

Russian Football Team Needs 'Spiritual Training,' Orthodox Bishop Says

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The Russian team's head coach Stanislav Cherchesov instructs players on the pitch. **Russian national football team, official page / VKontakte**

Russia's national football team needs divine intervention to succeed on the pitch, a senior Russian Orthodox Church bishop [said](#) Friday after the squad's unceremonious exit from the Euro 2020 championship.

The team and its management came under fire after it ranked last in its group and failed to qualify for the quarter-finals, which kick off later Friday in cities including coronavirus-plagued St. Petersburg. Russia's disappointing loss came as the country hoped to repeat its fairytale run to the quarter-finals at the 2018 FIFA World Cup that it hosted.

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Metropolitan bishop Mitrofan, who oversees the Church's commission on physical culture

and sport, told state media that Russia's football team "lacks spiritual training."

"Of course a solution to this problem is overdue and our national team needs confessors to take care of our lads," he told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

"In my view, our team lacks spiritual training: no fighting spirit, spiritually weak and unmotivated."

Metropolitan Mitrofan also blamed the squad's notoriously temperamental head coach Stanislav Cherchessov and the players' foul mouths for their "spiritual ruin."

"Coaches mainly motivate on the field with the help of filthy speech and swearing, which we all see just by reading lips, looking at the coaches and what our respected players say while they're running around," he said.

Captain Artyom Dzyuba told reporters that "we pooped our pants" while commenting on his team's group-stage loss last week. Dzyuba was previously [embroiled](#) in a scandal last fall when a leaked video appearing to show him masturbating on camera went viral.

The Russian Orthodox Church already maintains an active presence in the military and other non-religious fields as critics accuse President Vladimir Putin of blurring the lines between the Church and secular state to consolidate his power.

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