

Migration, sports and xenophobia

1. Introduction

Not the worst situation when somebody can play for a foreign club and make career in sports and even become a citizen for the new country and participate in the national team. With the birth of professional football thousands of sportsmen arrive to countries like Spain and England from Brazil or Nigeria. In other sports it is not even possible or very hard to switch nationality and all changes - especially when the player is later playing in the National team- cause turmoil.

In some cases the fans or teammates react with racism but some players can become popular and accepted regardless of origin. We took three persons to report a good and bad example in the history of sport in order not to forget the positive effects some successful ideals can do, nor forgive the xenophobia which is strongly hardens the life of migrants arriving to Europe from third world countries.

In Hungary the term “honosítás” naturalization is a common practice among various sports, except football. In the National team of Hungary there are no foreign players. Our only source of migrants are not others than the Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries but in other sports we welcome and rarely exclude foreign players. Is it racism that all people who play in a national team should live in their native countries?

We can see that some fans are targeting colored players with bananas worldwide and this is strong violation of human rights. All players and fans should respect each other but we do not see a strong reaction from the federations and clubs. In other sports such as chess or table tennis, foreign players from Asia are playing and being respected in Hungary. The National Football team seems not so open for migrants. It's just maybe because there are no such talents to break through the ice like our polish example Emmanuel Olisadebe.

Some national teams like Germany or France became very strong and successful despite the fact that the teams are full of naturalized players. So, it might be a new hope to recover from the last 30 years of not successful participation on international events qualifying but also maybe the Hungarian spirit will never accept naturalization in football.

2. First example of Natasa Dusev, Hungarian sprint canoer

Natasa Dusev- Janić is a Hungarian sprint canoer, who won two Olympic gold medals in the sprint canoe events at the Summer Olympics in 2004. Second gold medal with a silver one she won in 2008, while competing for Hungary. She has also won 22 (18 gold and 4 silver) medals at the ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships.

Natasa grew up in Serbia and competed for FR Yugoslavia at the 2000 Summer Olympics before moving to Hungary. She is a daughter of late Milan Janić, a Serbian canoer, who won a silver medal for

Yugoslavia in the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Both Natasa's brothers Mićo and Stjepan Janić are canoers as well and have competed for Croatia since 2004. They also took part in the 2008 Olympics.

Natasa Dusev- Janić was elected as a Hungarian Sportswoman in 2004 and 2010. Together with Katalin Kovács, she earned the title Hungarian Sports team of the year in 2005, 2006 and 2010.

3. Second example of Deco

Deco was never called up to the Brazilian national team and the Brazil group for the 2002 FIFA World Cup included other attacking midfielders such as Ronaldinho, Rivaldo and Juninho. Playing six years in a football club, Porto allowed Deco to gain Portuguese citizenship that made him eligible to play for Portugal. None of Deco's great grandparents and parents were Portuguese and therefore under Fifa's player eligibility rules required Portuguese citizenship to be considered eligible.

Deco was mentioned several times in the media as an option for the Portuguese national team. In 2002, having completed six years of Portuguese residence, he received Portuguese citizenship. After many months of public discussion which split Portuguese public opinion, and despite the opposition of a large number of Porto rivals' supporters, he was called up for his first international – coincidentally against Brazil. He scored the free kick that stunned Brazil, leading to a 2–1 win for Portugal. This was Portugal's first win over Brazil since the 1966 World Cup. Since that game, he was a regular in the national team.

Before the 2004 European championship, Luís Figo criticized Deco's inclusion and said "If you're born Chinese, well, you have to play for China." However, Deco commented saying "I was born in Brazil and it would be a lie to say that I'm Portuguese now and not Brazilian. But I love Portugal and I love playing for the national team." Despite the early criticism, Deco was one of the highlights of the Portuguese national team. He scored five goals in 75 caps for Portugal by June 2010 and his international career ended after the second round defeat to Spain at the 2010 World Cup.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/euro_2004/portugal/3795885.stm

4. Third example of black colored sportsmen that are abused by fans

Emmanuel Olisadebe is a Nigerian-Polish football striker, who is currently a free agent after most recently playing for Veria in Football League as a striker.

After moving to Poland and having a successful career with Polonia Warszawa, where he won the championship title as well as Polish Super Cup with them, he attracted the interests of the Polish national team and was eligible for Polish citizenship. He participated in the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

Growing up as a soccer-loving schoolboy in Nigeria, Emmanuel Olisadebe was unaware of racism until he signed a professional contract in Poland. The country's co-hosting of the European Championship serves as a reminder.

Olisadebe arrived in Warsaw as an unproven talent from Nigeria's youth squad. He was fast-tracked for citizenship to become the first black player to represent Poland and scored eight goals to help it qualify for the 2002 World Cup, the team's first global championship appearance in 16 years. Before being lauded for his goal scoring, Olisadebe said that he was regularly abused by fans and even teammates because of his skin color. The issue is back on the agenda as Poland co-hosts Euro 2012 with Ukraine. Netherlands captain, Mark Van Bommel said that black players were subjected to racial taunts at the team's June 6 open training session in Krakow, prompting tournament organizer UEFA to call on local authorities to increase police presence at such events to prevent a repeat. "We don't have this education about such things, not too many of us are aware of racism in general," Olisadebe said in an interview in Warsaw. "So when you come here and see different people you believe they love you in the way you love them. But as time goes on you realize it's different."

Also, according to players' union FIFPro, Russian supporters aimed racist insults at Czech Republic defender Theodor Gebre Selassie, the team's only black player, during the June 8 game between the Czechs and Russia in Wroclaw. Two days later in Gdansk, Italy striker Mario Balotelli was abused by fans of the Spanish national team, the Daily Mirror reported.

UEFA Investigation

European soccer, ruling body of UEFA, said in an e-mail that it is investigating whether there was alleged racist chanting at the games after receiving "new independent information." "Everybody is upset about individual cases," Beata Stelmach, Poland's deputy foreign affairs minister, said in an interview. "There are only a few people having this opportunity that we have an international event, we should talk about this problem worldwide."

Poland's population of 38 million is 94 percent ethnically Polish, according to its central statistics office. The majority of the rest are German, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian. While Olisadebe was among the country's black soccer pioneers, 130 Africans are now contracted to Polish professional teams, said Piara Powar, executive director of the Football Against Racism in Europe network.

Bananas From Stands

Olisadebe married a Polish woman during his four-year spell with Polonia Warsaw. He joined Greek club Panathinaikos in 2001 and remains in Greece playing for Veria, which last season won promotion to the country's elite league. "Memories of bananas rain down on him from the stands and monkey noises being directed his way still linger", he said. "At first you feel it's sad, really sad," Olisadebe said. "Sad like, 'why do they feel they are different from me?' It's not only that you feel 'I'm different from you', but you feel 'I'm less than you.' It's difficult to explain in words."

Justin Nnorom, another Nigerian player who moved to Poland at the same time as Olisadebe, said that he had no idea where the duo he was moving. "We'd tell people we're coming to Poland. 'Holland?' they'd say"-Nnorom said in an interview. "Both of us coming to Poland and Emmanuel playing for the national team - now when you say Poland nobody is surprised." After Olisadebe helped Polonia

Warsaw win its second league championship, then-national team coach Jerzy Engel pushed for the striker to be granted Polish citizenship.

Goal Assist

“The move wasn’t universally welcomed”, said Olisadebe, “with some fans and fellow players opposed to having a Nigeria-born player in their ranks”. The protests subsided when Olisadebe started scoring, including the second goal in a 3-0 home victory over Norway that secured Poland’s spot at the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea. “That helped us,” Olisadebe said. “They were like ‘let this one go through.’ It’s all been love since then.”

While a May 28 British Broadcasting Corp. documentary showed racism and anti-Semitic behavior by fans in some stadiums in Poland and Ukraine, Olisadebe said the situation has improved from his playing days and he wouldn’t discourage Africans from joining Polish teams.

“There’s nothing to be scared of,” he said. “They’ll abuse you, but at the end of the day you know what you want and you work towards it. There are other obstacles along the way other than racism. Racism is, just, one part of it.”