

Parreira will sort us out

by Nelson Rashavha



New Bafana Bafana coach, Carlos Alberto Parreira

Shaun Bartlett joined Carlos Alberto Parreira's multi-national New York/New Jersey MetroStars side as an up-and-coming 24-year-old striker from another MLS club, Colorado Rapids, in 1997.

"I played under him for about eight months," Bartlett remembers. "His approach was unique and he was always analysing the opposition to the finest little detail. He would make sure the team knew everything there was to know about our opponents. His training sessions were normally short and intense. He will bring his tactical acumen and, like Clive Barker, a lot of experience as well.

"He is able to deal with both senior and younger players. I played with Roberto Donadoni and Branco, and he had his own influence on all of us. You could ask him anything and if you had a problem, he would sort it out.

"Parreira has a proven track record so when he talks, you listen. He had no problem getting his point through to the team. He knows how to put his theories into practice and is probably one of the first coaches to teach me positional play."

Parreira has been criticised for lacking a warrior-like, no-fear personality like his countryman, Luiz Felipe Scolari, whom Safa was courting before 'Big Phil' decided to continue with Portugal for a further two years. But Bartlett has no doubt that Parreira is a winner, despite his 2006 Brazil team playing so tamely in Germany and the promising Robinho seeing little action.

"He did the same with Ronaldo in 1994," Bartlett says. "You can't just throw in a young player at the World Cup. Parreira will get the results, but that will depend on whether he has the players. I think the important thing is to give him time - he has four years, so let's not expect him to put things in place and have the team playing the way he wants straight away," Bartlett argues.

"Our players shouldn't worry too much ... Parreira will allow them freedom to do what they want at their clubs - but at a high level. He is used to doing things to higher standards and he will expect it here. Those who will work with him will have to be as professional as they can." Parreira is credited with reviving Brazilian football after leading Seleção to their first World Cup triumph in 24 years in 1994. He had to discipline and instruct big personalities like Romario, Bebeto, Rai and Dunga.

"One thing Parreira was good at in New York was that he had to deal with different cultures and he got them working well together," Bartlett explains. "There were Brazilians, Italians, guys from Colombia and Venezuela and, of course, Americans. But he managed to get everyone working together." **UM**