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Aurélio Pereira on Cristiano Ronaldo and the secrets of the Sporting Academy

Just two days away from seeing his most famous student, Cristiano Ronaldo, face Sporting in the Champions League, the Sporting youth football legend Aurélio Pereira spoke about the world famous CR7 and the philosophy of the Sporting Academy.

“Knowing Cristiano Ronaldo like I do, he won’t go easy on us. You can’t take the professionalism out of him. At the beginning he was just an 11-year old lad from Madeira who arrived at the Academy without his parents. In 1997 he cost a lot of money. A day after he got here he was already training with the older lads and he had a capacity that we were not used to seeing. The older players all said that he was something different and he was. On top of his technical quality he had speed and could get away from his marker. He had a bit of skill in the air too”, opened Pereira.

Asked to reveal the secrets of the success of the Sporting Academy, the Alvalade legend added: “Talent is one thing, but audacity is another. Players are only human and sometimes you forget that, but Ronaldo had a way of speaking with the rest of the players. On the second day he was completely relaxed with everyone, when anyone else would have packed their bags and went home if faced by the same thing. Youth football is in this club’s DNA, it is in our culture. We give our young players creative liberty and we don’t format anyone. We are really patient with them and treat them as people.”

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