

Brazil 2014: A Cameraman's Diary of the World Cup

GTC Freelance cameraman Brian Benjamin counts five weeks in Brazil for the World Cup as one of the highlights of his long and varied career. To preserve the memory of this fabulous trip he decided to write a blog diary and has kindly allowed us to abridge his World Cup blog to give a sample in Zerb. The full diary can be read unedited at: <http://benjietv.wordpress.com>

Day One - 9 June 2014

The day has finally arrived and I am off to Brazil as part of the camera team providing television pictures for the host broadcaster. My pictures, shots, slow-mo replays and anything else I film will be seen by millions of people around the globe. On Sunday 13 July – the World Cup Final – the audience will be astronomical as people tune in to watch the climax of the biggest single sporting event on the planet. No pressure then!

This trip will be made so much easier by the fact that the people I am working with are those I work with all year round on the Premiership Football in the UK for BT Sport.

We land at São Paulo and it is still dark, but as we disembark the sun is coming up outside and it looks like it will be a hot day in Brazil with temperatures of around 26°C. Fortunately a very quick journey through immigration as there are priority lanes for all staff working on the World Cup. We collect our bags and then check in again for our internal flight up to the north of the country in Natal, where we will cover our first match on Friday 13 June when Mexico play Cameroon.

Day Two - 10 June 2014

Today will be our first visit to the Arena das Dunas Stadium. It is impressive on the inside but sadly, and as predicted, the infrastructure around the ground is far from complete with unfinished roads and so on. Spent the morning collecting accreditation and team clothing followed by a briefing from our match director. We have all been allocated specific cameras that we will do at each game we cover throughout the whole tournament.

Day Four - 12 June 2014

Went to watch Brazil v Croatia in a beach bar with lots of locals. I figured this would be a fantastic place to watch with great atmosphere and was not disappointed: everyone dressed in their bright yellow and green shirts cheering and supporting their country. It was great to be among the local people for the game as they are so passionate about their football.

Day Five - 13 June 2014

Big day for us today and it's a 7.30am start from our hotel to the stadium in Natal. Everyone is nervous as we all realise the enormity of this tournament and how many people will be watching, scrutinising, criticising (as well as hopefully praising) our efforts as we provide TV pictures to the world.

The journey to the stadium turns farcical when halfway there we discover our bus doesn't have the correct accreditation so we have to stop and change buses. It's starting to rain but hopefully this won't last very long.



Watching the Brazil-Croatia game with locals in a beach bar



Maracana Stadium



Brian Benjamin



Rio street market



We arrive at the Estadio do Maracana in downtown Rio. Very, very impressive once you step inside and also quite surreal when you stop and think you are standing in the very arena where the World Cup Final will take place in under four weeks' time.

Day Eight - 16 June 2014

Nice relaxed day off in Rio today as no match until Wednesday. Took the metro from our station at Bota Fogo to the famous Copacabana Beach and had a look around there. We saw



Copacabana sand sculpture

With the FACS check underway, torrential monsoon rain sets in. Jamie, our match director, sounds really cool and relaxed despite all the pressure he is under. I will be operating Camera 19 on the 18-yard left position. My job is primarily to see any offsides, so keeping the ball and the back four players in frame at all times is essential. This is a camera whose replays are often used first. In total we have 36 manned cameras in this stadium, so hopefully every eventuality is covered.

The Mexican fans are a very friendly bunch whose sole intentions are to support their team, enjoy themselves and party. Not a hint of any aggression from anybody and they are allowed to bring alcohol in to enjoy while they watch the match.

Day Six - 14 June 2014

Up at 04.20am for an early departure this morning for our flight to Rio. A 3.5-hour internal flight makes you realise just how big this country is.



The Mexican fans really know how to party



L: My camera adorned with a Mexican sombrero charro; R: The iconic Christ the Redeemer statue



Breathtaking views from Christ the Redeemer

the ITV Studio, which overlooks this famous beach and then carried on around the bay to Ipanema Beach, which was equally pretty but far less crowded.

Sat by the beach for a couple of hours sipping caiparinhas (a Brazilian cocktail involving sugar cane liquor and lots of lime). A nice quiet and relaxed day and, despite everything we had read in the press, we felt safe just wandering around and found people friendly and happy to chat to us.

Day Ten - 18 June 2014

Warm and sunny again in Rio. Today we are covering the Spain v Chile match at the Maracana Stadium. Lots of Spanish and Chilean fans outside the stadium already as we drive in, so we hope the atmosphere will be as good as the other night.

Spain concede a goal in the first half and from that moment on the writing is on the wall. Another goal from Chile in the second half and suddenly the 2010 World Cup holders are out and going home early.

Now we must say goodbye to the Maracana Stadium for 5 days and head north once more; this time to Recife, which we are informed by our local fixer is one of the most dangerous cities in Brazil.

Day Eleven - 19 June 2014

Busy here in the domestic terminal this morning with fans from England and Colombia all sporting their shirts. The England fans are on their way to São Paulo while the Colombians are off to Brasilia. The Latin American supporters are always so friendly, happy to stop and talk to you and have their pictures taken. We land in Recife to a party atmosphere at the airport. Salsa dancers in the arrivals hall and two very pretty girls from Budweiser are handing out cold beers to everybody arriving.

We have not been in our hotel more than 5 minutes when three of our group's bags were stolen as they waited to check in. Laptop, iPad, passport, all gone in the blink of an eye as soon as our guard was down.

Day Twelve - 20 June 2014

This tournament is certainly pulling a few surprises out of the bag. First Spain, now England out. I wonder who will fall next.

everything is working correctly. On arrival this morning we had a debrief with Jamie and were pleased to hear that the feedback from HBS and FIFA about our coverage and pictures so far has been excellent.

The party atmosphere is already building here in Recife with just under 2 hours to go. I have been given a sombrero charro as a good luck charm by some Mexican fans and have mounted it on my camera for the match. I've always known the Mexicans like to party but tonight they have created such a brilliant, vibrant, colourful atmosphere, like nothing I've ever seen before. I was fortunate – or unfortunate depending on your viewpoint – to be right in the midst of them and was totally absorbed in the atmosphere they created.

Day Seventeen - 25 June 2014

It feels good waking up in Rio this morning. We are covering the 5pm kickoff of France v Ecuador today at the Maracana Stadium, which will be another winner-takes-all scenario.

Arriving, we feel the presence of a heightened level of security with police everywhere. These guys are not your regular cops and resemble storm-troopers with all their weapons and body armour. They are quite friendly towards us though and happy to pose for pictures as we make our way from the team bus into the safety of the stadium. We have our regular FACS check and Jamie comes down to be on the other side of camera, as we are to shoot a short promotional video about him for HBS as he will direct the Final on 13 July.

Day Twenty - 28 June 2014

Match 50 of the tournament today and, for us, the seventh of the nine we will cover during our trip to Brazil. Today we are back at our second home, the magnificent Maracana Stadium, in the heart of Rio for Colombia v Uruguay.

As we are now into the knockout stages, every game qualifies for possible extra time and penalties. Although we have all covered this scenario many times before back in the UK, we have a briefing with Jamie as he wants to ensure every camera knows the specific shots he will require. Depending on which end the penalties are taken, my role

will either be framing the entire penalty side on from the 18-yard line or, if it's at the opposite end, crowd reactions. I have also discovered that here in Brazil on days when the national team is playing, everything shuts down at 1pm and the city grinds to a halt so people can watch the game. It's a nice touch for a country that is so mad about football.

Day Twenty-Seven - 5 July 2014

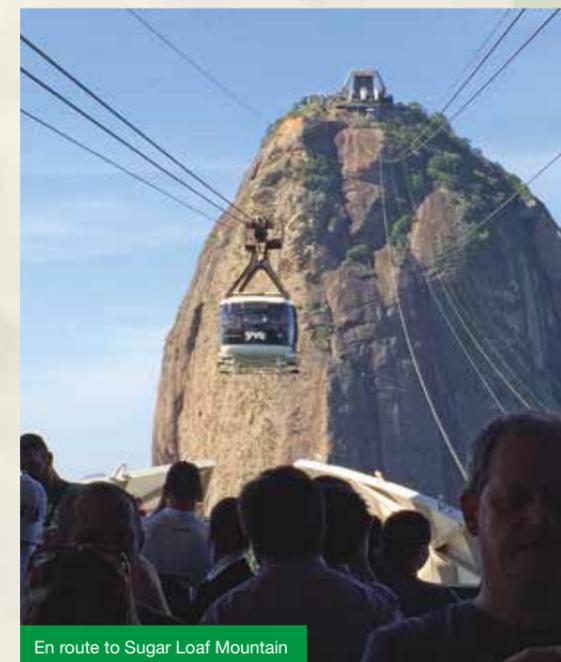
A fantastic day spent touring the two most iconic attractions in Rio: first, Christ the Redeemer or "Cristo Redentor" as it is called here in Brazil and then Sugar Loaf Mountain or "Pao de Acucar". The best and quickest way to get to the top of Christ the Redeemer is by the funicular railway.

We were extremely lucky with the weather as it was a cloudless day with blue skies and a gentle breeze. The views on the way up and once at the top are just breathtaking and it is quite clear why so many tourists flock here.

Day Twenty-Nine - 7 July 2014

A very moving, eye-opening and worthwhile trip today to the biggest favela (or slum area) in South America. Favela da Rocina is home to almost 30,000 people, although officially the statistics will show a much smaller figure. Having only previously driven through a favela in São Paulo on my way to the Interlagos Formula One circuit, I was not sure quite what to expect as that one is definitely not friendly or safe.

We have arranged to go on a proper guided tour with a guide called 'DJ'. DJ and his Costa Rican friend Daniel, an economics student, turn out to be very informative on the reality of life in a favela. Somewhat surprisingly, you don't see anybody begging because everybody – old, young, big or small – works doing anything that will earn them money to survive. We even came across an elderly man carrying a fridge on his back down a steep hill. Brazil has no welfare state and, unless you are disabled or retired, you will not get a penny from the government.



En route to Sugar Loaf Mountain

Unlike a lot of other cities where the better-off retreat to the hills to get away from the noise, here it is the other way around, so the poorer people tend to live high up in the favela. Many of the houses have graffiti on their walls and a lot of it is extremely good art. This trip was so worthwhile and has put paid to any misconceived ideas I had about favela life here in Rio.

Day Thirty - 8 July 2014

Well, the unthinkable has happened. Brazil are out of the 2014 World Cup and were completely annihilated and embarrassed by Germany. 5-0 down after 29 minutes, everybody here was totally stunned in disbelief. The game ended 7-1 in Germany's favour. It will be a very different Rio we awake to tomorrow. I hope this won't be an excuse for the troubles and disturbances to reignite.

Day Thirty-Two - 10 July 2014

No football today or tomorrow. The next match will be on Saturday and will be the battle for third place. Nobody wants third place, or second for that matter. Every team that entered and qualified for this tournament was only interested in one prize: to win the World Cup. After many hours of football, and tears of joy and happiness, we now have a Europe v South America Final.

Day Thirty-Three - 11 July 2014

Evening now at the Maracana Stadium rehearsing the closing ceremony. This 60-minute show will precede the match at about 2pm. The star attraction is going to be Shakira, which should be pretty amazing to see and hear.

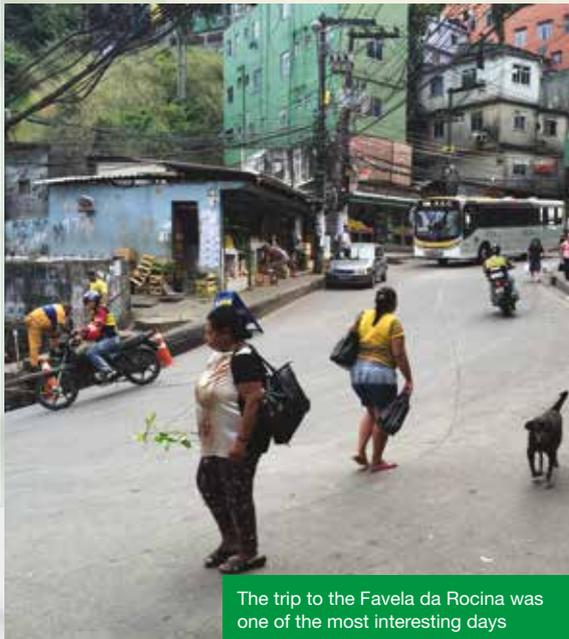


Rio street art

“ My pictures, shots and slow-mo replays will be seen by millions of people around the globe. On Sunday 13 July – the World Cup Final – the audience will be astronomical as people tune in to watch the climax of the biggest single sporting event on the planet.”



Not the easiest way to transport a fridge!



The trip to the Favela da Rocina was one of the most interesting days

From my camera position, my job will be to cross-shoot the dancers and offer close-ups of Shakira and the other singers. We have a different director for this short event. Jamie will just cover the match, while John Watts or "Wattsy" is in charge of this section. As always when music rehearsals are involved, this is a slow process with lots of different things to get right. This will be a long night methinks.

We finally get away from the stadium around 22.30pm and then it is back to the comfort of the Hotel Ibis. There is an unwritten rule, certainly among the camera crew, that none of us drink on the day preceding what for all of us will be, without doubt, the biggest sporting event we have ever covered. I know a few members of the crew are World Cup veterans, but this one feels different. This is Rio, it is extra special and it's such a shame Brazil will not be represented in that magnificent stadium. We all have to be totally alert and focused and it's nice to see a lot of professional people taking things seriously.

“

I have worked on many different things in my long career, been to some amazing places, shared wonderful experiences, worked with and met some incredibly talented people, but none more so than this brilliant crew in Brazil – this tops the lot.

Day Thirty-Four - 12 July 2014

Tomorrow will be the culmination of everything that we, along with everybody else involved in Brazil 2014, have strived to achieve. It doesn't get much bigger than this. But, before that stage is set, we have just one more score to settle, one more game to witness, which every person I speak to seems to think is a pointless one: the match between the hosts Brazil and Holland to decide third place, which will be played in the capital of Brasilia at 5pm.

As predicted, Brazil's World Cup campaign comes to a miserable end as they are convincingly beaten by Holland. Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari bears the brunt of their anger and his long-term future as national team boss is now in doubt.

Day Thirty-Five - 13 July 2014 The World Cup Final

Today is the day I have been looking forward to for the last 9 months since I was first asked to be part of this great and talented group of people: to come to Brazil, be part of the TV

production crew and provide pictures for the world with the ultimate prize of covering the World Cup Final in Rio. There were two other English crews involved in this tournament but they have long since gone home. It is also the first time since 1994 that an English crew with an English director has covered the final, the last being Los Angeles.

As much as we are all trying to treat this as "just another game", because we have to, this one is different, it is special, and unless you have departed Planet Earth you will likely be watching this match somewhere.

We are entertained by Shakira and then the Closing Ceremony seems to be over no sooner than it has begun. At precisely 4pm the whistle blows and the 2014 World Cup Final between Germany and Argentina is under way. Eventually the referee blows his whistle and that is it! Germany are the football champions of the world! Amazing scenes of joy and jubilation erupt all around this amazing stadium. They have finally done it and, if I'm honest, they deserve it. The best team in the tournament has lifted the Jules Rimet Trophy.

All that remained was to try and take in what we had just witnessed. Back in the TV compound, Jamie was walking around thanking everyone for what they had done. Tonight had showed just why British technicians are the best in the world. Everyone on the team rose to the occasion and played their small part in enabling the 1 billion people around the world rumoured to be watching this great match. For me, 13 July 2014 has to be the proudest moment of my career in television: operating a camera at The World Cup Final in Rio de Janeiro.

I have worked on many different things in my long career, been to some amazing places, shared wonderful experiences, worked with and met some incredibly talented people, but none more so than this brilliant crew in Brazil – this tops the lot. Today will never be surpassed for me as an experience. Somehow the Open Golf, which I am doing next week, doesn't quite have the same appeal.



German celebrations

Fact File

Contact Brian Benjamin on: benjietv@me.com or 07890 010460

Match Director: Jamie Oakford
Camera Supervisor: Alex Rollitt