

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: MIGRATION OF BRAZILIAN FEMALE FOOTBALLERS TO ITALIAN FUTSAL

POSSIBILIDADE DE CARREIRA: MIGRAÇÃO DE FUTEBOLISTAS BRASILEIRAS PARA O FUTSAL ITALIANO 

POSIBILIDADES DE CARRERA: MIGRACIÓN DE FUTBOLISTAS BRASILEÑAS AL FUTSAL ITALIANO 

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Abstract: Currently, there has been an intensification of the migration of Brazilian female football players to Europe. This study aimed to critically examine the migration and career opportunities of Italo-Brazilian football players who moved to Italian futsal. The empirical corpus of the study consists of five “in-depth interviews” with footballers who played in the Italian women’s futsal Serie A, as well as the use of documentary and digital sources. The research identified a substantial number of Brazilian players across the last seven editions of the competition (27 in 2016; 37 in 2017; 43 in 2018; 37 in 2019; 31 in 2020; 40 in 2021; and 41 in 2022). We conclude that, although Italian women’s futsal represents a valued opportunity, various adversities persist that hinder these migrant athletes’ ability to build a solid career.

Keywords: Women’s futsal. Migration. Italy. Career.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In November 2022, players of different nationalities¹ released a video in which they called for the establishment of a FIFA-recognized Women's Futsal World Cup (Jogadoras..., 2022). In the video, AJFSF President Natalia Orive stated: "In September 2021, we addressed FIFA regarding the mistreatment and public neglect of women's futsal players. A year later, we still have no official response. We are gathered here for the first time in history to publicly denounce this discriminatory treatment".² This demonstration took place in a context where, since 2015, FIFA, which oversees women's futsal, had organized two editions of the Men's Futsal World Cup but none for women (Dislascio, 2022). In 2024, FIFA confirmed the first edition of the Women's Futsal World Cup, which was held from November 21 to December 7, 2025 (FIFA, 2025).³

In Brazil, women's football and futsal were long banned. In the 1940s, the National Sports Council (CND) enacted Decree-Law No. 3,199/41, which prohibited women from playing football, futsal, and other sports considered "manly." Rooted in discourses that associated women with motherhood and domestic chores (Goellner, 2005; Almeida, 2018), the ban was nationwide and lasted until 1979, despite acts of resistance occurring in various places (Rigo *et al.*, 2008; Cunha, 2024).⁴

In the post-ban context of Brazilian women's football, one phenomenon that has gained prominence, particularly since the 21st century, is the migration of Brazilian female players, both in football and futsal. Despite its particularities, this movement follows the logic already established by Brazilian men's football (Damo, 2005; Tedesco, 2014) of "specialist immigration" (Rial, 2006).

For women, the pursuit of a professional career⁵ appears to be one of the main factors encouraging them to leave the country (Souza Júnior, 2013; Almeida, 2018). In football, many seek better opportunities in the United States, as well as in the French, English, and Spanish leagues, among others (Pisani, 2014; Pessoa; Scaciotti, 2023). Women's futsal is largely concentrated in Europe, especially in countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal.

The relevance of this research lies in addressing migration in women's futsal, an emerging sport that requires greater academic attention. The main objective of the

¹ The players who appeared in the video are Amandinha (Brazil), Ersilia D'Inecco (Italy), Anita Luján (Spain), Janice da Silva (Portugal), Fátima Villar (Uruguay), Chikage Kichibayashi (Japan), Zahra Lotfabadi (Iran), Nancy Loth (Netherlands), Julia Paz Dupuy (Argentina), Vika Kyslova (Ukraine), and the association's president, Natalia Orive of Spain (Jogadoras..., 2022).

² The full video can be accessed via the link: <https://ge.globo.com/video/jogadoras-criam-sindicato-para-reivindicar-mundial-feminino-de-futsal-11090019.ghtml>. Accessed on: June 10, 2025.

³ The qualifying countries were: Brazil, Canada, Argentina, Colombia, Spain, the Philippines, Iran, Italy, Morocco, New Zealand, Panama, Japan, Poland, Thailand, Portugal, and Tanzania (FIFA, 2025). The Brazilian national team was crowned champion without suffering a single defeat.

⁴ Through Resolution No. 7/1965, the CND prohibited women from playing football (field, beach, and indoor), any form of wrestling, water polo, rugby, weightlifting, and baseball. This decree was not revoked until December 1979, and women's football was not regulated until 1983.

⁵ A sports career can be defined as a choice made by an individual who practices a specific sport and dedicates many hours each week over the course of years with the goal of becoming a professional athlete (Alfermann; Stambulova, 2007).

study was to examine the migration process, professionalization, and career prospects of Brazilian female futsal players who migrate to play in Italy's *Serie A*. Additionally, the research sought to map the distribution of these transnational athletes across Italian teams and analyze the state of professionalization in women's futsal in that country.

2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study is characterized as qualitative research that used in-depth interpretive interviews as its empirical basis (Ferreira, 2014). Furthermore, documentary sources and social media posts were employed, which were interwoven with the oral information collected.

The “in-depth interpretive interview” is a methodological procedure that emphasizes the cross-referencing different types of sources: thus, it can be characterized as a methodology that draws on different qualitative approaches, such as Ethnography and Oral History. This connection is particularly relevant if we consider Oral History as an interdisciplinary methodological field, which is based on the use of oral sources (Montenegro, 2010; Portelli, 2010; Thompson, 1992).

The empirical corpus of this research consists of the interviews as well as the sources we produced from the dialogues and message exchanges we conducted with the interviewees through their personal social media accounts (Instagram). In addition to this material, we also used documentary sources and websites. The main website used to identify the football players was that of *Divisione Calcio a 5*, the entity responsible for the national women's futsal championship in Italy.

Subsequently, we built a network of interviewees consisting of five Brazilian athletes who, in 2022, were playing in Italy's *Serie A* futsal league. To better reflect the diversity among them, we selected players from different regions and different teams who had been playing in Italy for at least two years. All interviewees possessed considerable “football capital” (Damo, 2005), with a certain level of recognition in Brazilian and Italian women's futsal. Three of them had played for the Brazilian national team and two for the Italian national team.

In addition to the interviews, we monitored the Instagram accounts of the five interviewees. This social media platform is where they typically share personal photos and videos, as well as images from their travels, training sessions, and matches. The interviews, totaling five, were conducted remotely with the participants' permission and were subsequently recorded and transcribed.

The table below shows some biographical details of the five futsal players we interviewed:⁶

⁶ The five futsal players interviewed agreed to participate in this study and consented to the use of their names in this article.

Table 1 - Description of the interviewed futsal players.

Name	Age	Brazilian clubs	Year of migration	Italian clubs
Luciléia Renner Minuzzo ⁷	39	SER Santo Ângelo, Kindermann,	2012	Ternana, Montesilvano, Bitonto
Jociane Neckel (Neka) ⁸	40	Portuguesa Santista, Quedas do Iguaçu,	2007	Futsal Preci, Ternana, Lazio
Ana Carolina Sestari ⁹	27	Barateiro Futsal	2014	Montesilvano, Pescara
Débora Vanin ¹⁰	27	Female, Kindermann, and Barateiro Futsal	2017	Kick Off, TikiTaka
Bianca Castagnaro ¹¹	33	Londrina, Cianorte, and Stein	2017	Braganze, Città di Capena, Lazio, Bitonto

Source: The authors, 2023.

3 THE CAREER PATH OF BRAZILIAN PLAYERS IN ITALIAN WOMEN'S FUTSAL

Sports migration can occur within a country, between nations on the same continent, and between different continents (Maguire, 1994). However, most players from countries where clubs are not financially well resourced migrate to wealthier European clubs” (Nolasco, 2017, p. 60).

Alcázar notes that the migration of Brazilian women's futsal players to Europe began in 2005, specifically to Futsi Atlético Navalcarnero, a major club in the Spanish Women's Futsal First Division, where the Brazilians became known for *“their superior skill compared to the Spanish players. They are the ones who win matches”* (Alcázar, 2005, paragraph 1). In 2007, something similar occurred in Italian women's futsal,

⁷ Luciléia Renner Minuzzo, originally from Santo Ângelo (RS), began her career with the Sociedade Esportiva e Recreativa Santo Ângelo team. Between 2005 and 2012, she played for Kindermann in Santa Catarina. In 2013, she moved to Italian futsal and continued to play there through 2024. In 2013, she was named the best futsal player in the league. The interview with her was conducted in 2020 via the Zoom app and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

⁸ Jociane de Mello Neckel (Neka), originally from Dois Vizinhos (PR), grew up playing football in a rural community, far from the city. At age 12, she passed a tryout for the Portuguesa Santista football team in São Paulo; however, at her father's request, she returned home. Neka continued to compete in regional and state championships. In 2007, she moved to Italian futsal. In Italian futsal, she won titles and was called up to the Italian national futsal team. She has lived in Italy since 2007. The interview was conducted in 2022 via Google Meet and lasted about 140 minutes.

⁹ Ana Carolina Sestari, originally from Progresso (RS), moved with her family to Nova Brescia (RS) at the age of six, where she grew up and played football with friends and family, mainly on a small field located in front of her grandparents' house. At school, she competed in her first tournaments, such as the Rio Grande do Sul School Games (JERGS) and Guri Bom de Bola. She played as a field player until age 11. But after suffering a bicycle accident, Ana began playing as a goalkeeper. At age 14, she passed a tryout for the Barateiro team in Brusque (SC), where she played from 2010 to 2013. In 2014, she moved to Italian futsal. Since 2015, she has played for the same team, Montesilvano, which was renamed Pescara in 2021. Ana has played for the Italian national team and was ranked among the top three futsal goalkeepers in the world for two consecutive years. The interview was conducted in 2021 via Zoom and lasted approximately 65 minutes.

¹⁰ Débora Vanin, originally from Chapecó (SC), played football on a small field near her home during her childhood. In addition to playing on the street, she played futsal at school and at a youth academy (Female Futsal). In 2017, she was called up for the first time to the Brazilian national futsal team, the same year she left Brazil to play in Italy. The interview was conducted in 2023 via Google Meet and lasted about 50 minutes.

¹¹ Bianca Castagnaro was born Osasco (SP). It was at school that she first started playing futsal. Bianca has always played as a goalkeeper. As a teenager, she joined a boys' futsal academy, where she was the only girl. At age 14, she was invited to play in the Youth Games for the Londrina team, where she remained until she was 18. She played for one year with Osasco Palmeiras (SP) and then returned to Paraná to play for the Cianorte team

more specifically at Futsal Preci¹². This event became known as “*Il miracolo sportivo che cambiò il futsal femminile*”¹³ (Scardicchio, 2022, n.p.).

In recent years, we have witnessed an intensification of the migration of female futsal players to Europe, primarily to Spain¹⁴ and Italy. In Table 2, we present a survey of the participation of Brazilian female players in the 2016–2023 editions of the Italian Serie A.

Table 2 - Brazilian players competing in the Italian Serie A

Season	No. of Brazilian players	Total number of teams in Serie A	Teams with Brazilian players
2016–2017	27	17	9
2017–2018	37	16	13
2018–2019	43	16	14
2019–2020	37	14	13
2020–2021	31	10	9
2021–2022	40	12	11
2022–2023	40	14	11

Source: Divisione Calcio a 5 (2015).

The table above shows that, in the 2016–2017 season, 27 Brazilian players were spread across 9 teams. That number grew to 37 across 13 teams in the 2017–2018 season. By 2018–2019, there were 43 players across 14 teams.

There was a slight decline in the 2019–2020 season, with 37 Brazilian players on 13 teams, and again in 2020–2021, which featured 31 players on 9 teams; in 2021–2022, there were 40 Brazilian players on 11 of the 12 teams competing in the league; only Padova did not have any Brazilian players. In 2022–2023, once again 40 Brazilian players were present on 11 of the 14 teams competing in the championship. These players were playing for teams spread across different regions of Italy.¹⁵

Athletes who leave Brazil in search of new opportunities in Italy are part of a contemporary migratory flow that encompasses cultural, economic, and emotional exchanges (Zanini; Assis; Beneduzi, 2013). In “a world where distances have shrunk” (Zanini; Assis; Beneduzi, 2013, p. 2), the transition from a national to a transnational career becomes a possibility for players from countries with few professional options in the sport (Agergaard; Ryba, 2014).

¹² The club was founded in 2005 in the small town of Preci by Italian Damiano Basile and his father, Raffaele Basile (Scardicchio, 2022).

¹³ The sporting miracle that changed Italian women’s futsal (our translation).

¹⁴ The specifics of the migration process of Brazilian female players to Spain are the subject of another study we are conducting. However, we note here that in 2021, for example, there were 21 Brazilian women playing in the top division of the Spanish League (Vecchioli, 2023).

¹⁵ From 2016 to 2023, for example, they were based in the following regions: Sardinia (Futsal Cagliari, Athena Sassari, and Ichinusa Sinnai); Sicily (Virtus Ragusa); Calabria (Lamezia); Campania (Woman Napoli); Apulia (Futsal Salinis, Real Statte, Bisceglie, Bitonto, and Stone Five); Lazio (Lazio C5, Olimpus Roma, Belletum Ferentum, and Città di Capena); Abruzzo (Pescara, Città di Montesilvano, and Tiki Taka Francaville); Umbria (Città di Falconara); Marche (Ternana); Tuscany (Futsal Florentia and Palletirie); Lombardy (Kick Off C5); Veneto (Futsal Breganze, Città di Thiene, Real Grignano, Granzette, Audace Verona, and VIP Tombolo).

In Italy, similar to what occurred in Brazil, women's futsal competitions officially began in 1992. At that time, the championships consisted of regional tournaments, held from the north to the south of the country. In these competitions, the top eight teams competed in the so-called *Final Eight*, a knockout stage that crowned the national champion (Scardicchio, 2022).

With the growth of women's futsal in Italy, the directors of Futsal Preci, Damiano Basile and his father, Raffaele Basile, organized a tryout in 2007 in the city of Chopinzinho, Paraná, and selected six Brazilian players, all of Italian descent, a requirement related to the immigration rules of the time (Scardicchio, 2022). In the following season, in 2008, the Preci team's managers decided to also invest in Argentine players (Scardicchio, 2022).

The importation of non-European players sparked controversy in Italian futsal. Consequently, the Italian Futsal Federation limited the participation of foreign players to one non-EU player and five more with dual citizenship per team.¹⁶

Jociane Neckel (2022), one of the first to immigrate to play for Futsal Preci, reported that the process of obtaining dual citizenship documents was difficult: "I couldn't figure out where my grandfather was from in Italy; I knew his name, but I didn't know which city — I knew nothing." So:

I sent that information to them in Italy — the people who were inviting me to play — and they sent a letter to the priest at the church, because back then the church was where the records were kept, asking if a "so-and-so" of a certain age had been born there. So, they looked it up in the records and replied that yes, it was my great-great-grandfather who had been born there, with all the details. So, we managed to do it (Neckel, 2022).

Once they had overcome the challenges related to documentation, the first female players who emigrated experienced prejudice from some of their teammates (Scardicchio, 2022), mainly due to rivalry among teammates and also with opponents: "Because, as I told you at the beginning, we used to score 20 or 30 goals against them in every match. And we got called names, 'monkey,' like, 'Brazilian, banana, monkey'"¹⁷ (Neckel 2022). However, the other players reported that they were well received; Luciléia Minuzzo (2021) noted that: "they really like the Brazilians here, right? Especially because they have that image of 'oh, Brazilians play well, they know how to play,' so they end up falling in love with them."

The arrival of foreign players boosted the sport in the country and led to a restructuring of Italian futsal. In 2011/12, the main competition ceased to be a regional

¹⁶ The presence of foreign male players — both EU and non-EU nationals — on European teams was the subject of various controversies throughout the second half of the 20th century. One of the milestones in this debate was the Bosman Ruling of 1995. Following this ruling, which established the right to free movement for European professional athletes throughout the European Community, there was also a marked relaxation of restrictions regarding the presence of non-EU athletes (Araújo, 2002).

¹⁷ The term "monkey" is linked to racist theories, which, until the mid-1930s, biologically subordinated the Black race to the White race (Mackedanz; Nunes; Rigo, 2023). Although it was refuted by the scientific community as early as the mid-1950s (Mackedanz; Nunes; Rigo, 2023), and is currently classified as a crime of racism in Brazil, this expression still frequently appears in football matches.

league and became a national one, known as *Serie A*¹⁸. This new competition format prompted teams to sign more Brazilian players: “There are many Brazilians here [...], every team has one or two Brazilians, or even more, as is the case with my team here, which has five,” says Minuzzo (2021). Initially, in the 2007 season, there were only six Brazilian players (Scardicchio, 2022); by 2023, there were more than 40, spread across 11 of the 14 teams competing in the 2022/23 season (Tuttocampo, 2023).

To help foreign female futsal players integrate into Italian culture, some teams invest in Italian language classes, while others focus on hiring more than one player (and/or coaching staff members) of the same nationality. These strategies aim to facilitate the building of mutual support networks among foreign female players; some even share housing. When studying male football players, Rial (2008, p. 55) notes that the “formation of peer networks” is often used to support the successful migration of players. Agergaard and Ryba (2014) also highlight the importance of these networks, which act as facilitators of social interactions among transnational athletes.

Strategies for recruiting young futsal players usually involve a scouting process. Bianca Castagnaro, for example, who has been playing in Italy since 2016, recalled her own experience: “You have an Italian last name, right? [...] based on your last name, you do [...], I won’t charge you anything if we manage to secure your citizenship. Can I start offering you to some European clubs?” (Castagnaro, 2023). In Castagnaro’s case, the agents handled all the legal procedures for acquiring dual citizenship and immigration, in addition to direct negotiations with the Braganze futsal team.

Since women’s futsal does not generate large sums of money, many players take on the responsibility of managing their own careers. This was the case for Bianca Castagnaro: “So, the first time I came, it was the agency that offered me [...], after that the clubs would come directly to talk to me, and then we’d get into the contract details” (Castagnaro, 2023). Vanin’s transfer to Italian futsal happened in a similar way to Castagnaro’s: “A Spaniard who works for Kick Off, [...], watched (virtually) some *Taça Brasil* matches and told the club he was interested in bringing me over” (Vanin, 2023).

Other times, signings can happen through networks of contacts, friends, and acquaintances. Minuzzo (2021) recounted that she was encouraged by a friend who played in the Italian men’s professional futsal league: “The club where my friend played also had a women’s team, so he said [...], as a first experience: ‘come here, because then you’ll get to know it and see what the championship is like’” (Minuzzo, 2021). Ana Sestari’s transfer process in 2015 resembles Minuzzo’s. According to her, a journalist friend informed her that the transfer window was open, and she directly contacted Everaldo, coach of Portos.¹⁹

¹⁸ The increase in participation, which reached 40 clubs in the 2014/15 season, led to the first change in the following season: in 2015/16, the competition featured *Serie A Elite*, comprising the 16 best-ranked teams from the previous year, and *Serie A* as a second division (Divisione Calcio A 5, 2015). This format remained in place until 2017/18, when the competition returned to its original format, with *Serie A* as the top division and *Serie A2* as the second (Divisione Calcio a 5, 2017). Currently, *Serie A* is played in a round-robin format, with home-and-away matches, in which the top-ranked teams advance to the knockout stages, determined based on their standings from the previous phase (Divisione Calcio a 5, 2022).

¹⁹ In her first year in Italy, in 2015, goalkeeper Ana Sestari encountered a problem with her documentation regarding dual citizenship and could not be registered to play in *Serie A* for Portos. At the end of the season, she transferred to the Montesilvano team, having to wait another three months before she could finally be registered for the competition.

When moving to Italian futsal, many female players aim to build a career of international prominence. In this sense, making the national team of their country of birth (Brazil) or the Italian national team is one of the most sought-after goals for Italian-Brazilian female players.

The importance of representing the Italian national team was highlighted by the transnational Italian-Brazilian futsal player, Gaby Vanelly (*Kick Off C5*). Gaby has been playing in Italy since 2018, and in 2022 she was called up to represent the Italian national futsal team for the first time: Gaby noted that “[...] it was a *mix* of satisfaction, joy, and many emotions.” She added: “I want to wear this jersey for years to come and represent the team as best as I can, and I’ll do everything I can to win titles with it,” in an interview conducted by Christopher Henrique (2022) for the website Torcedores.²⁰

Officially established in 2015, Azzurra, the Italian women’s futsal team, has included Italian-Brazilian players since its inception. A survey based on data from the *Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio* (FIGC) website found that from 2015 to 2023, twelve Italian-Brazilian players have played for the Italian national team²¹ (FIGC, s.d.).

Most Italian-Brazilian female players view their call-up to the Italian national team as recognition of their “football capital”²² (Damo, 2005). As Bruna Borges²³ noted in an interview with *Globo Esporte* in 2009: “I can only say thank you. Here (in Italy) there is recognition of women’s futsal. I feel important and hope to keep growing. Who knows, maybe a chance will come up on the Brazilian national team, on the court.” Bruna was playing for the Montesilvano team when she was called up by Italy for the first time, in 2015.

Like Bruna, Renata Adamatti²⁴ also expressed some satisfaction with the recognition she received: “[...] it wasn’t an easy choice, since I’ve represented Brazil my whole life. It was always my dream. Italy welcomed me and gave me this opportunity. I’d been there for four years and felt like I was representing the Italian national team. I decided because Italy is in my heart too”²⁵.

Both Bruna and Renata demonstrate an Italian-Brazilian subjectivity and identity (Hall, 2006) reshaped by football. This subjectivity of the transmigrating athlete

²⁰ HENRIQUE, Christopher. Na Itália, Gabi Vanelli celebra... *Torcedores.com*, June 24, 2022. Available at: <https://www.torcedores.com/noticias/2022/06/na-italia-gaby-vanelli-celebra-primeira-partida-pela-selecao>. Accessed on: June 7, 2023.

²¹ The players called up were: Caroline Pesenti, Joseane Pinto Dias, Eliane Dalla Vila, Bruna Borges, Neka, Gabriella Tardelli, Jéssica Marques, Juliana Bisognin, Ana Carolina Sestari, Renata Adematti, Rafa Dal’maz, and Gaby Vanelli.

²² “Football capital” is a concept used by Damo (2005) to refer to the qualities of male footballers. Damo applies this concept specifically to the field of football, drawing on Bourdieu — more precisely, Bourdieu’s expansion of the concept of capital — by highlighting the existence of “cultural capital,” “social capital,” and “symbolic capital,” which function in conjunction with the classical notion of “economic capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, 1992).

²³ In 2009, Bruna Borges was called up to the Brazilian national football team, where she trained with the youth squad at Granja Comary in Rio de Janeiro but did not play in any official matches, and in 2013, at age 21, she had the opportunity to move to Italian futsal (Tarifa, 2013). At the time of the interview, Bruna had not yet been called up to the Italian national team.

²⁴ Renata represented Brazil in five editions of the World University Championship (Costa, 2020) and moved to Italy in 2016. In 2019, while playing for Italcave Real Statte, she was called up to the Italian national team.

²⁵ Interview given to journalist Eduardo Costa of the *Pioneiro Esportes* blog, affiliated with the *Jornal Gaúcha ZH*. The article was published on April 10, 2020.

is a fairly common phenomenon among male football players who play for national teams of countries other than their places of birth (Rigo *et al.*, 2023).

If we take 2007 as a reference — the year in which the first Brazilian women's futsal players emigrated to Italy (Scardicchio, 2022)²⁶ — and the data we have collected, the increase in the number of Italian-Brazilian women's futsal players who began playing in Italy is evident. The arrival of these migrant athletes elevated the status of Italian women's futsal, a sport often associated with those who “stopped playing football, for those who can no longer stand playing on the field and go play futsal,” Neckel (2022).

4 PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ITALIAN WOMEN'S FUTSAL: PROGRESS AND CONTRADICTIONS

In Brazil, a large number of men have the opportunity to pursue football as a professional career (Marques; Marchi Júnior, 2021), but for women, this possibility remains much more difficult, whether in football or futsal. Souza and Martins (2018) found that more than 95% of the athletes who competed in the 2015 São Paulo futsal championship — one of the most structured competitions in the sport in the country — did not have any type of contract or formal employment agreement. Despite this being a requirement under Brazilian law (Brazil, 1998)²⁷.

Aware of the reality of Brazilian women's football, Vanin (2023) emphasized: “I believe that anyone who makes a living from this — who seriously wants to make a living from it — wouldn't choose to live in Brazil, right?”. From this same perspective, Minuzzo notes: “I used to get paid, but I don't even remember how many months now — I think 11 months — but in December and January, which was the vacation period, we didn't get paid.” And she adds: “I didn't have a professional contract” Minuzzo (2021). Along the same lines, Castagnaro (2023) commented: “In Brazil, I never had a professional contract. It was all based on verbal agreements, [...] and often over the phone.”

In this context of the lack of professionalization in Brazilian women's futsal,²⁸ playing in Europe has become an alternative for some female players (Tedesco, 2014). In Europe, countries such as Spain²⁹ and Italy have stood out as preferred destinations for Brazilian athletes. Neckel (2022) noted that “at first, no Brazilian wanted to come to Italy [...], they all wanted to go to Spain.” Italy began to emerge as a viable option starting in 2011, when the women's futsal championship ceased to

²⁶ Scardicchio provides important insights into the history of women's futsal in Italy.

²⁷ One indication of this difficult reality for female players is the late start of women's championships. The first official competitions date back to 1983 for state women's futsal championships and 1992 for national competitions (Sanches; Borim, 2010).

²⁸ Although the Brazilian landscape of women's futsal professionalization is quite fragile, it can be considered the most promising in South America, as it is the only country where female players receive some form of compensation, even if informally (Altmann; Reis, 2013).

²⁹ For further discussion on the unique aspects of transnational futsal player migration to Spanish futsal, see: ÁVILA, Carina Castro. Por que a Espanha é um oásis para jogadoras brasileiras de futsal. *TAB Uol*, Jan. 13, 2022; VECCHIOLI, Demétrio. Goleira brasileira passou fome e dependeu de doações para comer na Espanha. *Uol*, Aug. 6, 2023.

be governed by regional committees and began to be administered by *the Divisione Calcio a 5*.³⁰ From that point on, the Italian championship became a cohesive national competition, consisting of two main divisions, *Serie A* and *A2*.

The *Divisione Calcio a 5* imposed a series of rules for the competition, such as the requirement for indoor courts. Neckel (2022) emphasized that the arrival of Brazilian female players helped boost and reshape Italian futsal: “So the process went like this: when some teams started to see that the Brazilians were better, they’d say, ‘I want one too, I want one too.’ And that’s how futsal exploded here in Italy” (Neckel, 2022).

This search for the best players occurred in parallel with certain requirements established by the Italian Futsal Federation, which affected the contractual relationship between the athlete and the team/club. One of these requirements, included in the *Serie A* regulations, stipulated that all teams would be required to file the contract established with each athlete with the Italian Federation:

Sports employment contracts and apprenticeship contracts for players must be filed by the club concurrently with the registration application and, in any case, in accordance with the provisions of the Collective Agreements. The filing of such contracts must be done by the club with the Futsal Division, with simultaneous written notification to the player. If the club fails to file the documents within the deadlines, the player may do so within 15 days after the expiration of said deadlines. Filing after the deadlines set forth in this paragraph is not permitted and will not be accepted (FIGC, 2025).

The established contract specifies the monthly salary and the duration of the athlete’s affiliation with the club. This measure has become an attractive feature for Brazilian female players used to informal agreements. Minuzzo (2021) highlighted the importance of a contract registered with the Federation because, [...] “if there is a problem, you can involve the Federation, and then the club is obligated to pay you.” Regarding the importance of implementing official contracts in women’s futsal, Fernanda Haag (2018) points out that verbal contracts, which predominate in Brazil, leave athletes in a situation of dependence on the “good faith” of employers, and there is always the risk of non-compliance with what was verbally agreed upon.

However, despite the requirement for a contract filed with the Federation, informal agreements continue to exist in Italian futsal. Vanin (2023) gave an example: “If I ask for my electricity bill to be paid, they don’t put that directly in the contract that goes to the Federation; so it’s kind of a verbal agreement for us to include that ‘something extra’.” This “something extra” has a certain tradition in the process of sports professionalization and is often used to assist athletes who do not have high salaries (Souza; Martins, 2018).

Similar to what exists in men’s football,³¹ women’s futsal in Italy also commonly includes performance bonuses tied to sporting achievements. “So you say, okay, I want this *amount*, but I want this much if I win the Italian *Scudetto*, this much if I win

³⁰ Currently, futsal in Italy is under the jurisdiction of the National Amateur League, which is also the governing body for Serie D football, beach soccer, and regional championships for both men’s and women’s futsal (FIGC, 2026).

³¹ In Brazilian football, this practice became known as “bicho,” due to its association with the “bicho” lottery, and dates back to the era when professionalism was prohibited. For further discussion, see: FILHO, Mario. *O negro no futebol brasileiro*. 5th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X, 2010.

the *Coppa Italia*, and this much for something else” (Castagnaro, 2023). However, these agreements are not always honored: “We’ve won more than once and gotten nothing. Zero money. So there’s no way to make ends meet” (Neckel, 2022).

Among the contractual requirements is a clause regarding the athletes’ age, which favors the team/club more than the players. This clause stipulates that if a player who signs a contract with a Serie A team is under 25 years old, she remains bound to that team until she turns 25. “It’s as though you only become an adult at 25 and then have the right to choose where you go,” comments Vanin (2023).³²

Another clause that does not favor female players addresses cases of club bankruptcy. The clause stipulates that, in the event of bankruptcy, the club is exempt from fulfilling its contractual obligations. If this occurs, “then you’ve lost, because bankruptcy is bankruptcy,” says Castagnaro (2023).

These contradictions and weaknesses in Italian women’s futsal cause a series of uncertainties and collective anxieties that, as Ana Sestari (2022) denounced, extend into the post-career period:

We know that the career is short; it’s a career where if you don’t build anything or have nothing saved up, [...] we don’t have a formal job, we have nothing. We have a contract filed with the Federation, but nothing that you can count as a pension, so, for my life, I’m going to work until I’m 85.

However, despite the countless difficulties in building a career in Italian futsal, the five Italian-Brazilian women we interviewed felt that, even so, women’s futsal in Italy is a more promising opportunity than in Brazil: “If I think about it financially, it’s here; there’s no other country that pays like here,” Ana Sestari (2022). “Italy is more rewarding financially” (Vanin, 2023).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Italy stands out as one of the most sought-after countries for Brazilian women’s futsal players. Our study showed that, in the 2022/2023 season, for example, *Serie A* featured 40 Brazilian players spread across 14 teams. According to the players interviewed, this demand is mainly due to better opportunities to build a career as a futsal player than in Brazil. The athletes also emphasized that playing in the Italian Futsal *Serie A* adds more “football capital” to their careers.

This study also highlighted the relevance and need for further research on Italian women’s futsal. For example, studies focusing on the 48 teams that make up the Italian Futsal *Serie A2*.³³ Or research addressing the migration of players to countries that have established themselves as destinations for Brazilian women’s futsal players, such as Spain, Russia, and Portugal (Ávila, 2022; Vecchioli, 2023).

³² This rule refers to Article 32 of the Internal Organization Regulations of the *Federazione Italiana de Giuoco Calcio* (FIGC), and the restriction applies only to teams competing in the Italian women’s futsal championship (FIGC, s.d.).

³³ Number of teams identified based on a survey conducted in the 2023 *Divisione Calcio a 5*.

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Resumo: Atualmente, acompanhamos uma intensificação no processo migratório de futebolistas brasileiras para o contexto europeu. Diante disso, esta pesquisa objetivou problematizar a migração e as possibilidades de carreira das futebolistas ítalo-brasileiras que migraram para o futsal italiano. O corpus empírico do estudo constitui-se de cinco “entrevistas compreensivas” com futebolistas que atuaram na Série A do futsal feminino italiano, além do uso de fontes documentais e digitais. A pesquisa mapeou um elevado número de brasileiras nas últimas sete edições da competição: 27 em 2016; 37 em 2017; 43 em 2018; 37 em 2019; 31 em 2020; 40 em 2021 e 41 em 2022. Concluímos que, apesar de o futsal feminino italiano representar uma oportunidade valorizada pelas futebolistas brasileiras, persistem adversidades que dificultam as possibilidades de essas atletas migrantes construírem uma carreira sólida.

Palavras-chave: Futsal feminino. Migração. Itália. Carreira.

Resumen: Actualmente observamos una intensificación en el proceso de migración de futbolistas brasileñas al contexto europeo. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo problematizar la migración y las posibilidades de carrera de las futbolistas ítalo-brasileñas que migraron al futsal italiano. El corpus empírico del estudio se compone de cinco “entrevistas en profundidad” con futbolistas que han jugado en la Serie A del futsal femenino italiano, además de utilizar fuentes documentales y digitales. La investigación identificó un número elevado de brasileñas en las últimas siete ediciones de la competición (27 en 2016; 37 en 2017; 43 en 2018; 37 en 2019; 31 en 2020; 40 en 2021 y 41 en 2022). Concluimos que el futsal femenino italiano representa una oportunidad valorada, pero persisten adversidades que dificultan las posibilidades de que estas atletas migrantes construyan una carrera sólida.

Palabras clave: Futsal femenino. Migración. Italia. Carrera.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mariana da Silva Brum: Conceptualization, writing, data collection, and analysis.

Silvana Vilodre Goellner: Theoretical review, writing, supervision.

Luiz Carlos Rigo: Supervision, writing, and review.

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All five participants in this study consented to video recording and the use of the information for the preparation of this article, as evidenced by their signature on the Informed Consent Form (ICF). The recorded interviews were properly stored for verification purposes.

AVAILABILITY OF RESEARCH DATA

Research data are available only upon request.

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