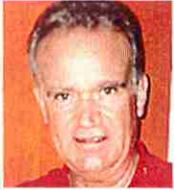


# Talking a good game: Ramiro Alonso

Interview: Luke Gosset



Ramiro Fernandez Alonso is the hairdresser for the Spanish national team. He accompanies the players to tournaments and travels all around Spain to work for his footballer clients. Roberto Carlos and Denilson recommended him to their Brazil team-mates at the last World Cup. His ambition is to cut the hair of David Beckham.

"The happier footballers are inside, the better they perform on the pitch. No player is going to win a match because of a haircut, but being settled affects performance positively. I'm sure the way the Brazilians felt about their appearance had a role in winning the last World Cup. If they didn't have the skill they wouldn't have got anywhere – but a healthy sense of self-esteem is an important factor.

I was going to be a priest, but you never really know what you want to do when you're young and my brother persuaded me to go into hairdressing. He's a hairdresser and thought I'd make a good one too. I followed his advice, gave up college and that was that. I started off working with him in Gijon, then opened my own shop in Oviedo in 1966.

My first footballer client was Spanish international goalkeeper Juan Carlos Ablanedo. That was 25 years ago now. He won the Ricardo Zamora award for the keeper to concede the fewest league goals three times in his career, and I cut his hair when he was at Sporting Gijon. He recommended me to Luis Enrique and it took off from there. Since then, I'm proud to have taken my scissors to practically every player in the Spain team.

When I'm at a tournament or travelling with the side, I make sure I'm available at any time. After breakfast I'll get on with my own business while the players are training. When they're done, and have seen the physiotherapists, they'll come for a haircut. It tends to be later in the afternoon or the evening. Often they won't want much done, just a trim to keep their hair looking sharp. Footballers are generally lively characters and always want to know what suits them.

I started working for the Brazilian team in Korea. Their hotel was only three kilometres away. I was



Ronaldo and his 'frontal triangle of success'; Kiko and his legendary sideys; and Nesta, an Italian with nice hair

recommended by Denilson and Roberto Carlos, who is meticulous about his appearance. Not everybody looks as good bald as he does. A head isn't like a football pitch; you can't just mow it. There's technique involved. I've seen people butcher themselves when they've done a bad job on their own. Brazilians pay a great deal of attention to the way they look so I was pleased to receive the call. Hair allows people to express themselves; the personality flies its flag on the head.

## 'The Italians' big hair is romantic and perfectly structured all at once'

Santiago Canizares [Valencia's goalkeeper] is one of my most regular clients. He gives you free rein and knows a lot about hair. Raul's an extraordinary person, but quite serious too. Perhaps his image is less sober these days, but he could still do with opening up. Poor Zinedine Zidane – he hasn't got the raw material. Kiko? His sideboards have been around for a while. It's his thing. His hairstyle is so well known they've named a cut after him: 'the Kiko'. Ronaldo had his World Cup final haircut because of a bet. They called it the 'frontal

triangle of success' and the next day thousands of kids in Brazil went out and had the same cut.

But my ambition is to work for David Beckham. I divide society into two categories, the hip and the hippies. The former set trends, the latter follow them. Beckham is definitely in the first bracket. It would be a privilege to work for him. Anything he does looks good but I would come up with something more stylised, leaving his hair long but spicing it up somehow. Right now it's straightforward, all swept back in the same direction. His mohican at the World Cup was his most eye-catching effort to date, but it probably involved a lot of work and he didn't keep it for long. I didn't like the crew-cut – it's so limiting. I would never do anything like that to him.

Beckham knows how to blend his hairstyle and dress sense with his physique and personality – and he's not afraid to take advice from his wife. He's in a class of his own, but on the whole the Italians lead the way. I was on the jury choosing the best-hairdressed nation in Japan and Korea, and we unanimously voted for Italy. Image is intrinsic there. The Italians are always bang up to date. Their big hair is romantic and perfectly structured at the same time. Francesco Totti, Alessandro del Piero, Paolo Maldini – you can't beat those guys... unless your name's Beckham."

With thanks to Enrique Ramon

# 118 DIDIER DESCHAMPS

France's most famous water carrier, and captain of their 1998 World Cup-winning team

"I'm not going to be original. Winning the World Cup is something every player

aspires to, and to win it in France made it even more special for me. As I lifted the trophy above my head, everything came together perfectly in that moment. You could have written this for me, couldn't you?"



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