15 goals, surpassing the previous record held by Gerd Mueller by one goal.

AFP, Sao Paulo

Three-time FIFA World Player of the Year Ronaldo, whose goalscoring genius led Brazil to the 2002 World Cup title, confirmed his retirement on Monday at the age of 34.

The tearful Corinthians striker announced his decision at a press

conference in Sao Paulo.

"I'm stopping my career as a professional footballer," he said, his voice breaking. "It's been a beautiful, emotional, marvellous career."

"These last two years, I've had a long series of injuries, from one side to the other, one leg to the other, one muscle to the other. The pain pushed me to

think about the end of my career."

Ronaldo also revealed that he suffered from a thyroid problem that had made it difficult to control his weight.

"Four years ago, in Milan, I discovered that I suffered from an underactive thyroid that slowed down my metabolism and that to control it, I had to take hormones that weren't

authorised in football as they were considered a form of doping," he said.

"Lots of people must regret having made jokes about my weight. But I feel no anger towards anyone."

Having earlier indicated that he hoped to play on until the end of the year, injuries and Corinthians' early elimination from the Copa

Libertadores prompted him to bring forward his retirement.

During a glittering 14-year spell in Europe, Ronaldo scored goals at a prolific rate for PSV Eindhoven, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and AC Milan, before returning to Brazil in 2009.

He won the World Cup with Brazil in 2002 and became the leading scorer in

Real show real character

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid showed real character to close the gap on leaders Barcelona to five points winning 1-0 at Espanyol on Sunday, despite playing virtually the whole match with 10 men after goalkeeper and captain Iker Casillas was sent off after just 90 seconds.

Brazilian international left back Marcelo scored the decisive goal on 23

minutes as Real took advantage of Barcelona's 1-1 draw against Sporting Gijon on Sunday to edge closer in the title race - but it took a battling display from Madrid's 'Galacticos'.

Real had collected one point from the last six on the road and got off to the worst possible start at the Cornellà-El Prat with captain Casillas red-carded for a rash challenge outside the area.

Barely a minute and a half into the match, the keeper came out to stop Jose Callejon in his tracks on the edge of the box and the referee immediately brandished a red card.

Real coach Jose Mourinho sacrificed Argentine winger Angel di Maria and substitute goalkeeper Antonio Adan, a 23-year-old from the youth academy, came on for an unexpected debut.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Real looked more dangerous and Sami Khedira tested Carlos Kameni in the fifth minute with a low drive before Marcelo clipped the top of the crossbar minutes later.

Real scored on 23 minutes with Ronaldo feeding Marcelo

on the left and the Brazilian hammered a first time shot past Carlos Kameni, who should have done better, to give the visitors the lead.

Madrid were the stronger side early in the second half although Espanyol were unlucky to have Callejon flagged offside in the 53rd minute when the striker was clear on goal.

The extra man started to tell as Espanyol dominated possession and it was backs to the wall for Real as they absorbed a good 15 minutes of pressure, but debutant Adan was largely untested.

Togo striker Emmanuel Adebayor missed two great chances to wrap up the points for Real in the closing stages with Kameni foiling him on both occasions. However, the misses didn't prove costly.

Elsewhere, Villarreal fell two points behind rivals Valencia in the Champions League race as they crashed to their second successive league defeat with a 1-0 loss at Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday.

Defender Alberto Lopo's goal on the hour sealed three vital points for Depor, who move out of the relegation zone, as Villarreal failed to score for the second consecutive game.

A set-piece undid Villarreal, with Ivan Riki heading down a free-kick from the left and centre-back Lopo reacting first to slide in a rare goal.

Villarreal, beaten at home by promoted Levante last time out, should have equalised in the 82nd minute but substitute Marco Ruben headed over from close range.

Depor move out of the relegation zone and are now three points clear of Osasuna, who replace them in the bottom three.

RESULTS

Espanyol 0	Real Madrid 1
(Marcelo 23)	
Levante 1	(Caicedo 52) Almeria 0
Malaga 2	(Baptista 79-pen, Rondon 90)
Getafe 2	(Miku 8, Colunga 23)
Hercules 2	(Farinos 80, Trezeguet 87)
Real Zaragoza 1	(Braulio 4)
Real Sociedad 1	(Tamudo 73) Osasuna 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1	

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RESULTS

Palermo 2	(Pastore 7, Nocerino 48)
Florentina 4	(Giardino 36, Campore 70, Bovo 78-og, Montolivo 88)
Bari 0	Genoa 0
Brescia 0	Lazio 2 (Gonzalez 18, Kozak 58)
Cagliari 4	(Conti 19, Canini 29, Nene 44, 71) Chiello 1 (Thereau 84)
Catania 3	(Sivestr 45, Lodi 80, 85)
Lecce 2	(Jeda 56, Munari 61)
Cesena 0	Udinese 3 (Di Natale 41, 75, Inler 69)
Sampdoria 3	(Palombo 8, Gastaldello 11, Macarone 15) Bologna 1 (Paponi 65)

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