

My Best XI for the World Cup 2010

- Shoubhik Pal

Goalkeeper: **Maarten Stekelenburg** – Netherlands

The current Holland goalkeeper had zilch expectations before the World Cup, but came out from it as one of the better goalkeepers of the World. His cross collection was assuring, and some of his saves were out of this world, one in particular being a save denying Kaka in the quarter finals. His one possible blotch can be his questionable positioning against Diego Forlan's strike in the semi finals. However, it wasn't a mistake of 'Robert Green' proportions and again, the Jabulani ball has a mind of its own.



Defenders:

Right Back: **Philipp Lahm** – Germany

The German stand-in skipper increased his reputation even further in this World Cup, and his astute leadership was met with some absolutely brilliant defending. When his central defenders were caught napping, he was always there in hand. Some of his blocks were absolutely critical. His marauding attacking runs always put the opposition defense under pressure and some of his crosses were sublime, namely the one that led to Klose's goal against Australia.



Centre Back 1: **Lucio** – Brazil

Although Brazil's campaign can be called a failure, Lucio's tournament was far from it on personal performance. The Brazil skipper was a rock at the back, making up for the occasional shortcomings of fellow defender Juan. More impressive were his penetrating runs through the centre of the field and efficient passing, which gave Brazil a different dimension from Dunga's one-dimensional defensive tactics.



Centre Back 2: **Joris Mathijsen** – Netherlands

The Netherlands were expected to have free flowing football as the crux of its attack and a shaky defense, an imitation of Argentina, so to speak. But the exact opposite happened. They sometimes had to play dirty to score goals and their defense was in brilliant form. One of the key reasons to this was Joris Mathijsen, whose positional sense and surprisingly good passing made them almost bedrock in defense.



Left Back: **Maicon** – Brazil

I know he's a right back, but the fact that there weren't many impressive left backs in the World Cup makes me give this to him. Also, I believe this position would bring out a different dimension in him. We've always known Maicon was good (he kept Dani Alves out of that team) but this World Cup really proved to me that he was something else. His defending is impeccable and his attack is similar to that of a firing Wayne Rooney and not the one we saw this World Cup. In short, Maicon is the closest thing I have seen to 'Total Football' this whole World Cup.



Midfielders

Defensive Midfielder 1: **Bastian Schweinsteiger** – Germany

This man has been immense. All that aggravation about Michael Ballack not playing wouldn't matter to the Germans at all now. This season, 'Basti' has found a new lease of life, and almost plays like 2 players. One, who provides the screen to the defense and snuffs out attacks, and the other, who builds attacks, provides assists, dribbles and is not afraid of shooting long range. And he did these two roles with aplomb this World Cup. Ask Argentina.



Defensive Midfielder 2: **Xabi Alonso – Spain**

His long passes are a joy to watch and his short passes are played with speed and cleanliness that it's almost difficult to dislike the way this man plays. He, along with Xavi, has the best pass success percentage in the competition, but unlike Xavi, Alonso's passes have more beauty and danger instilled in them. And who can forget his dangerous shots from range? All these qualities make it a no brainer to realize who is better between Busquets and him.

Attacking Midfielder 1: **Keisuke Honda – Japan**

The fact that this guy is brimming with talent is an understatement. Although Japan didn't make it too far into the competition, and unluckily so, Honda established himself as probably the best player in the group stages. Quality exuded every time he touched the ball and his set piece technique was second to none this whole competition. His goal and assist in that match against Denmark rank as in the top 5 of this competition, respectively.



Attacking Midfielder 2: **Wesley Sneijder – Netherlands**

He's not the most talented player in the world. His passing is often wayward. His shots from the halfway line are a joke. Yet, how has Wesley Sneijder had such a great year and established himself as one of the best players of this competition? Sure, luck has something to do with it, but Sneijder possesses many qualities that others on this list may cover up with pure skill. Sneijder is tenacious and never stops trying, as well as possessing heaps of self confidence. All this has made him arguably the player of the tournament.



Second Striker: **Diego Forlan – Uruguay**

Forlan is the hero of the South Americans and the Golden Ball winner. All that talk about Forlan not adapting to the Premier League is now dissipated into thin air, as he showed all the qualities that a complete footballer should possess. Skill, leadership, drive, willingness to shoot yet being very unselfish, Forlan reinvigorated himself this World Cup. And the fact that he's thirty and possesses such match changing influence is another treat, dispelling the whole 'if you're thirty, you have no skill' opinion.



Front Striker: **David Villa – Spain**

Thank God Barcelona bought him before the World Cup. At certain times this World Cup, it felt that beating Spain meant beating ONLY David Villa. Until that semi final against Germany, Villa was involved in every single goal Spain scored in the tournament, whether it was scoring or assisting. 'El Guaje' was Spain's lifeline in this World Cup, and the fact that he is a total footballer was accentuated further when he was forced to play as a left winger, however, he reveled in that role, shown by his superlative performance against Honduras.



These men were my top picks of this World Cup. Of course, listing only 11 players doesn't do justice to all the wonderful performances shown during this one month bonanza. Excluding the likes of Iker Casillas, Sergio Ramos and Thomas Mueller from this list may be a crime, but this is the high level of quality displayed in this World Cup. While hot favorites like Wayne Rooney, Didier Drogba, Kaka, Robin van Persie and Franck Ribery flopped, these men rose to the occasion. □