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Zenit's Hulk Puts Racist Chants Behind Him to Star in Champions League

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Zenit St. Petersburg's Hulk (R) fights for the ball with AS Monaco's Nabil Dirar during their Champions League soccer match at the Petrovsky stadium in St. Petersburg, October 1, 2014.

Hulk was the stand-out performer for Zenit St. Petersburg in the Champions League Group C goalless draw with Monaco on Wednesday, hours after it had been confirmed that he had been the target of racial abuse in a league match.

The Brazilian international, who had told a Russian newspaper that he could hear monkey chants aimed at him by visiting Spartak Moscow fans on Saturday, produced a lively display at the same venue, the Petrovsky Stadium.

Even his occasional flashes of brilliance, though, could not break the deadlock as Zenit and Monaco played out a disappointing stalemate on a freezing night.

Hulk, who helped create a couple of Zenit's best chances with his surging runs, had earlier told the Sport Express newspaper that on Saturday "I clearly heard monkey chants shouted in my direction and this was not only on one occasion."

"It was coming from a large group of people....I take this as a personal insult for me and my club."

Russian Football Union (RFS) disciplinary committee chief Artur Grigoryants also confirmed that racial abuse had taken place before the panel announced Spartak supporters would be banned from attending the club's next away game at Ural Yekaterinburg on Oct. 19.

The dispiriting controversy showed no signs of disrupting Hulk's form against Monaco, though, as Zenit, despite being unable to find any early rhythm in the absence of their Belgian midfield fulcrum Axel Witsel, protected a 14-game unbeaten run in all competitions.

After an uninspiring first half, the home crowd grew increasingly restless as Monaco, largely untroubled and well-marshalled by veteran center back Ricardo Carvalho, were happy to sit back and soak up the pressure.

Chances were at a premium for both sides in the first 45 minutes, but one of the better ones fell to Dimitar Berbatov, who forced a fine save from Zenit goalkeeper, Yuri Lodygin, at close range.

Hulk ran half the length of the pitch before laying the ball off to the Portuguese international Danny, but his shot was wild and sailed over the crossbar.

In the second half, Hulk also managed to power free down the left flank and slide the ball across to Jose Rondon, but the ball was just behind the Venezuelan, whose finish was weak.

Midway through the second period, Nicolas Lombaerts headed straight at Monaco keeper Subasic, as Andre Villas-Boas's side wasted another good chance and the home fans grew increasingly restless.

Zenit and Monaco both have four points from two games.

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