

Portuguese politicians congratulate Ronaldo for winning Ballon d'Or

Jan 14, -- Portugal's President Anibal Cavaco Silva congratulated Cristiano Ronaldo on Monday for his "exceptional sporting level" after the Real Madrid forward was honored the best footballer in the world with a Ballon d'Or award in Zurich, Switzerland.

"He is the first Portuguese (footballer) to receive this distinction two times. This award is a recognition of his exceptional sporting level, his commitment and dedication throughout his whole career as a footballer," Anibal Cavaco Silva said in a statement posted on the President's official website.

The president congratulated Cristiano Ronaldo on behalf of "all the Portuguese" and said the FIFA distinction also meant "the valorization of the sport in Portugal" and was a "stimulus for young sports people, making a very relevant contribution to the international projection" of the country.

"Congratulations Cristiano. Even emotionally you are a champion," reads another statement by cabinet minister Marques Guedes.

Socialist leader Antonio Jose Seguro also praised Cristiano Ronaldo for his "hard work and dedication" which he said "transcended football's boundaries."

"Cristiano Ronaldo's talent is one of the best examples of the projection of Portugal's name," Jose Seguro wrote on the social networking site Facebook, above a picture of the Portuguese idol.

The leader of the country's biggest opposition party said the award was a "just recognition of the work carried out and of the magic that Cristiano Ronaldo displays in many games and which ends up in either goals or assistance for goals."

"If goals are the soul of football, Cristiano Ronaldo is a player who sows the states of the soul and who fills us all with pride," he added.

The results of the Ballon d'Or were presented by former footballer Pele. Cristiano Ronaldo edged players Lionel Messi and Franck Ribery and has clinched the award for the second time in five seasons.

Although competition against the Spanish and Argentine players was fierce, Ronaldo's performance in the Brasail World Cup playoffs was a determining factor, with the player scoring four of the national team's goals against Sweden.

Ronaldo was distinguished with a Ballon d'Or five years ago when he played for Manchester United, and is the first Portuguese player in history to win the award for the second time running.

Eusebio, in 1965, and Luis Figo, in 2000, were the only other Portuguese footballers to be named the world's top footballers.

Ronaldo ended 2013 with an impressive record of 69 goals: 59 for Real Madrid and 10 goals for his national team. /XINHUA

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