

Anzhi's Samba Won't Let Russian Racists 'Break Me'

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LONDON — Congolese defender Chris Samba insists that he remains committed to Dagestani club Anzhi Makhachkala despite his anger at being the target of racism in the country that will host the 2018 World Cup.

A banana was thrown at Samba, who is black, after a match at Lokomotiv Moscow last month, the third such incident against an Anzhi player in the past year.

"I feel extremely passionately about racism in football and will never let the small community of racists break me," Samba said in a statement. "I'm a strong character and will keep fighting for my team."

Samba left English Premier League club Blackburn in February to join Guus Hiddink's Anzhi for a reported £12 million (then \$19 million).

"I am thoroughly enjoying my time in Russia, and although I was of course angry at the racism incident along with the rest of the football world, racist issues here are no different

to what I have experienced in other countries," Samba said.

But the incident prompted World Cup organizers to pledge to step up action to curb racism in Russian football.

Racism has become entrenched in some of the country's fan clubs, which often include ultranationalists and neo-Nazis.

Samba's Anzhi teammate Roberto Carlos, a former Brazil and Real Madrid defender, had bananas thrown at him twice last year. In 2010, Lokomotiv Moscow fans unfurled a banner showing a banana in a display directed at Nigerian striker Peter Odemwingie, who went on to join West Bromwich Albion in the English Premier League.

Anzhi is owned by Suleiman Kerimov, a billionaire from Dagestan, the Caspian province where the club is based.

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