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Montenegro v Russia Match Abandoned With Goalie Akinfeev Hospitalized

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's players scuffle with Montenegro's players during their Euro 2016 Group G qualifying soccer match in Podgorica March 27, 2015. The Euro 2016 Group G qualifier between Montenegro and Russia was abandoned midway.

Montenegro and Russia's Euro 2016 qualifier was abandoned midway through the second half on Friday after two outbreaks of crowd trouble and a scuffle between the players.

The game was first delayed by 33 minutes when Russia goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev was hit on the head by a flare thrown from the Montenegro section of the ground soon after kickoff.

Midway through the second half a scuffle ensued between players near the touchline, with Eastern Europe's Sport Klub television reporting that a missile hurled from the terraces appeared to have hit another Russian player.

With the score at 0-0 in the Group G game, German referee Deniz Aytekin ordered the players

back into the dressing room for the second time moments after Montenegro keeper Vukasin Poleksic saved a Roman Shirokov penalty.

Montenegro and Russia supporters clashed at halftime, forcing riot police to move in to separate them. Montenegrin daily Vijesti reported on its website.

It said there were talks during the break about whether to carry on with the game because of the intensity of the fighting with the start of the second half delayed by 18 minutes.

UEFA said it would wait to receive reports from the match delegate and referee before opening disciplinary proceedings.

Montenegro coach Branko Brnovic said his players were distraught and apologized to their stunned Russian visitors.

"I apologize to the Russian players and staff for everything that's happened. It is no surprise that the game was abandoned after the second incident," he told Montenegrin state television broadcaster RTCG.

"My players are completely distraught, all of them are at a loss for words and I also don't know what to say after all this.

"We now don't stand a chance (of qualifying) and also face a lengthy crowd ban," he added, with Russia and Montenegro level on five points from four games behind group leaders Austria, who have 13 from five, and Sweden on nine from five.

"Fortunately, our FA president Dejan Savicevic has a very good reputation with UEFA, while we have to make sure we get back on the rails," Brnovic added.

More Help

The trouble occurred three days after UEFA President Michel Platini told the European soccer governing body's congress in Vienna it needed more help from government authorities across the continent to battle racism, match-fixing and violence.

It was the third serious outbreak of violence involving teams from the former Yugoslavia in Euro 2016 qualifying.

The Group I match between Serbia and Albania in Belgrade was abandoned in October after a flag of so-called greater Albania was flown over the terraces by a remote-controlled drone.

It triggered a brawl between rival players and a pitch invasion by home Serbia fans, who attacked Albanian players and forced them to run for cover into the tunnel.

In November, visiting Croatian fans littered the pitch with flares during their 1-1 Group H draw against Italy in Milan, forcing a 10-minute delay in the second half.

On Friday, the stadium announcer warned spectators the game in Podgorica would be abandoned if there was any more crowd trouble after Akinfeev was wheeled off on a stretcher and taken to hospital before Russia began to dominate the game.

Alexander Kokorin missed the best chance in the first half before Aytekin awarded the visitors a penalty after the striker went down under a challenge from Marko Basa, sparking wild protests from the home team.

Moments after Poleksic kept out the spot-kick, the players clashed by the touchline.

According to Vijesti, Russia's Dmitri Kombarov signalled to the referee during the scuffle that he was hit by a missile from the terraces after which Aytekin abandoned the game.

Some reports said a lighter had hit the Russia player.

Russia coach Fabio Capello was quoted by Vijesti telling reporters: "I think it was the correct decision to abandon the match. After the first incident, the delegate told us to carry on and we had to."

Asked about Akinfeev's injury, the Italian added: "Our goalkeeper has been hospitalized and has neck burns.

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