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Russia's Football Team Captain Pulled From Matches After Masturbation Video Scandal

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Russian national football captain Artyom Dzyuba. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

The captain of Russia's national football team Artyom Dzyuba has been excluded from the squad's training camp and three upcoming international fixtures after a private video appearing to show him masturbating went viral.

The team said Sunday it would not call up Dzyuba for November matches against Moldova, Turkey and Serbia to "protect the team and the player from unnecessary negativity and stress."

"We've always emphasized that everyone must meet the level and status of a national team player on and off the field," manager Stanislav Cherchesov said on the national team's Twitter account.

Cherchesov declined to comment further on the leaked video, saying the controversy

surrounding “has nothing to do with the Russian national team from the viewpoint of sports.”

FC Zenit St. Petersburg, where Dzyuba is a striker, added that “a person’s private life should not become public property and a matter of discussion.”

Dzyuba, 32, took to Instagram after Zenit’s victory over FC Krasnodar late Sunday to apologize to fans and thank supporters.

“Like any other person, I’m not ideal, I make mistakes. We’re all sinners,” he said. “I can only blame myself.” Dzyuba has since made his Instagram account private.

Russian public figures, including celebrity Ksenia Sobchak, came to Dzyuba’s defense and condemned the leak.

Reuters reported that the private video was not suggestive of any controversial behavior and it was not clear how it was leaked.

The Baza Telegram channel, which is reported to have links to Russia's security services, wrote that Dzyuba’s phone was allegedly hacked several weeks ago.

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