BRAZILIAN FUTBOL
It's A Kick!

Fuelled by the scintillating play of the "Three R's" (Ronaldo, Rivaldo, and Ronaldinho), Brazil won its fifth championship at the 2002 FIFA World Cup held in South Korea and Japan. When the groups were drawn, Brazil seemed to have been lucky; Their adversaries would be Turkey, China and Costa Rica. At the end, it turned out that Turkey finished the tournament in third place. Brazil went on beating all three opponents, scoring 11 goals and conceding only three, and topping the group.

In Brazil's opening game against Turkey, Rivaldo fell to the ground clutching his face after Turkey's Hakan Ünsal had kicked the ball at his legs. Hakan Ünsal, who had already been booked, was sent off while Rivaldo jumped to his feet and continued playing. Rivaldo escaped suspension but was fined £5,180 for play-acting, he became the first player to be punished in FIFA's crackdown on "simulation" and "diving".

Next they defeated Belgium 2–0, in the most difficult match for Brazil in the tournament. Against England in the quarter finals, Brazil won 2–1. Ronaldinho scored the winner with a remarkable lofted free kick and also assisted teammate Rivaldo for their first goal, but was sent off for stamping on the right ankle of England's Danny Mills. The semifinal was against Turkey, which Brazil had faced in their group. Again, this match was difficult, as Brazil won 1–0 with a goal by Ronaldo. Rivaldo had scored one goal each in all five game up to this one but did not manage to hit the target in the sixth. He had seemed all set to repeat Jairzinho´s great achievement in 1970 when he scored in every game of the World Cup.

The final was between two of the most successful teams in the competition's history: Germany and Brazil. Either Germany (or West Germany) or Brazil had played in all World Cup finals since 1950, except for 1978 (f the last game of 1950 is considered to be a proper final). Incredibly, the teams had never played each other in the World Cup before, besides a match between Brazil and East Germany in the 1974 FIFA World Cup. German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn had been the tourna\ ent's best keeper, but could not maintain that level of play, as Ronaldo vanquished his France '98 demons, scoring both goals in the Brazilian 2–0 triumph.

Entering the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, Brazil were seen as heavy favorites to repeat their success at the previous cup. Brazil beat Croatia 1–0, Australia 2–0, Japan 4–1, the first two being hard-fought matches, to come out at the top of their group.

The Brazilian squad preparing for the World Cup in Weggis, Switzerland.During the second round, they defeated Ghana 3–0. However, Brazil was eliminated in the quarterfinals against France by a score of 1–0 when Thierry Henry scored the winning goal. France was led by a rejuvenated Zinédine Zidane and by a strong defence which kept the Brazilian strikers under check for the duration of the game. Brazil were shut out, attempting just one shot at French goalkeeper Fabien Barthez. The game was also notable for being the first time that the Brazil team had been shut out in consecutive matches against a particular team. France now has a 2–1–1 all-time record against Brazil in World Cup play.

After the result of 2006, the team was criticized by many Brazilians. Some, such as Pelé, blamed coach Parreira and Ronaldinho for the team's early elimination.[20] The night after Brazil's defeat, vandals burned and destroyed a 7-meter tall fiberglass and resin statue of Ronaldinho in the Brazilian city of Chapecó, which had been erected in 2004 to celebrate Ronaldinho's first election as FIFA World Player of the Year.[21] Roberto Carlos[22] and Juninho each announced their retirement from the team and Juninho asserted that it was time for the players over 30 to retire from the team.[23] Cafu, the Brazilian captain, made an infamous comparison between the team of 2006 and the team at 1982 World Cup, one that is remembered as one of the greatest teams that lost a World Cup.[24] Two days after the loss, Ronaldinho and Adriano partied through the night in Barcelona, increas-