

Neymar's brain on auto-pilot - Japan neurologists

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Neurological research suggests Brazil's Neymar, shown here in Brasilia on July 12, 2014, plays as if he is on auto-pilot

Brazilian superstar Neymar's brain activity while dancing past opponents is less than 10 percent the level of amateur players, suggesting he plays as if on auto-pilot, according to Japanese neurologists.

Results of brain scans conducted on Neymar in February this year indicated minimal cerebral function when he rotated his ankle and point to the Barcelona striker's wizardry being uncannily natural.

"From MRI images we discovered Neymar's brain activity to be less than 10 percent of an amateur player," researcher Eiichi Naito told AFP on Friday.

"It is possible genetics is a factor, aided by the type of training he does."

The findings were published in the Swiss journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* following a series of motor skills tests carried out on the 22-year-old Neymar and several other athletes in Barcelona in February this year.

Three Spanish second-division footballers and two top-level swimmers were also subjected to the same tests, added Naito of Japan's National Institute of Information and Communications Technology.

Naito concluded in his paper that the test results "provide valuable evidence that the football brain of Neymar recruits very limited neural resources in the motor-cortical foot regions during foot movements".



Brazil's forward Neymar (R) and Mexico's defender Rafael Marquez (C) jump for the ball in front of Mexico's goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa during a World Cup match in Fortaleza on June 17, 2014

Asked whether Neymar's Barcelona team-mate Lionel Messi or Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo might display similar test results, Naito said: "It is fair to assume they would show similar levels given their footwork and technique."

Naito told Japan's Mainichi Shimbun newspaper: "Reduced [brain activity](#) means less burden which allows (the player) to perform many complex movements at once. We believe this gives him the ability to execute his various shimmies."

Neymar carried the hopes of host nation Brazil on his shoulders at the recently ended World Cup but his involvement ended in tears as he

fractured a vertebra in the 2-1 quarter-final victory over Colombia.

Without their talisman, who had scored four goals in the tournament, Brazil suffered their most humiliating defeat ever when they were pulverised 7-1 by eventual champions Germany in the semi-final.

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