

IM, Valinhos não tem de ser fluente em Inglês. Como ele disse, o futebol é uma linguagem universal “passando passa, pontuando está; pontuando e defesa é defender. Mas é como é feito que faz a diferença e o treinador será julgado pela forma como ele vai fazer zimbabuenses fazerem-no melhor.

Yes, Valinhos need not be fluent in English. As he said, football is a universal language “passing is passing, scoring is scoring and defending is defending. But it’s how it’s done that makes the difference and the coach will be judged by how he will make Zimbabweans do it best. Brazilian Valinhos is two months into his new job as Zimbabwe’s national team coach, although he is yet to get a match.

An onerous task awaits the 61-year-old coach whose apparent brief is to lead the Warriors to the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa as well as the African Nations Cup tournament in Angola the same year.

Needless to say, Valinhos’s success or failure will be determined by whether he is able or not to turn the Warriors from the pussycats that they had become into a competitive outfit.

But for a man whose knowledge of Zimbabwean football is as good as non-existent, the Brazilian will need a big heart to last the distance.

Zimbabwe’s football ills range from incompetent administration to a lack of quality players.

In any case, Valinhos has already seen the impediments he will encounter in his tenure when the Zimbabwe Football Association failed to secure training facilities for the national team three weeks ago.

But more woes are likely to come Valinhos’s way.

For now, there is no guarantee that Zifa will be able to organise friendly matches for the Warriors, especially on Fifa-reserved days.

Even if the Warriors are to get friendly internationals, there is no assurance that they will attract quality opponents.

There is a misguided belief in local football that Valinhos "by virtue of hailing from the great football nation of Brazil" will easily lure high-profile opponents for Zimbabwe.

The only relief is that he hasn't pledged to do so although obviously it's every coach's dream to play Brazil, Argentina and Germany, to name just a few.

But if Zifa were able to organise friendlies with giants such as Cameroon, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Ghana, it would give Valinhos a good measure of the task that awaits him.

In any case, playing teams such as Mozambique, Botswana and Lesotho will only add pressure on Valinhos because the Warriors, as bad as they are, are not expected to lose to such "minnows".

So, besides the marketing opportunity that normally comes with high-profile matches, Valinhos and Zimbabweans at large will be able to gauge how far we have lagged in terms of football standards.

For now Zimbabweans have had no choice except to speculate in their heads how the Warriors are better or worse than other countries.

That's the tragedy of failing to qualify for the Nations Cup tournament.

Zimbabwe would have been a better footballing nation had they taken part in the biennial tournament in Ghana, even if they had lost all their matches.

The Warriors would have gained invaluable exposure playing some of Africa's greatest exports to Europe.

Zimbabwe would have learnt how football is not just about skill but organisational abilities.

They would by now be aware that the game is more about technique than anything else.

We all would have seen how physically unfit our boys are compared to the rest of Africa.

But Zimbabwe missed such a great opportunity because the Warriors were as bad on the field of play during qualifying matches as were Zifa in organisational abilities.

Valinhos went to Ghana to "spy" on two of Zimbabwe's opponents in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers - Guinea and Namibia.

I don't know whether or not the "spying" mission served the purpose it was intended for.

What I am sure about is that Valinhos knows zilch about Zimbabwean football - a fact that makes it hard for him to compare the Warriors with, say, Guinea.

What Valinhos needs to know, besides Zifa's well-documented shortcomings, is that Zimbabwe is desperately short of quality players.

During the two training camps he has arranged so far, Valinhos should have seen the kind of players who are at his disposal.

In any case, I can't imagine David Mandigora and Brenna Msiska "assistants to Valinhos" recommending players other than those who have already failed in the Warriors' colours.

Judging the performance of those who donned the national colours in various tournaments last year, you would say, maybe, they have a future.

But now, very few of them are young enough to have a future "if they care to produce their birth certificates.

The same applies to a number of players in the Under-17 and 20 sides who are clearly overaged for the youth teams.

For interest's sake, does Valinhos expect Gift Lunga to be a better player than he is by the time of the World Cup finals?

Unless he is a magician, Valinhos will by the time the Warriors play in the 2010 qualifiers wish Zifa could also "buy" players like they had imported him.

The long and short of it is that Valinhos, who has never coached at senior national level, has a tough challenge to achieve what he is paid for.

Of course, it's also not a secret that Valinhos was employed as a red herring to lure countries such as his motherland Brazil to camp in the crisis-torn Zimbabwe during the World Cup extravaganza.

Which explains why the Warriors gaffer's salary in foreign currency is being paid by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority "which no doubt had a say in his employment terms.

But Valinhos will soon realise that he will be judged by how many matches he will win, not the number of Brazilian football tourists he will attract to Zimbabwe.

Mostre-nos se a sua magia brasileira pode trabalhar no ZimbabuÃ©, tendo em conta todos os obstÃ¡culos susceptÃ¡veis de serem lanÃ§adas no seu caminho. (Show us if your Brazilian magic can work in Zimbabwe, given all the obstacles likely to be thrown in your path.)

VocÃª precisa ser um mago, o senhor Valinhos. (You really have to be a magician, Mr Valinhos.) Senhor Valinhos, vocÃª ainda nÃ£o viu nada ainda â€” and we havenâ€™t seen anything yet from you as well.

NB: Please donâ€™t write to me in Portuguese. But if Valinhos is to be at the helm of the Warriors until the 2010 World Cup, maybe I wonâ€™t have to rely on an Internet translator by then.

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