

Russian Sports Minister Joins Race for Russian Football Union Leadership

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Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko waves as he arrives to the preliminary draw for the 2018 FIFA World Cup at Konstantin Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia July 25, 2015.

Sports minister Vitaly Mutko will take on vice-speaker of the Russian State Duma Igor Lebedev in a two-horse race for the president's post at the Russian Football Union (RFU) later this year.

Both were registered by the election committee on Monday for the Sept. 2 polls, the RFU said on its [website](#).

With 45 member organizations of the RFU backing him, Mutko, who headed the union from 2005-2009, is an overwhelming favorite to win the election.

Lebedev, who mustered only nine votes when he ran for the RFU presidency in 2012, currently has the backing of only one member.

The RFU has been looking for a new president since May 31, when Nikolai Tolstykh was

removed from his position following a vote of no confidence after the union incurred vast debts under his leadership.

The new president will have a one-year term. Fresh elections will be held in September 2016 and the successful candidate will have a four-year tenure.

The main task for the new leader of the organization will be to sort out the RFU's financial mess as well as preparing the country to host the 2018 World Cup which would include continuing the fight against racism.

The problem resurfaced recently but RFU rejected allegations that Ufa's Ghanaian midfielder Emmanuel Frimpong was racially abused by Spartak Moscow supporters in a July 17 Russian Premier League match.

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