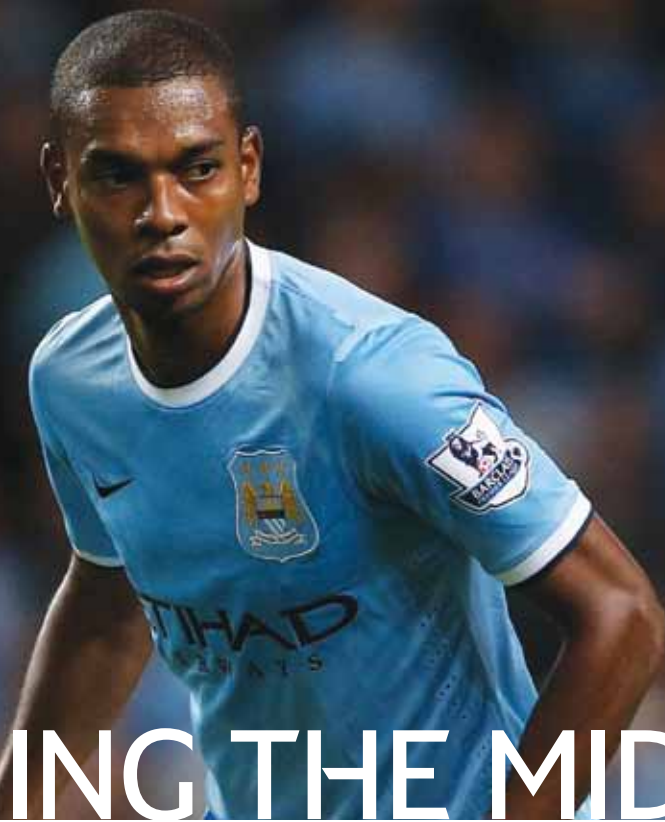


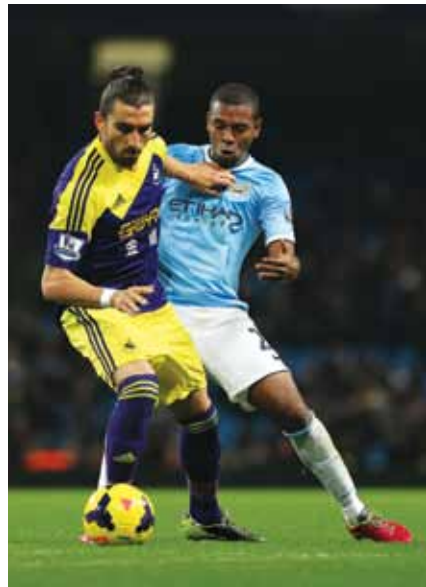
Fernandinho of Manchester City in action during the Barclays Premier League match between Manchester City and Newcastle United at the Etihad Stadium on 19 August 2013 in Manchester, England.



MANNING THE MIDFIELD

MANCHESTER CITY PLAYER FERNANDINHO RECENTLY DROPPED IN TO ABU DHABI. HERE HE TALKS ABOUT ADAPTING TO THE UK, FAMILY, AND WHAT THE 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP MEANS FOR BRAZIL

WORDS | GISELLE WHITEAKER



Chico of Swansea City is closed down by Fernandinho during a Barclays Premier League match between Manchester City and Swansea City at Etihad Stadium.

Fernando Luiz Rosa, better known as Fernandinho, always planned to play for a big football club, in a big league. That plan has come to fruition. But despite the hefty GBP 30 million that Manchester City forked over for the Brazilian player, Fernandinho remains grounded, earning respect as a consistent player with a determination to succeed.

Fernandinho began his career with Brazilian club Atlético Paranaense, making 72 appearances before the blistering speed and long-distance shooting of the defensive midfielder caught the attention of Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk. Back then he was worth GBP 7 million, but his eight seasons with Shakhtar – which netted the Ukrainian league title for the last four seasons – have seen his stock skyrocket.

Fernandinho recently paid a quick visit to Abu Dhabi, a city where as a youngster he began making a name for himself. Back in 2003, he played in Brazil's title-winning side in the FIFA U-20 World Cup, scoring the winning goal in the final against Spain. "For me, it was a very good experience," says Fernandinho with a shy smile. "Now I am back here, I can see the city is really different. I love its energy. The people are similar to Brazilian people, so I feel at home. They are very kind and open."

While Fernandinho also spent time in Abu Dhabi with Shakhtar in January last year, he claims that despite the ten-day visit, the team

remained holed up in the hotel most of the time. "We didn't see anything," he laments, but this visit to the city, his first as a Man City player, has been significantly different. "It's an amazing place," he says. Even though he has only had a few days to explore Abu Dhabi, he's been impressed by the city's extensive development. "These two days in Abu Dhabi were very quick, but I've really enjoyed the weather and the seafood. We did a tour by helicopter. That was very nice," he enthuses. "I hope I can come back here as soon as possible."

When Fernandinho is not on the field he dedicates time to his family. His wife Glaucia and son Davi came with him to Abu Dhabi. "Sometimes we have a lot of games and must be away from home, so whenever I have free time I enjoy it with my family," Fernandinho states. Davi is clearly his father's biggest fan. The shy youngster with a mop of curls is reluctant to leave his father's side, clambering quietly onto his lap as he speaks, patiently waiting for his father's attention.

Davi is already an avid footballer. "He's good," says Fernandinho proudly. "Are you going to be like your dad?" I ask Davi. "I hope," interjects Fernandinho. "Maybe in 20 years we'll see if he will play football. We always play together when I get home after training. That for me is a big pleasure."

It's not surprising to learn that football runs in the family. "My father played football, so I



CLOCKWISE: Brazil's players, including Fernandinho (back row, far left) pose for a team picture prior to a friendly football match between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Brazil on 28 February, 2012 in St-Gallen; Fernandinho in action; Fernandinho vies with Cardiff City's South Korean midfielder Kim Bo-Kyung during a Premier League football match between Cardiff City and Manchester City on 25 August, 2013.



While Manchester City has yet to live up to expectations when playing away from Etihad Stadium, Fernandinho is convinced that they will pull together

always loved football and I always wanted to be a football player," Fernandinho admits. As a youngster, he played the sport for hours on end, using flip flops or bricks for goalposts. He also vividly recalls watching the 1990 FIFA World Cup hosted by Italy as an impressionable five-year-old, coincidentally the first time the United Arab Emirates qualified in a World Cup. "I remember the goalkeeper, Zé Carlos, was a very important player for Brazil. For me he was the best one," Fernandinho comments.

"When I was 17 and Brazil again won the World Cup, the player who was very important in my mind at this time was Kléberson – he

played for the same team I played for, he came from the same city I lived in, so we had a similar history in football," says Fernandinho earnestly. Kléberson set up one of the two Brazilian goals in the final, leading to their record fifth World Cup win, a moment that sticks in every Brazilian football fan's mind. "When I was young he was champion of the world and for me, he was my idol!"

Now Fernandinho is working towards being an idol for others, winning the admiration of his fellow team-mates and followers in equal measure, respected for his down-to-earth nature and steadfast will to succeed. He

has high hopes for Manchester City moving forward. "I hope we can win absolutely all battles. All of them. But we know that this is very difficult. The Premier League is very strong. But then, we have a good squad of good players, a good manager and we'll try to do our best for the team," he states. He is determined to see the team improve throughout each game. And while Manchester City has yet to live up to expectations when playing away from Etihad Stadium, Fernandinho is convinced that they will pull together given time.

He has settled in quickly to life in Manchester. "There's a big difference between Brazil and Manchester of course. Especially the weather," he laughs, but he adapted to the sub-zero winter temperatures of the Ukraine, so there's little doubt he'll adapt to Manchester as well. "It was a great time for me and my family," Fernandinho reminisces about his time in the Ukraine. "It was a university for us – we learnt a lot of things there, but we continue to live, so now we are in England we will enjoy this time."

"Manchester is a good city," he quickly adds. "I like it there. The winter is not very cold. It rains a lot, but that's not a problem. The rest is good. The people are nice and the city has a lot of provisions for entertainment."

While Manchester is now home, Fernandinho's eye is firmly on the ball that's inexorably bouncing towards the World Cup in his home country. "It's very exciting. It's a big opportunity for all the people – our players can play at home for the first time in 60 years. I think it'll be a really good chance for the country to show our qualities to the world," he says, his eyes lighting up in anticipation.

"They love football in Brazil. When the nationals start playing the World Cup everybody stops to watch the game. No-one works, school stops, everybody stops to watch. The people of Brazil are very receptive, very open, they love to help people and I think that when you go to Brazil for the World Cup you'll have an amazing experience," he says. "I hope I will play," he adds, voicing a hope we echo for one of the nicest men in football. 🗣️