

## Alarms ring as banana thrown at Carlos

AFP, Moscow

Russia's football authorities vowed to step up the fight against racism Thursday after a fan threw a banana at Roberto Carlos in the latest apparent racial attack on the Brazilian former World Cup winner.

Carlos, a defender for revamped Caucasus side Anzhi Makhachkala since February, received a pass from the goalkeeper and was about to pass it when a banana was thrown on to the pitch, landing nearby.

The 38-year-old Brazilian picked it up and threw it back, walking off the field before the final whistle and raising two fingers at the stands, indicating this was the second such incident since March.

Both Anzhi and their hosts -- Krylya Sovetov of the Volga city of Samara -- denounced the insult and vowed to find the culprit.

"The stadium is no place for racism," Anzhi said in a statement after the match, demanding that the fan be identified and punished.

It is the second such incident in a matter of months. In March a fan was pictured holding the fruit out to Carlos during a game against Zenit Saint Petersburg. Zenit was fined 300,000 roubles (\$10,700) and banned the fan from its games.

Carlos has proved a huge success after signing for the Dagestan outfit in February in a late-career move, inspiring the previously marginal team to fourth in the Russian Premier League so far this season.

He has also charmed the Russian public, in football and outside, with his usually smiling demeanour and an apparent genuine interest in the country.

Russia's Premier League issued an appeal to fans to prevent fellow supporters tarnishing the reputation of the Russian game.

"People allowing themselves such outbursts are sitting next to you at the stadiums. If you don't want your club to suffer, don't let them disgrace Russian football," it said.

Carlos was shown after the incident sitting down on the bench and burying his head in a towel in distress. "Such things should not be tolerated in civilised countries," he told Sport Express newspaper after the match.

He added that he "felt deep disappointment and had no desire to continue the game," which Anzhi ended up winning 3-0.



**STAR Sports**  
Wimbledon Championships  
Third Round  
Live from 5:00pm  
**ESPN**  
Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm

**DAY'S EVENT**

**Bangladesh League**  
Mohammedan v Abahani  
Time: 4:15pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
Sk Russel v Ctg Abahani  
Time: 4:15pm  
Venue: Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur  
Soccer Club Feni v Farashganj  
Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Feni Stadium



Mexican forwards Javier Hernandez (R) and Jesus De Nigris (2nd-R) both rise for a header during their Gold Cup semifinal against Honduras at the Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Mexico, USA to meet in final



Football

AP, Houston

The United States and Mexico both turned to their stars to advance to the Gold Cup final.

The Americans defeated Panama 1-0 and El Tri beat Honduras 2-0 in Wednesday's semifinals, setting up another championship final between the two power teams of the CONCACAF region.

Mexico and the U.S. have won nine of the 10 Gold Cups contested since the biennial tournament took its current form in 1991. The United States beat El Tri 2-1 in 2007, and Mexico won 5-0 in the 2009 final.

"We know what the U.S. represents," Mexican forward Aldo de Nigris said. "We know it will be a tough rival, but we have to worry about ourselves, and, for me personally, it provides extra motivation because I've never played one of these finals."

Before the Americans could think about Mexico, they had to redeem a stunning loss to Panama on June 11.

Clint Dempsey scored in the 77th minute off an assist from Landon Donovan, and the

Americans earned a 1-0 victory on Wednesday. The United States has shut out its last three opponents since the 2-1 loss to Panama in the group stage.

"It was a really good team effort," American coach Bob Bradley said. "It was a hard game, for sure. I thought the mentality of the group was looking for ways to win."

Freddy Adu made a long-awaited return to American soccer in the second half, and set up the winning play with a long, slanting pass to Donovan, who played in his 27th consecutive Gold Cup match to extend his own record.

Donovan was benched at the start for the second straight game, and joined the action in the second half. He tracked down Adu's cross, then threaded a pinpoint pass through the Panama defense to Dempsey, who slid as he redirected the ball into the low corner of the net.

"It was a great ball from Freddy to open up Landon," Dempsey said. "All I had to do was put my foot on it."

Panama lost to the Americans in the knockout stage for the fourth straight time. Coach Julio Dely Valdes said his team sur-

prised the Americans in their earlier match, and the U.S. team was more focused this time.

"It was a very intense game, very few chances for both teams," Dely Valdes said. "I'm pleased with my team's performance, they fought until the very end."

Adu played for the national team for the first time since 2009. Bradley said Adu struggled in early practices for the tournament, but has steadily regained his form.

"From the start of this camp, Freddy's made progress," Bradley said. "The opportunity (Wednesday) was earned on his part. You could see him getting sharper, his confidence coming back. He was a nice part of the play that led to the goal. It's important for him, he earned this opportunity and I think everybody on this team feels good about that."

The United States is unbeaten in 22 of its last 24 games in the Gold Cup, a tournament with 12 teams from Central and North American and the Caribbean. The Americans improved to 7-1-2 against Panama all-time.

Mexico is the only team to have beaten the U.S. in the knockout stage of the Gold Cup, with wins in 1993, '98 and 2009. And the

Mexicans have looked more dominant so far in this tournament, outscoring their five opponents by an aggregate score of 18-2.

Mexico had trouble with Honduras in the semifinal, with neither team scoring through 90 minutes of regulation.

De Nigris and Javier "El Chicharito" Hernandez scored off corner kicks early in overtime to propel Mexico into its third straight Gold Cup final.

"This is what we expected," Mexican coach Jose Manuel de la Torre. "Honduras is very orderly, very strong. Our team was not finding the spaces."

Pablo Barrera assisted on both goals for Mexico on Wednesday.

De Nigris headed the first past Honduran goalkeeper Orlin Vallecillo in the third minute of the extra period, drawing roars from the heavily pro-Mexico crowd at Reliant Stadium.

The baby-faced "Chicharito," already a huge star in Mexico, then triggered the loudest cheer of the night when he used his right hip to redirect Barrera's corner kick in the ninth minute of overtime.

## Varane snubs MU for Real Madrid



Football

AFP, Paris

Highly-rated French defender Raphael Varane is to sign for Spanish giants Real Madrid from French Second Division side Lens, the selling club's president Gervais Martel told the team's supporters on Wednesday.

Varane, 18, is regarded as one of the most promising young defenders in French football and had been closely linked with a 10million pounds move to English champions Manchester United last month.

However, Martel revealed to Lens supporters that Varane - who has just 23 Ligue 1 matches under his belt in a season that saw the club relegated - had met with Real coach Jose Mourinho and the deal was done.

"Even if Lens had stayed in Ligue 1,

Raphael Varane would have left because he is a phenomenon!"

"He is going to play for Real Madrid under the leadership of Jose Mourinho who he has already met, just as he has Zinedine Zidane (advisor to the Real president).

"Raphael is an exceptional boy. I am proud that he is going to don the Real colours!"

"He has been pursued by Real for the past two months, he was welcomed by Real and he visited their facilities. He told me: 'I cannot turn down such an opportunity!'"

Martel insisted that money was not the main reason for letting Varane leave for Real - though he did not reveal details of the transfer fee.

"Letting him leave is not about the money."

"I must allow him to pursue his career. He is going to a club which has huge sporting ambitions. I am certain he will earn his place there."

## Parma snap up Giovenco from Juve

AFP, Rome

Italian international offensive midfielder Sebastian Giovenco signed for Serie A side Parma from rivals Juventus on Wednesday after a successful loan spell.

The 24-year-old - capped twice - cost Parma 3million euros for half-ownership of him with Juventus retaining the other 50 percent.

Giovenco, who scored seven goals in his 32 appearances for Parma last season, had told the media that he did not want to return to Juventus as he was annoyed he had lost his place in the starting line-up at the end of the 2009/10 campaign.

## Can Batista do the trick?



Football

AFP, Buenos Aires

They say everything comes to him who waits and Argentina fans will be hoping that it is their turn after 18 years without a major trophy at senior level.

But after the adrenaline rush of a year-and-a-half under Diego Maradona they will happily bow to the somewhat more pragmatic approach of successor Sergio Batista if their 'albiceste' can win a record 15th Copa America next month.

Given that the event is on home soil Batista and his charges will be firmly in the spotlight - but if he is a less exuberant character than Maradona he does

possess a number of trump cards as he goes about trying to prevent bitter rivals Brazil winning their third straight continental crown.

One is that the 48-year-old from Buenos Aires earned respect as a heart-on-sleeve-wearing international midfielder who steadied the defensive ship while Maradona went marauding on the way to 1986 World Cup glory while another is that he started off at Maradona's own nursery side Argentinos Juniors.

A third factor in Batista's favour is that he is utterly shorn of the hype which resolutely stuck to Maradona's coattails during his ultimately ill-fated spell in charge which culminated in last summer's quarter-final thrashing by Germany in South Africa. Appointed

first as interim coach Batista can also point to having earned his corn with the under-23 side, whom he led to Olympic glory at the 2008 Beijing Games.

With that generation of players maturing he can now show he is the man to take the two-times champions forward, first by acquitting themselves well on home soil starting with group encounters with Bolivia, Colombia and Costa Rica before targeting an assault on a third World Cup success - in Brazil - in three years time.

Brazil themselves went 19 years in the comparative wilderness after their epoch-shattering 1970 vintage of Pele and company won the World Cup - they ended the drought with a home Copa success.



PHOTO: AFP

Santos starlet Neymar celebrates after scoring against Uruguay's Penarol during their Libertadores Cup final at the Pacaembu Stadium in Sao Paulo on Wednesday.

## Neymar not going to Real



Football

AFP, Sao Paulo

The chairman of top Brazilian side Santos, Luis Alvaro de Oliveira Ribeiro, on Wednesday insisted young starlet Neymar is not on his way to Real Madrid, despite a report to the contrary by Spanish sports daily Marca.

"It is a grotesque and irresponsible lie," stormed Oliveira Ribeiro, annoyed that the story had come just as the Brazilians were set to take on Penarol of Uruguay in the final second leg of the Copa Libertadores.

He added that whenever top clubs came calling his message to them was "we have no interest in unloading our top stars."

And he added that "if it were for me to decide then Neymar and (fellow Brazil star) Ganso would reach retirement with Santos."

## Villas-Boas targets quadruple

SOCCERNET

New Chelsea boss Andre Villas-Boas has set his sights on the quadruple next season but insists every Champions League triumph is based on luck.

Last season, Villas-Boas, 33, took Porto to success in three competitions including the Europa League, but he faces a more daunting task if he is to secure the Champions League title that has so far eluded Roman Abramovich.

Villas-Boas, who worked at Stamford Bridge during Jose Mourinho's time at the club, knows expectations will be high but is optimistic about his chances of success.

"I am confident I can respond to Chelsea's expectations and we can focus on the four trophies that we have to win," he said. "I am pretty much confident that people will like it."

"This is a new leadership, a new way of being, but I think in the end it all ends up in the motivation everyone must feel to continue to win for the club."

He added: "I can understand that Chelsea are obsessed with the Champions League, but Champions Leagues are not won by the best clubs. They are won by clubs that are lucky."

With the arrival of Villas-Boas, there has been inevitable speculation that he will look to take the likes of Hulk, Falcao and Joao Moutinho with him, but Porto president Jorge Pinto da Costa has warned that they will only be sold if release clauses are met.

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

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## Neymar sets up Santos glory

INTERNET, Undated

Brazilian side Santos clinched their first continental silverware since 1963, defeating Penarol 2-1 in the second leg of the Copa Libertadores final.

After a scoreless first leg in Montevideo last week, goals from young Brazil striker Neymar and midfielder Danilo ensured the Sao Paulo outfit won South America's premier club competition for the first time since the legendary football icon Pele played for the team half a century ago.

A late own-goal from defender Durval offered Uruguayan side Penarol hope of snatching their sixth Libertadores title, but Santos prevailed at the Estadio Vila Belmiro.

Neymar -- who has been linked with a move to a host of European clubs including Real Madrid and Chelsea -- broke the deadlock with a well-struck shot early in the second half.

Danilo, a Brazil under-20 international, scored what proved to be the winning goal after 68 minutes with a driven shot beyond Penarol goalkeeper Sebastian Sosa.

Santos' post-match celebrations were soured by a mass brawl which broke out between both sets of players, immediately after referee Sergio Pezzotta had blown the full-time whistle.

Multiple kicks and punches were thrown amid chaotic scenes, with a small number of Santos fans running on to the pitch to celebrate with their team.