

LEARNING FROM THE BEST LESSONS

Pia Sundhage has a wealth of experience as a player and as a coach, and now she leads a transitional Brazil side into a World Cup. But first, a 'very inspiring' England

Tonight's game gives all of us as coaches, players and supporters the opportunity to dream of performing in front of a big crowd, at Wembley, and to play against Sarina Wiegman, the best coach in the world. It's going to be very inspiring.

I remember when Sarina and I coached against each other in the European Championship in 2017, when Netherlands knocked out Sweden in the quarter-finals. For her to win the that tournament with Netherlands, and to then turn England around and win it again, it's amazing. Every time you watch her coach – or just have a chat with her – you can tell she's very good at what she does. She knows exactly what she wants to do, and she brings out the best in the performance of her players. She's very impressive.

I think that tonight's game will be

close. If you look at how England have been scoring goals, they're especially good in the air. Their speed of play is also impressive, so we know it's going to be tough. Every 50/50 battle is something we will need to deal with. But everything we experience tonight will be invaluable for us when it comes to the World Cup. You can't beat this kind of experience. It's the best lesson ever.

I remember the last time we met England and the way England played, and I thought that they made it really hard for us. Both Brazil and England have improved since then and I'm expecting a tight game and a great match to watch. I think there will be some great football played. The way both teams play is fairly fast, especially when it comes to the transitions.

I think it's important for our team going to the World Cup that we

are capable of playing with high pressure and low pressure, and to still feel like we're controlling the game. I think we have a bit of a way to go to make sure that we do the right thing at the right moment. You know, if you look at the final pass from the central part of the pitch, that's one thing. But if you look at the final pass from crosses, then we know how good the English players are. And it will be great for us to experience that because it will happen at the World Cup. In the SheBelieves Cup, where we encountered tough games against Japan, Canada and USA, there were plenty of things we could take away; areas where we were successful, and others not so much. If we learned anything there, it's that any team is capable of beating each other.

Looking back at the Copa América Femenina, which is why

we're here, we scored some great goals. We did a good job defensively too; we were compact. And of course, I remember the final against Colombia, a good, attacking team, with a great crowd. I clearly remember our combination play before we were awarded the deciding penalty kick, and how important that was because we couldn't create that many chances from open play. It's so important for us to experience games like that, when things really matter. The Finalissima is that kind of game. It's not just a friendly; it comes with that emotional part before the match, in the locker room, during the game, and afterwards, and that's very important. So, playing in the Finalissima really matters, because this is a specific moment where we have to deal with all the emotions and the pressures. It's a privilege to play and coach under pressure and you have to deal with it and enjoy it.

I think one of the lessons I've learned is to not take anything for granted, and to not pay too much attention to world rankings. There are so many teams that can win the World Cup, but if you do the right things, and if you are a little bit lucky, even we have a chance to win.

We will certainly set some goals. We did the same during the Olympics, and while there are new players now, it's important that we set the same kind of expectations. You can dream. And I think all of us

will dream about winning, but the process will be very important.

The reality now is that we're going through a transition. Hopefully, Marta is coming back, and she will be important for the team not specifically in the way she's playing, but with her presence. She has so much energy and is such a good role model. Marta has done everything to be available. Could you imagine if she could be part of a winning World Cup team? If she was the one to put that World Cup trophy in the air as part of the best team in the world, that would be remarkable. I think this young team needs her experience. There's so much energy around this group, and if we can use the joy that's created by the fans around them, then we will have a great World Cup.

Brazil breathes football. When I meet people out here, they wish us good luck in the Finalissima and the World Cup. I think that's pretty cool. We are going to do our very best and hopefully, we can bring something good to Brazil, but also all South America.

Playing in a tournament is the pinnacle for any player. The highlight of my career as a player was the 1984 European Championship, including scoring against England in a penalty shootout. I also played in the 1991 World Cup and the 1996 Olympics. These tournaments mean a lot

to me. Likewise, as a coach, my highlight came in the 2011 World Cup quarter-finals against Brazil when I was coaching the USWNT. Brazil were leading 2-1 until Megan Rapinoe found Abby Wambach, who scored to make it 2-2. Then we won on penalty kicks, which was such a fantastic moment.

I hope to experience more moments like it...

