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## Socrates

He was named after a Greek philosopher by his self-educated father. He strolled around midfield like a disinterested Greek god, six foot four, bearded, resplendent in the yellow of his country. When the ball came to him he would explode into action, the whole of his team moving like a clockwork machine around him, inevitably, irresistibly moving the ball into the net, usually spectacularly, a feat he managed 22 times in 60 appearances for his country, twice part of the best team never to win the World Cup in the 1980s.

I knew all that, and I can still picture him in action. It was only when reading his obituary that I discovered so many other things about an extraordinary life in and beyond football. He led player's revolts for better terms and conditions; his club's supporters protested about his lack of visible celebration when scoring, something he managed 172 times in 297 matches, and he only played one season in Europe for Fiorentina. He played 12 min for Gosforth Town against Tadcaster Albion in a Northern League game in 2004 when he was reported to be a decade too old to play.

He became a social activist and campaigner for democracy, something that grew out of his campaigning for improved conditions for his team mates, at a time when the oppression by the club management reflected the conditions in the country at large under the military dictatorship. Despite warnings from his national football association, the players wore shirts with 'Vote on the 15th' printed on the back, urging the public

to take part in the upcoming elections that were one of the first moves towards ending the dictatorship at a time when people were afraid to speak out against the regime. He was as proud of his team's valiant contribution in helping dismantle the dictatorship as he was of his considerable football achievements. His team won the championship with 'Democracia' printed on the back of their black shirts. It was 'perhaps the most perfect moment I ever lived. And I'm sure it was for 95% of my teammates too.'

He was urged by Gadhaifi in a midnight meeting in a tent to stand for president. His childhood heroes included Che Guevara and John Lennon. He smoked and drank beer copiously, which contributed to his premature death at the age of 57; his warm up at Gosforth included two bottles of beer and three cigarettes. He wrote a thesis on the need for fundamental changes to football as a result of players' increasing athleticism, which increased the distance they ran per match from 4 to 10 km in under 30 years. He was one of the few medically qualified doctors to play at the highest level, qualifying from the University of Sao Paulo while playing professional football. He practised medicine after retiring. His nickname on the pitch was 'the doctor'. His name, Sócrates Brasileiro Sampaio de Souza Vieira de Oliveira, MD (19 February 1954–4 December 2011).

John Hobson

e-mail: [hon.editor@som.org.uk](mailto:hon.editor@som.org.uk)