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Russia Opts Out of Central Asian Football Championship

By AFP

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Valery Karpin, head coach of the Russian national team. **Anna Meyer / FK Zenit / TASS**

The Russian football team, shorn of international competition due to the invasion of Ukraine, will not take part in the inaugural edition of the Central Asian Championship despite having been slated to.

Russia had been invited but declined the invitation this week claiming it was due to a loaded fixture list despite having been barred by UEFA and FIFA from their competitions.

However, national coach Valery Karpin gave a different reason, saying he had concerns over the high temperatures and his players getting injured because of the artificial pitches.

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As a result the draw went ahead for the friendly competition in Dushanbe on Wednesday with

just seven teams: Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan along with special guests Oman.

The draw took place days ahead of a visit to Tajikistan by FIFA supremo Gianni Infantino.

Kazakhstan will also be missing as they are members of UEFA and not the Asian Football Confederation.

Russia have remained members of UEFA despite threatening to defect to the AFC and being barred from the Euro 2024 qualifiers.

Since being banned by UEFA and FIFA following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, 2018 World Cup hosts Russia have played four friendlies against Central Asian opposition — winning one and drawing the other three.

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