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Rostov Football Coach Igor Gamula Gets Five-Match Ban for Racist Remark

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Igor Gamula

FC Rostov head coach Igor Gamula has been suspended for five matches after being found guilty of making racist comments, the Russian Football Union, or RFS, said Wednesday in a statement.

Gamula had been asked at a news conference after the match against Ural Yekaterinburg on Oct. 31 if Rostov had signed Cameroon defender, Benoit Angbwa, who attended the game.

"We already have six black players, do you want me to get a seventh? Angbwa just lives here, we will not be buying him," he said.

The 54-year-old Gamula's comments caused a storm in the media, especially in Britain.

"I immediately told the journalist that my remarks were between him and me and it was a joke. He took the quote and published it," Gamula said.

"I will say it again — it was a joke. I have a great relationship with all the team's dark skinned

players. The British press just doesn't understand our Russian humor."

Rostov's South Africa central defender Siyanda Xulu was offended by the comments and said he would not train until Gamula apologized to all of the club's dark skinned players.

Gamula personally said sorry to each of the players in question and they all shook hands with him.

Harshest Punishment

However, South Africa's Minister for Sport, Fikile Mbalula, and South African FA president Danny Jordaan asked soccer's world governing body FIFA to look into Gamula's comments.

"Any country that is going to host the World Cup should be hospitable to any race or nation, without discrimination because of the color of a person's skin and in particular Russia," Jordaan said referring to the 2018 finals.

"Therefore I believe that he (Gamula) deserves the harshest possible punishment. This is not the first time that such things have been said in Russia."

Dynamo Moscow's Congo defender Christopher Samba and Zenit St. Petersburg's Brazil striker Hulk were both victims of racist abuse by opposition fans during matches in September.

"Of course, you need to watch what you say, especially when we are trying to battle against racism," RFS vice president Nikita Simonyan said after Wednesday's disciplinary committee meeting.

"If you want my personal opinion, I think Gamula said he was sorry enough times. He literally slapped himself in his face for making such an unfortunate joke."

Gamula said the RFS had told him not to comment on his ban.

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