Brazil recently scored the opportunity to host the 2014 World Cup! The country has been hard at work building stadiums and beautifying its host cities to put its best face forward. Having recently hosted the 47th National Super Bowl, New Orleans is very familiar with the pressure Brazil feels to get ready for droves of soccer fans.

Sports fans in Brazil and New Orleans talk about their memories, concerns and pride in being a host city, thrust into the international spotlight. Emily Carlson, Emily Cuevas, and Elizabeth Edel investigate, and Emily Carlson gets the ball rolling.

At the mention of the word “futebol,” the eyes of Cairo Santos light up. He practically learned to play soccer before he could walk, which means he has a unique connection with the sport.

My whole life that was my passion. I’d go out with my friends on the weekends and play soccer, and during the week I’d practice with my school team, practice with the club team, so for the most part of my life soccer was sort of a priority in my interests, other than any other thing I did in Brazil.

This passion for the game is a feeling shared by most Brazilians, especially as Brazil prepares to host the World Cup next year. Cairo describes a typical Brazilian game day.

People leave jobs early, get off early, go to their homes, or bars, or for the most part go and watch with their family, and so everybody watches.

But, the World Cup’s impact spreads far beyond individuals’ fervor. Brazil’s government is also taking this opportunity to rebuild infrastructure and increase the country’s security. People witnessing the evolution of the soccer facilities are feeling excited about what the future holds. Brazilian native and New Orleans resident, Nalu Zacaria owns the pizzeria “Coco Bamboo,” a hub for Brazilians in New Orleans. She thinks the Cup will increase tourism and create jobs.
(ACT-Voiceover) With the Cup, the economy of Brazil is getting better. The workforce in general, of domestic workers, manicurists, hair stylists, and the like, say that it is getting more expensive. On the one hand, this is good because they are making more money. The economy of Brazil is doing very well.

TRACK
So well in fact, that Brazil is building 7 new stadiums and upgrading 5. In speaking with Sao Paulo resident Lincoln Hirata, he expresses his distaste with all of the money being spent on the stadiums. He said the worst part of all is that the Brazilian government is using income taxes to fund these construction projects without the consent of the people.

ACT-LINCOLN (rising construction sounds including beeping of crane)

TRACK
He also worries tourists will abandon the stadiums and the country after the Cup and won’t visit the other wonderful places Brazil has to offer. All of this, he says, makes the World Cup construction a poor investment.

TRACK
The World Cup also affects the Brazilian social structure. Jessica Rich is a professor at Tulane who specializes in social movements in Brazil. She says,

ACT/ Rich
(6:33 Rich) I know that Brazil has had to quote, “beautify”, certain areas of the city that are going to be used a lo
t by tourists. There are people that have been living in certain neighborhoods for a very long time who face the prospect of having their homes destroyed.

TRACK
Even though the World Cup is causing controversy about the the infrastructure of Brazil, there is no doubt that national sentiment towards the game will remain strong. Cairo says that hosting the World Cup in Brazil is going to be crazy for the country. He remembers watching his favorite Brazilian soccer player, Ronaldinho, winning at the 2002 World Cup. That experience, alone, Cairo says, was one of the best of his life.

Like Cairo, thousands feel connected to national sports events! In the crowded French Quarter
on Super Bowl Sunday in New Orleans, crowds of purple and red swarmed through the streets.

AMBI
Crowds cheering in the streets in the French Quarter

TRACK
New Orleans resident, Stat Frank came to the French Quarter on the day of the Super Bowl and felt the pride in hosting such a popular event. He mused that Brazilians must be feeling a similar excitement and pride for the World Cup.

ACT/ Stat
(5:20) Obviously since it's on such a global scale, and you're not rooting for your local team, you're rooting for your country. But, I think that both are great. To be able to support your team. I think it rallies people together.

TRACK
Cairo, the soccer player from Brazil, is also the Tulane University football kicker. He had never watched a football game until he played in one at the college level. He admires the production and the almost unreal investment that the people and government put into the Super Bowl, America’s favorite football game.

ACT/ Cairo
(11:45) The love for the game from the people is still the same.

TRACK 10
There is something special about the connection countries have to their national sports. Host cities like Rio, Sao Paulo and New Orleans take on a life of their own as they prepare for events that consume the resources and attention of millions. Despite shaking infrastructure, the people will still come together and cheer, because every touchdown, every goal, is a goal for their country, and a moment of power and pride.