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Mural of Russia Coach Defaced, Restored After World Cup Loss

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A mural depicting Russian football coach Stanislav Cherchesov's mustachioed features has undergone a series of physical transformations in the days after the Russian national team was knocked out of the World Cup over the weekend.

As the coach who led the Russian team to qualify for the knockout stages of the football tournament for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, Cherchesov became the nation's man of the hour.

Reflecting Russia's newfound infatuation, a team of street artists spray-painted the mural of Cherchesov pointing a finger on a wall in central St. Petersburg. It included a caption with a lyric from a pop song dedicated in part to the coach reading: "You are amazing, Stas" in Russian.

However, vandals "cut" the tip of Cherchesov's finger after Russia lost to Croatia on Saturday.

The original image reportedly offended the fans of St. Petersburg's Zenit Football Club

because Cherchesov's fingers were interpreted to form the letter L, allegedly representing the Polish team Legia Warsaw that he had coached in 2016.

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The Hoodgraff street artists who were responsible for the original mural updated the installation, depicting the gruff coach instead giving a salute. The gesture became famous on June 14, the opening day of the tournament, when the lowest-ranked Russian team beat the second-lowest ranked Saudi Arabian team by 5-1.

"We just had to do it," said Hoodgraff member Artyom Burzh, who started the painting after watching Russia beat Egypt in its second game of the tournament.

"The man served Russia in full, just like the entire squad," St. Petersburg's Fontanka.ru news website quoted Burzh as saying.

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