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In Pictures

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Sao Paulo: Street football in Brazil's biggest city

Sao Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, is the beating heart of the nation's most popular sport, football.



Teenagers wait to play football in a park during a break from class. Many students opt to wear the uniforms of famous club teams during their matches. Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint German are the most popular foreign teams. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]

By **Gui Christ**

19 Mar 2018

Sao Paulo, Brazil – [Brazil](#) is known across the world for its affection

for football

FOR [FOOTBALL](#).

From Pele to Neymar, Brazil has produced players with their own unique style, and teams with extraordinary flair.

As such, it has become the most revered football nation in the world, according to sportswriter David Goldblatt, host of Al Jazeera's new football podcast [Game of Our Lives](#).



Game of Our Lives

Cinema of The Pitch — with Werner Herzog

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In particular, Sao Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, is the beating heart of "O Jogo Bonito" [the beautiful game], the nation's most popular sport.

The city, home to some 12 million people, has a rich history of football success stories.

The three largest local teams – Corinthians, Palmeiras and Sao Paulo – have won 27 national championships between them and have a combined fanbase of seven million supporters.

Passion for football flows freely at every level of the game in Sao Paulo, professional and otherwise, with more than 1,000 amateur teams active in the city.

Inspired by their heroes on the national team, many amateur football players create their own unique styles, incorporating radiant clothing, vivid tattoos and glittering boots, making matches across the city a dazzling display of colour and movement.

On a weekend walk through Sao Paulo you can see people playing football in

On a weekend walk through Sao Paulo, you can see people playing football in all kinds of settings, from a father teaching his child the basics in one of the city's parks, to an amateur championship in an abandoned factory turned improvised pitch, the city lives and breathes the game.

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Through these players and the myriad places in which football takes place, Brazil's love for the sport shines through.



Due to the size of the pitches, matches in park arenas are usually limited to seven-players-a-side. [Gui Christ/Al



Without official uniforms, men's street teams often resort to playing shirts vs no-shirts, allowing team mates to recognise one another on the pitch. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





Street football gives players, such as Rafael, 16, freedom to perform tricks with the ball. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



Often in a single match players will sport the uniforms of multiple international teams, such as Barcelona, and local teams, such as Ponte Preta. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





With few parks situated in downtown Sao Paulo, residents have converted the space under a bridge into a playground where children and adults gather to play various sports, including football. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



The older the boot, the better it fits. Many players prefer well-worn footwear, saying they offer greater comfort and allow for the best tricks to be produced. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





One of Sao Paulo's most famed street football arenas is in Ibirapuera park. The wait for a match here can often extend to two hours or more. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



While waiting to play in Ibirapuera's arena, footballers pass the time playing cards and listening to music together. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





A young man shows his Corinthians football club tattoo. Founded in 1910 by five railway workers, Corinthians is the most popular team in Sao Paulo. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]

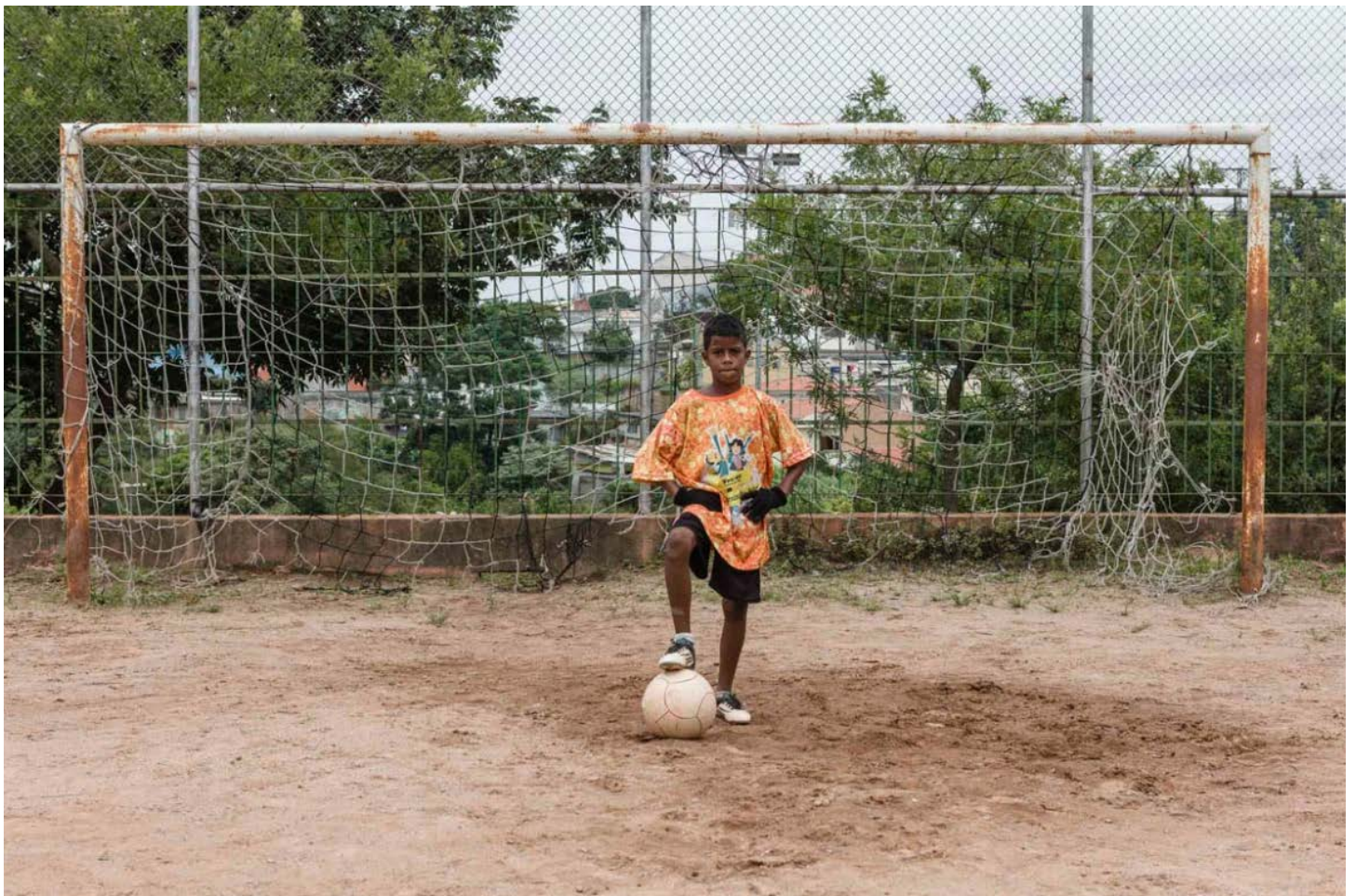


Children play "piggy in the middle" while warming up for a match. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





A young goalkeeper watches his teammates play on a public sand field in the Raposo Tavares neighbourhood, one of the poorest in São Paulo. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



Marcelinho, 10, poses after a match in which he scored two goals. He trains at Raposo Tavares club, a local football school that prepares players to join more successful teams. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]





Female players from the Uniao "union" team, one of the few mixed male/female teams in Sao Paulo. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



Different from other teams, Uniao players sport vintage uniforms in a nod to the club's creation 107 years ago

by a socialist labourers association. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]



A Uniao teamtalk includes all members, men and women, who make reference to the team's values and ideals. [Gui Christ/Al Jazeera]

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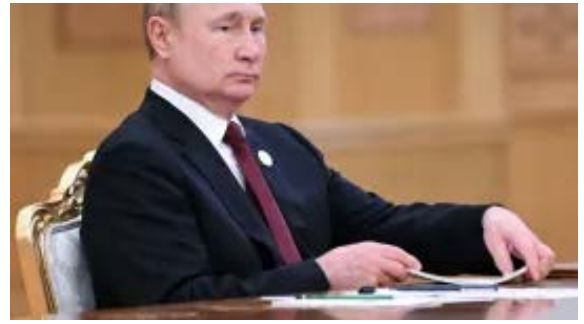
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