

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 stadium. 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.

What to WATCH
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Third Round
Live from 5:00pm
ESPN
Sportscene India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT
Bangladesh League
Mohammedan v Abahani
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
SK Russell v Ctg Abahani
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: Birsreshtha Mostafa Kamal 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 surprised 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.

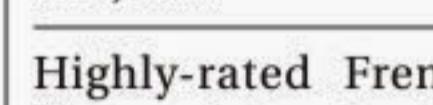
"This is what we expected," Mexican coach Jose Manuel de la Torre. "Honduras is very orderly, very strong. Our team was not finding the spaces."

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

AP, 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 can't 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 Giovinco from Juve

AFP, Rome

Italian international offensive midfielder Sebastian Giovinco 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 50percent.

Giovinco, 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.



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

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