

Brazil turns to Brunel as it seeks to reverse footballing failures

December 22 2014

Brazilian football is looking to science for answers as it comes to terms with the national team's humiliating 7-1 defeat at the hands of Germany in this summer's World Cup.

State legislators in Belo Horizonte, the scene of the Brazilian team's shocking exit from the tournament, invited Brunel's Professor Mark Williams to talk on the subject of "Changing football in Brazil: challenges of renovation" in recognition of the world-leading work by the university's Centre for Sports Medicine and Human Performance.

Prof Williams, an advisor to the English Institute of Sport and the Premier League, called on the country to put science at the heart of its vision for the beautiful game.

His speech, which was broadcast on Brazilian state television, highlighted the ways in which other countries are using scientific research to inform talent-spotting and to develop elite athletes' performance.

Prof Williams, Head of the Department of Life Sciences at Brunel University London, said: "Brazil has given us many of football's all-time greats, but in modern football raw talent alone is not enough. Science is key to bringing the World Cup back to Brazil's trophy cabinet."

Addressing the Legislative Assembly of the State of Minas Gerais, Prof Williams told his audience that cognitive and neuroscience insights on

how instruction, feedback and practice scheduling affect skill development had changed coaching behaviour in the Premier League, while training increasingly took into account decision-making and anticipation skills during high-pressure games.

He showed how animation and [virtual reality technology](#) was creating simulation-based training programmes that sped up how quickly players can learn these skills.

The final issue was talent spotting, with too many boys selected by size and strength over potential. He said that the majority of top players are born later in the selection year, meaning technical ability and game intelligence skills are more important.

Professor Williams proposed policy and structure changes to ensure equal opportunity for all athletes to reach elite levels.

Provided by Brunel University

Citation: Brazil turns to Brunel as it seeks to reverse footballing failures (2014, December 22) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-12-brazil-brunel-reverse-footballing-failures.html>

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