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Russia Wins Beach Soccer to Claim Final Gold of Games

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Egor Shaikov of Russia celebrates after scoring a goal during their men's beach soccer final match at the 1st European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan, Jun. 28.

BAKU — Russia won gold in the beach soccer final against Italy on Sunday to bring the curtain down on the inaugural European Games in Azerbaijan.

Russia, ranked number one in the world, was heavily tipped before the event having won the 2011 and 2013 World Cups and ran out 3-2 winners in an exciting final to cap five days of spectacular action on the sands of Baku.

Russia led 3-0 and was cruising but had to withstand a furious late Italian rally to claim the final gold available in the Azeri capital.

One of four non-Olympic events among 20 sports at the continental games, beach soccer wowed spectators with spectacular goals, acrobatic flicks and stunning tricks.

Portugal claimed bronze with a thrilling 6-5 victory against Switzerland earlier on Sunday.

"I am feeling good but not 100 percent because my first thoughts are still on the gold medal," Portugal's Nuno Belchior told reporters at the European Games Park adjacent to the Caspian seashore.

"Yesterday [2-1 semi-final defeat to Russia] was one of the best performances from us for two or three years, we just had no luck.

"But I think Russia is now afraid of Portugal. This is very good for the world cup [which Portugal hosts in July]. Our confidence is good."

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