

Pepsi Takes on Coke in World Cup War



Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos, centre, in action with Celta's Gustavo Cabral, right, and Hugo Mallo, left, during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Celta at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Jan. 6, 2014. (AP Photo/Andres Kudacki)

LONDON (AP) — Pepsi and Coke are slugging it out around the most global of stages: this summer's World Cup in Brazil.

With Coca-Cola as an ongoing main sponsor for the World Cup, Pepsi is again launching an attempt to draw attention to its own brand with major figures from the sport — without mentioning the every-four-year event, of course.

For the third tournament, Coca-Cola has been taking the World Cup trophy around the world in a highly publicized tour. Pepsi announced Thursday that its campaign would include Argentina forward Lionel Messi and 18 rivals including Brazil defender David Luiz, Netherlands striker Robin Van Persie and U.S. attacker Clint Dempsey. The superstars also include England midfielder Jack Wilshere, Spain defender Sergio Ramos and Belgium defender Vincent Kompany.

Some of the stars play together for their clubs as well as joining in the advertising campaign. Argentina striker Sergio Aguero, a Manchester City teammate of Kompany, said players realize that they'll soon be sworn rivals.

"Obviously we talk about it. We joke between us on who will have to face whom during a World Cup game," he told The Associated Press. "Of course we have many players in Manchester City participating in the World Cup. I have to face (Bosnia striker Edin) Dzeko. But all games are difficult."

Added David Luiz, who plays for Chelsea and Brazil's national team: "I can't wait to join fans from across the world and celebrate a big year for football."

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The World Cup — to be played this June and July — is one of the biggest occasions for advertisers to reach a global audience. Prior to the last World Cup in 2010, Pepsi launched a major campaign to draw attention from Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the event in South Africa. Coca-Cola has extended its World Cup sponsorship deal until after the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

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