

Brazil bids farewell to soccer idol Lobo Zagallo

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Brasilia, January 8 (PL) - Former Brazilian soccer player and coach Mário Jorge (Lobo) Zagallo, who died on Friday at the age of 92, received on Sunday a last tribute from fans, athletes and coaches.

After a wake at the headquarters of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), in the Rio de Janeiro suburb of Barra da Tijuca, where a closed mass was held for family and friends, Lobo Zagallo's lifeless body was buried at the Sao Joao Batista cemetery, in Botafogo, a neighborhood in the South Zone of the Rio de Janeiro city.

The body was taken to the necropolis in a fire truck from the headquarters of the sports confederation.

A sign with the phrase "Eternal Zagallo" was hung on the façade of the CBF, where, in addition to the funeral of several personalities, there were wreaths from President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the first lady Rosângela Lula da Silva, popularly known as Janja.

Lula declared this Saturday three days of national mourning.

The Sunday wake took place next to a life-size wax statue of Zagallo, the only four-time world champion, twice as an athlete, in 1958 and 1962, once as a coach, in 1970, and once as technical coordinator, in 1994.

He also coached the Canarinha in the 1974 and 1998 World Cups (he finished fourth in the former and runner-up in the latter).

Ednaldo Rodrigues, president of CBF, announced that "Zagallo deserves an infinite homage. We always deal, first of all, with the essence of the relatives and in a joint way. We will soon inform about these tributes".

Marcos Evangelista de Moraes, better known as Cafu, captain of the Brazilian five-time world champion team in 2002, declared that "Zagallo was paid when he had to be paid, he was a dad when he had to be a dad, he was a friend when he had to be a friend and he was a coach when he had to be a coach.

According to the former fullback, he was a respected coach and that was the most important thing. "When you have respect for the group, the tendency is to do what we did, win titles and make Zagallo recognized and known, as a Brazilian hero," he remarked.

For striker José Roberto Gama de Oliveira, nicknamed Bebeto, one of the architects of the tetra in 1994, "all my history as a soccer player and as a man, I had him as a reference. He was my second father. He transcends soccer. We have a great love for his family.

Zagallo had been hospitalized since December 26 and died on Friday of multiple organ failure at Barra D'Or hospital, in Rio's West Zone.

Born in Atalaia, a municipality located in the small state of Alagoas (northeast), on August 9, 1931, he became one of the greatest legends of Brazilian sports.

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