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Ukraine's Shakhtar FC Cuts Ties With U19 Player Who Fled to Russia

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Footballer Alexander Rosputko. **Ukrainian Football / Facebook**

Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk FC has terminated the contract of its player who fled to Russia following a UEFA Youth League match in Belgium this month, the team announced Monday.

Instead of returning to Ukraine following his team's Oct. 4 victory against Antwerp (2-1), U19 midfielder Oleksandr Rosputko, 19, reportedly changed his clothes in an airport bathroom, leaving his neatly folded uniform behind, deleted all of his social media posts and stopped answering phone calls before heading to Russia via Turkey.

In a short press release, Shakhtar said that Rosputko's contract had been terminated due to his failure to return to the team and "refusal" to fulfill his contractual obligations.

His father, Yuri Rosputko, told Russian media that he couldn't discuss the precise reasons for his son's departure, saying only that "he will definitely be safer in Russia."

He added that his son had not asked for political asylum, but would simply apply for a Russian

passport, “as he would have done in his homeland in Donetsk.”

According to the Sport.ua sports news website, Rosputko's exit may have been caused by conflict with his teammates over his pro-Russian views or disagreements over the terms of his Shakhtar contract.

Rosputko, who played for Shakhtar and trained in their academy since he was eight years old, had reportedly signed a new five-year contract just days before the Antwerp match. Representatives of the club said “There were no indications that he would flee.”

Rosputko is now reportedly looking at joining a St. Petersburg club.

Shakhtar was based in the city of Donetsk until 2014, when it moved westward due to the outbreak of conflict between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian government forces in eastern Ukraine.

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