

Putin's World Cup Gestures, Explained

June 15, 2018



Reuters

Russian President Vladimir Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, has weighed in on the speculation surrounding the president's hand gestures at Thursday's match with Saudi Arabia.

Russia and Saudi Arabia faced off in the first match of the FIFA World Cup, with a historic 5-0 victory for the host team. During the game, Putin's gestures, seemingly directed at Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman seated next to him, sparked a wave of online commentary.

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Putin spread out his hands and smiled after every goal, which many saw as an apology to his guest and ally.

But Peskov, in an interview with *Govorit Moskva*, laid the speculation to rest, [explaining](#): "it's

emotions. You don't apologize for victory in sport."

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Prior to the match, the Russian team was ranked as the weakest of all the World Cup participants.

Despite Russia and Saudi Arabia's strengthening cooperation, the president gave Mohammad bin Salman a warning when they met before the match: "You know how warmly we think of you, but I think you will understand me: today I can't wish your team success. The strongest team will win."

Since the victory, the Russian public's attitude to their team has shifted from disdain to pride. "Everyone who didn't believe in our team, take that - 5-0!", Reuters [reported](#) as the front page of the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper.

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