

Russian Football Fans' Interest Plummetes After World Cup Fiasco

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September 04, 2014



Russia's Alexander Kokorin (2nd L) celebrates with his teammates Victor Faizulin (L), Oleg Shatov (2nd R) and Alexander Kerzhakov his goal against Algeria.

Russia's football team played out a 4-0 win over Azerbaijan on Wednesday evening in front of a crowd of just 3,500 spectators in the lowest turnout to a national-team game in a decade.

Striker Alexander Kerzhakov set Russia on their way to victory with two goals in the opening 15 minutes, a brace that also saw the 31-year-old striker overtake Vladimir Beschastnykh as Russia's all-time leading goalscorer.

Defenders Sergei Ignashevich and Vladimir Granat grabbed the other goals in what turned out to be a comprehensive victory for the national side.

The result will have come as a welcome relief for trainer Fabio Capello, whose team suffered a disappointing World Cup in Brazil, scoring just two goals in three matches and failing

to record a single victory.

But whereas the World Cup humiliation was witnessed by tens of thousands of spectators in Brazil and on millions of television screens in Russian homes, the attempt at redemption on Wednesday played itself out in the shadows.

Just 3,500 fans made the trip to the 18,500-capacity Khimki stadium outside of Moscow — the lowest turnout to an international since 2004, when roughly 3,000 people showed up for the match.

But it was not just the Russian national side that suffered the effects of a World Cup hangover on Wednesday.

England fans voted with their feet following a similarly disappointing World Cup campaign, with just 40,181 turning up to watch their side take on Norway — the lowest ever turnout at Wembley Stadium for an international match.

In the pick of the Wednesday night friendlies, Germany took on Argentina in a re-run of the July World Cup final, with the South Americans running out 4-2 victors over the recently crowned world champions.

The friendlies came ahead of the first round of matches for the 2014 European Championships qualifying campaign which kicks off next Monday.

Russia, which is ranked 23rd in the world by the FIFA governing body, will be looking to make a positive start to their campaign against Lichtenstein, which ranks 167th, with the match kicking off at 8 p.m. at Khimki Stadium.

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