

Brazil shows the depth of their game

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Osaka, Japan, 14 November, 2006 -- Entering the semifinals of the Women's World Championship, Brazil remains the only unbeaten team, but more than that, the other coaches see Brazil as being the most complete team in the championships.

"Brazil does everything well," Russian coach Giovanni Caprara points out. Their record bears that out. In the first round, they only dropped two sets -- the second and third sets against the Netherlands. In the second round, they dropped the first two against China and the first against Russia. But in all these matches, the Brazilians showed they had something in reserve to pull out and win the matches. In the first round, Brazilian coach Ze Roberto used his ace setter Fofao sparingly as she recovered from a leg injury. When he needed her, she responded. "She is the balance of this team," he admits. As captain and one of the world's best setters, 36-year-old Fofao leads her team in all areas. The generally young Brazilian squad feeds off her calm personality and gain the confidence to beat all they face. Having some of the best and most athletic players in the world helps. In the early games, 22-year-old Jaqueline Carvalho dominated the opposition with her ferocious spikes (not to mention her sparkling defense), partly due to the absence of another star player, Fabiana Claudino, whose playing time was also limited during the first round due to an injury. While Carvalho thunders down spikes from the outside, Fabiana delivers from the middle, feeding on Fofao's short sets and using her massive 314-cm spiking range to oppress opposition defenses. But Brazil's talent doesn't end there. Walewska Oliveira and Welissa Gonzaga deliver on both offense and defense, while universals Sheilla Castro and Renata Colombo provide fantastic offensive power. Perhaps the unsung star of the team is 169-cm libero Fabi, whose sensational and athletic digs are matched by supreme control. Many of the Brazilian attacks start with her. In training, Fabi laughs and jokes with her coaches and fellow players and is the epitome of a competitive athlete enjoying her sport. The fun and laughter of a Brazilian training session sets the tone for their matches: They enjoy their sport, they enjoy each other, and they enjoy winning. In the semifinals, they will face Serbia and Montenegro, a team they have developed in their own image. "Serbia and Montenegro is a very good team," Ze Roberto concedes. "They have speed and experience, so it will be a difficult game tomorrow. We have faced them in the past and we know they are quick and I think this will be a good fast game."

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