

FIFA extends Prestianni ban worldwide



SL Benfica's Argentine forward #25 Gianluca Prestianni hides his mouth while arguing with Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #07 Vinicius Junior

AFP | Lausanne

FIFA announced yesterday it had extended Gianluca Prestianni's suspension worldwide after the Benfica winger was originally banned by European football's governing body UEFA.

Argentina's Prestianni was handed a six-game ban, with three of them suspended, for discriminatory conduct in the first leg of Champions League play-off tie against Real Madrid on February 17.

Madrid forward Vinicius Junior accused the 20-year-old Prestianni of racism as they clashed on the field, which Prestianni denies.

As the two argued, Prestianni spoke to Vinicius while covering his mouth, with the Brazilian subsequently complaining to the referee, leading to the match being suspended

for 10 minutes.

"The FIFA Disciplinary Committee has decided to extend the six-match ban imposed by UEFA on SL Benfica player Gianluca Prestianni to have worldwide effect," FIFA told AFP.

"The sanction has been extended in accordance with article 70 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code."

Prestianni, who made his only international appearance last November, has already served one match of his suspension, missing the Champions League play-off second leg.

Following FIFA's decision, the former Velez Sarsfield player would miss holders Argentina's two opening games of the World Cup, which takes place in the United States, Canada and Mexico between June 11 and July 19.

MAD-RID

Simeone Jr Blasts 'Ignored' Penalty Claims After Champions League Exit

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Atletico Madrid were left frustrated on Tuesday night as their Champions League campaign came to an end with a semi-final defeat to Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium.

The winning moment came in the first half when Bukayo Saka reacted quickest after Jan Oblak parried Leandro Trossard's effort, bundling the ball home to give Arsenal a 1-0 lead — a scoreline they would hold until full-time.

However, the Spanish side were convinced the match could have taken a different turn.

Atletico's main complaint came midway through the second half, when Giuliano Simeone broke through on goal and went down under pressure from Gabriel Magalhaes. Although appeals for a penalty were im-



Giuliano Simeone appeals for a penalty during Atletico's semi-final defeat to Arsenal

mediately made, play was not reviewed by VAR after the assistant referee had already flagged an offside in the build-up. Replays later suggested Simeone may have been level when the pass was played, raising questions over whether the attacking phase should have been allowed to continue.

Following the incident, Simeone shared images on social media highlighting the moment,

questioning why the decision had not been reviewed in full.

Shortly after, Atletico were again denied a penalty when Antoine Griezmann went down in the box following a challenge from Riccardo Calafiori. On this occasion, VAR upheld the on-field decision, citing a prior foul by Marc Pubill on Gabriel Magalhães earlier in the move, which had already ended the attacking sequence.

Despite the disputed incidents, Atletico manager Diego Simeone declined to criticise the officials after the match, saying: "I won't focus on that. It would be an excuse, and I don't want to make excuses."

Arsenal progress to the final in Budapest, where they will aim to secure their first Champions League title. For Atletico, the search for a maiden European crown continues.



Madrid winger Giuliano Simeone is the son of the club's manager, Diego Simeone

Europa League Semi-Final Preview

Braga host Freiburg as Aston Villa face Nottingham Forest tonight



Chris Wood celebrates his penalty in Forest's first-leg win over Villa

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Europa League semi-finals continue tonight at 10PM Bahrain time, with teams competing for a place in the final at Besiktas Park in Istanbul on May 20.

Braga vs Freiburg

SC Freiburg host SC Braga in the second leg, with Braga

leading 2-1 on aggregate after a dramatic first-leg win, sealed by a stoppage-time winner from Mario Dorgeles.

Freiburg have already made history by reaching their first European semi-final. The Bundesliga side have been among the competition's most in-form teams, scoring 11 goals in their last three Europa League matches while conceding just twice. However, their domestic form

has dipped, with recent defeats to Stuttgart and Borussia Dortmund raising concerns ahead of this tie in Germany.

Braga, meanwhile, bring experience at this level. The Portuguese side reached the Europa League final in 2011 and are back in the semi-finals for only the second time after a 5-3 aggregate win over Real Betis. Despite a recent league loss, they remain competitive domestically and



Braga's Demir Ege Tknaz (L) battles for possession with Freiburg's Jordy Makengo

will look to protect their advantage away from home.

Freiburg are expected to be without Patrick Osterhage, while Jordy Makengo remains a doubt. Braga will miss Gabriel Moscardo through suspension, but key players such as Rodrigo Zalazar and Florian Grillitsch add quality and familiarity with German opposition.

Aston Villa vs Nottingham Forest

In England, Aston Villa host Nottingham Forest in the second leg of their semi-final, with Forest holding a 1-0 advantage from the first leg.

Forest arrive full of confi-

dence, unbeaten in their last ten matches and revitalised under Vitor Pereira. Their disciplined performance in the first leg gives them the edge, but the job is far from done.

Villa will rely on their exceptional home form in Europe. Unai Emery's side have won their last nine European matches at Villa Park and will be confident of overturning the deficit despite inconsistent domestic results.

With both clubs boasting European pedigree — Forest with two European Cup titles and Villa with one — the tie remains finely balanced heading into tonight's decisive clash.

Australia FA condemns Melbourne ban on World Cup watch parties

AFP | Sydney

Football Australia called yesterday for a ban on public watch parties for the 2026 World Cup in Melbourne's Federation Square to be reversed.

The governing body said it was "extremely disappointed" with the decision by Melbourne Arts Precinct, which cited previous "dangerous" fan behaviour in the square.

"The FIFA World Cup is the biggest sporting event in the world and unites Australia's multicultural communities, while reinforcing our national identity," said Football Australia chief executive Martin Kugeler.

"Live sites create iconic moments for Australian sports fans," he added.

"Melbourne is one of Australia's sporting and multicultural capitals, and this decision goes against this tradition."

Katrina Sedgwick, chief executive of the Melbourne Arts Precinct, which manages the square, said the behaviour of some fans led to its decision not to host World Cup watch parties.