

Brazil Great Ronaldo Hungs Up His Boots



Brazilian star Ronaldo has announced he is retiring from football at the age of 34.

He is one of only two players – the other being Zinedine Zidane – to be named FIFA world player of the year three times. In a glittering goal-filled career, Ronaldo Luís Nazário de Lima was a member of two World Cup-winning sides in 1994 and 2002.

He told a packed press conference in Sao Paulo that injuries had forced him to put an end to his career.

"I came here to say today that I'm ending my career as a professional player...Four years ago at Milan I discovered I was suffering from a complaint called hypothyroidism, which slows down your metabolism and to control it I would have to take some hormones that are not permitted in football because of anti-doping."

He added that "it has been a beautiful, emotional, marvellous career."

He had been expected to retire at the end of this season but with his club, Corinthians, making an early exit from the Copa Libertadores, he decided that now was the time to call it a day.

Ronaldo's glittering career began at Cruzeiro in his native Brazil where a dazzling goalscoring streak brought the teenager to the attention of some of Europe's biggest clubs.

Later that season, he was named as non-playing member of his country's 1994 World Cup squad.

Ronaldo joined PSV Eindhoven after the competition. In two seasons in Dutch football, he hit 54 goals in just 57 games.

That rich vein of form alerted Spanish giants Barcelona, who were coached by Englishman Bobby Robson at the time.

Robson only coached Ronaldo for one season but he once referred to him as "the best player I have ever worked with."

Robson said: "Ronaldo was lean, mean, as quick as an Olympic sprinter and some of the goals he scored had me shaking my head in disbelief."

Ronaldo stayed just one season at the Camp Nou where he netted 47 goals in 49 matches – a return which saw him named the youngest ever winner of the FIFA World Player of The Year at the age of just 20.

After one season with Barca, Inter Milan snapped him up for a world record fee and Ronaldo went on to score 59 goals in 99 appearances for the Italian giants.

But it was with the Nerazzuri that injuries began to hamper Ronaldo's career. He damaged his knee in 1999 and then again during his comeback in February 2000, which kept him out of the game for another two years.

Nevertheless, Real Madrid were willing to part with 39 million euros in 2002 to secure Ronaldo's signature. He paid them back with 98 goals in 164 games and a record number of replica shirts sold with his name. Four seasons later, he was back at the San Siro, this time with AC Milan. He played just 20 matches there, scoring nine goals, before moving back to Brazil to play with Corinthians.

He also made a huge impact on the international stage and holds the record for the number of goals scored in World Cups, with 15.

In 97 international matches, he scored 62 times for Brazil.

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