

**HONG KONG November 10, 2013**

## **“Guangzhou Evergrande Champions Marcello Lippi – the maker”**

I am ready to describe some important characteristics related to Marcello Lippi and I think I have something meaningful to share about this incredible Soccer Coach with the people in Guangzhou and with everybody else in Mainland China. Something makes this Italian man truly special and I want you to know what that might be.

**Marcello Lippi has an independent spirit.** Some people might think that this is a sort of “present” something that a single individual gets automatically from the history of his home town, from the traditions of the populations around him and there is some truth in it. However, independence has its price. It is not for free and it is not granted. For a soccer coach a strong spirit of independence is an asset, particularly when the coach is technically prepared like he is. It allows him to make those difficult choices – often creative choices – that are not common, that are a surprise to the opponent, but also that might expose the coach to appalling criticism when the team loses. In soccer, it is basically impossible “winning all the time”. There is a moment when your team loses.

That is exactly when subjects like Marcello Lippi are coming out and dominate their environment. In the ancient Greek Mythology there was a guy called “Antaeus” – son of Gaea, the Goddess of Earth – and Antaeus was almost unbeatable because any time somebody threw him down to the floor it would make him stronger – defeat made him stronger, more determined and more powerful than before.

**Marcello Lippi doesn't like losing.** Yeah, nobody does. But Marcello remembers and prepares himself for the future come back. He considers defeat as a “step” towards future success.

He is exactly like Antaeus, able to find energy at the very critical moment of defeat. Defeat makes Marcello Lippi stronger. Few people are able to do so.

**But he has the ability and the strength to show grace and style also while losing.** And I tell you, a small number of Italian citizens can do that, less of all, if they are Italian soccer coaches. For Marcello Lippi style is the natural essence of his life. They show up both like in one package. You cannot separate the two, in fact “style” never walks out on him, never abandons him.

**Marcello Lippi doesn't use too many words but he is a real master in the use of language.** For a coach this is extremely useful. There are situations in which it is necessary (for the coach) to scold one or more soccer players without offending them, getting a positive reaction from them and at the same time telling them what they probably do not like to hear. You see, being good at playing soccer, having intelligence while playing ... it doesn't mean necessarily that they are intelligent persons. Few good soccer players are idiots but, for sure, there are idiots among them. Some of them are excessively sensitive, ready to react at the wrong moment, in front of the wrong audience. That's when a coach like Marcello Lippi makes all the difference in the world.

An appropriate use of language is critical for a soccer coach also during those frequent interviews with the press. In modern time, the worst enemies of a soccer coach are journalists or TV commentators. They have the tendency to emphasize conflicts (also non-existent conflicts) between the coach and the president of the team, they like to underline a crisis of the team at any mistake or at any possible occasion and so forth.

**Marcello Lippi knows the human soul and he is ready to forgive whoever shows the desire to be forgiven and the will to deserve such forgiveness.** A soccer team cannot be successful while living in the past. The past with its unsolved issues will prevent future success. To be successful any player should get the projection of future satisfaction and victories. Moving on is fundamental in several circumstances. The coach must have the ability to heal a wounded warrior giving him hope for the future. On the other hand he must also manage to stop those “trouble makers” who might destroy the spirit of the group and finding the proper balance in such activities is anything but easy.

I do love Marcello Lippi, deeply. I do not know him personally. I just come from the same wonderful region: Toscana (Tuscany), not from the same Province.

**Marcello Lippi is a mystery, as well.** It would be ridiculous from my side to pretend that I know a man like him, in details, with his complexity, with his extraordinary qualities. I don't. But I guarantee that my short presentation of him here is truthful and trustworthy. I know that for a fact.

I am AC Milan supporter since around 1962 (when I was 4 years old). Watching Marcello Lippi winning so many games when he was the coach of Juventus was not nice. But I always respected him. I started loving him in 2006, before the beginning of the Fifa World Cup, in Germany. Of course I had no idea that he was going to win that one too. Advancing among the first 8 teams in the world would have been satisfactory to me. But then I saw the position he selected on the field for Totti, Pirlo, Grosso and others and my admiration for this man never stop increasing, since then. It was more than magic, it was unbelievable and marvelous to my eyes.

I do love him, with all my heart. I am absolutely glad that Guangzhou Evergrande won the Asian Champion League and I wish them all the best. They deserved this victory and in a true spirit of the sport, that is all that matter.