

# CARNAVAL

## Ronaldo takes the heat

One of the few things Brazilians take more seriously than soccer is Carnival.

Case in point: Brazil's World Cup preparations.

Fearing that its players would be in no shape to play on Feb. 13, the official end of pre-Lenten celebrations, the Brazilian soccer federation (CBF) didn't schedule a match on the FIFA's first international match day of the year.

The CBF turned down a chance to play Poland and use its European-based players. Instead, Brazil was forced to play Bolivia (6-0) on Jan. 31 and Saudi Arabia (1-0) on Feb. 6 without many of its stars.

The presence of star Ronaldo at Rio's Carnival parade with fellow Brazilian striker and party animal Edmundo prompted reports of a rift between Ronaldo and national team coach Luiz Scolari.

According to the *Jornal do Brasil*, Scolari chastised Ronaldo for not training seriously enough.

Ronaldo has been in Brazil with the permission of Italian club Inter Milan to continue his rehabilitation after the latest setback in his comeback attempt.

Ronaldo was scheduled to play against Saudi Arabia in what would have been his first appearance for Brazil in more than two years, but he was scratched after suffering a thigh injury.

Ronaldo insisted he was following the training program Inter has designed for him.

"Since my arrival in Brazil," he said, "I have been practicing twice a day for five or six hours, in order to come back stronger than ever, because that is my biggest desire."

Ronaldo was hanging out with Edmundo in Brazilian brewery Brahma's VIP box on the Carnival parade route.

Edmundo fell out of favor at Fiorentina four years ago when he left the Italian club for Carnival with it in first place.

Ronaldo and Edmundo joined millions of spectators who turned out for Carnival celebrations highlighted by a two-day parade of samba schools through Rio's streets to Sambodrome, the 60,000-seat samba stadium.

**Ronaldo (left) hangs out with party animal Edmundo in the VIP room at the Sambodrome, site of Rio's famous samba parade.**



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