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CARLOS ALBERTO PARREIRA

Brazil coach ready for Hexacampeonato bid

Brazilian Carlos Alberto Parreira knows all about pressure.

He coached Brazil to the 1994 World Cup title — "24 hours a day of suffering," he says — and he was fired as Saudi Arabia coach in the middle of the 1998 World Cup.

Parreira, 59, has coached five national teams and 10 clubs. Rarely has he enjoyed the success at other jobs that he had in leading Brazil to the '94 title — his MetroStars didn't make the MLS playoffs in 1997 — so he is happy to take up the challenge of leading Brazil in its bid to win the Hexacampeonato, a sixth title.

"The period between 1991 and 1994 was very out-of-the-ordinary," said Parreira. "Brazil had not won a World Cup for over 20 years, and the pressure was unbearable for everyone."

Parreira was the subject of intense media criticism. Nonetheless, he called it a "privilege" to be appointed Brazil coach for a third time.

For the first time, the defending World Cup champion will have to compete in qualifying to earn a berth in the 2006 finals. Brazil's European-based stars had little motivation for the heavy travel in South American qualifying for the 2002 World Cup.

Parreira will have no trouble finding players.

"Our players are the best in the world, so much so that they are imitated by others," he said.

Parreira cited Brazil's new wave of talent: Diego and Robinho, who led Santos to the 2002 Brazilian title, Gil and Kleber, whom he coached on runner-up Corinthians.

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