



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Soccer Star Pele Buried in Brazil

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Pele, considered by many the best soccer player ever, was buried on Tuesday in his home city of Santos in Brazil.

Pele led Brazil to three World Cup championships: in 1958, 1962 and 1970. He was one of the world's most famous athletes in the 1960s and 1970s.

He met presidents and queens, and a civil war in Nigeria was temporarily stopped so people could watch him play. Many Brazilians believe Pele's soccer skills put the country on the world **stage** for the first time.

Thousands of soccer fans attended his funeral in the **stadium** he made famous, Vila Belmiro. He started playing for the Santos football club at 15 years old.

There were enough flowers from fans and well-known players including Neymar and Ronaldo to fill one part of the stadium. Behind one of the stadium's goals were lines of shirts with Pele's number 10. And the sound of the song "Eu sou Pelé" ("I am Pelé") filled the air.

Among the mourners were Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and FIFA president Gianni Infantino. FIFA is the organization that runs world soccer and puts on the World Cup. Infantino said every country should name a stadium after Pele.

"I am here with a lot of emotion, sadness, but also with a **smile** because he gave us so many smiles," Infantino said. "As FIFA, we will pay a **tribute** to the 'King' and we ask the whole world to observe a minute of silence."

Manoel Maria, Pele's best friend and a former Santos player was there. He said: "If I had all the wealth in the world I would never be able to repay what this man did for me and my family."

Caio Zalke called Pele "the most important Brazilian of all time" while waiting to get into the stadium. One girl, Geovana Sarmento, came with her father. They waited three hours to get inside. She said, "He is one of the greatest people ever, we needed to honor him."

One man, however, criticized some famous Brazilian soccer players who missed the funeral. "Where's Ronaldo Nazario? Where's Kaká, where's Neymar?" asked Claudionor Alves, who works at a **bakery** next to the stadium. "Do they think they will be remembered like Pelé will? These **guys** didn't want to stop their vacations, that's the problem."

After the ceremony, Pele's casket, covered with the flags of Brazil and Santos football club, was driven through the streets on a fire truck to the cemetery.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.*

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## Words in This Story

**stage** -n. a platform where a performance takes place

**stadium** -n. a large building with many rows of seats where sporting events take place

**smile** -n. an expression on your face that shows happiness

**tribute** -n. something done to show respect or affection or someone

**bakery** -n. a place where bread and other grain products are made into baked items

**guy** -n. a casual way of saying a man or person

**casket** -n. the box where a body is placed before being buried

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