

Russian Footballers Union Condemns Racist Fan Abuse Against New Player

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Ervin Botaka / [Vkontakte](#)

A Russian footballers union has criticized fans of a Moscow club for racist abuse directed against a newly signed player of African descent.

Football club Torpedo Moscow, which has frequently faced [sanctions](#) in the past for its fans' racist behavior, [signed](#) Russian-Congolese defender Erving Botaka-Yoboma over the weekend. In 2015, the team was punished with a stadium ban after its supporters made animal noises towards an opposing team's player.

Related article: [Torpedo Moscow Get Stadium Ban After Fans Racially Abuse Hulk](#)

An unofficial group of the Torpedo supporters, the Zapad-5 Ultras, sparked controversy after [writing](#) a post on the [Vkontakte](#) social media network saying that "there may be black in our team's colors, but there is only white in our supporters' ranks."

Alexander Zotov, who heads the All-Russian Union of Footballers, called the commenters “a group of idiots” and said the recent World Cup had set a better example of Russian attitudes toward race in football.

“There have been changes in attitude after the World Cup, but a group of idiots still remains,” he was [quoted](#) as saying by the Sport24.ru website Wednesday.

“People with a limited worldview exist in any country. We saw how open our society and people were [during the tournament],” Zotov said.

Torpedo’s owner Roman Avdeyev defended Botaka-Yoboma’s signing, touting the 19-year-old’s local roots and upbringing at Torpedo’s youth club.

“There is no ‘skin color’ in our criteria. We’ve never noticed it and will never notice it,” Avdeyev was [quoted](#) as saying by the Sportfm.ru website earlier on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Zapad-5 group [wrote](#) a post saying they were against Botaka-Yoboma’s signing because the player had earlier left Torpedo’s youth academy for “our enemy club — Lokomotiv [Moscow],” though the controversial “only white” post remained on their social media page.

A meet-and-greet between Torpedo Moscow players and fans is scheduled in southern Moscow on Thursday.

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