

| CRIME |



FEBRUARY 17, 2016

SOCCER PLAYER SHOOTS & KILLS REFEREE AFTER RECEIVING RED CARD

MIKE BESSLER

In a shocking reminder of the thin line between athletic competition and real-world violence, a soccer referee in Argentina was gunned down recently after he ejected a player from a game by issuing a **red card**. *Fox News* reports that 48 year-old César Flores was fatally shot by an unidentified player after Flores dismissed the man from play due to an unspecified infraction. A rival player was also shot and injured, but multiple sources report that he is expected to survive. The incident took place during an amateur match in Argentina's Córdoba province.

"It all happened during the football match," said a source close to police. "We don't know [exactly what took place], but it appears the player was angry, fetched a gun and killed him."



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Flores was shot in the head, chest, and neck by the assailant. Authorities are still looking for the shooter, who left the scene after the incident.


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Some scholars refer to certain types of soccer-related violence as "football hooliganism." [Photo by Christof Koepsel/Bongarts/Getty Images]

The Guardian noted that the above-noted incident is not the first time in recent memory that a soccer player has physically **assaulted an official**. Last June, an amateur match was called off when a referee was knocked unconscious by an angry player. In January, a supposedly "friendly" contest between River Plata and Boca in the resort city of Mar de Plata resulted in **40 fouls**. When an official issued a red card against one player, he was swarmed and shoved repeatedly by the man's teammates.

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A report by *CNN* recalled a similar, gruesome incident of soccer-related violence from neighboring Brazil. In 2013, a referee stabbed a player who had been expelled from play, prompting angry fans to kidnap and torture the official. The referee was then stoned to death and dismembered by

members of the deceased player’s family.

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A policeman in full riot gear keeps a close eye during a World Cup Qualifier between Trinidad and Tobago and USA as part of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers for Russia 2018 at Hasely Crawford Stadium on November 17, 2015 in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. [Photo by Ashley Allen/Getty Images]

While cases of assaults involving players and officials are not unheard of, soccer-related violence is typically associated with trouble in the stands. Mass violence pitting large contingents of rival fans against one another have plagued the game of soccer in Latin America and throughout Europe for decades, as discussed in Tiffanie Wen’s “A Sociological History of Soccer Violence,” a study published by the Atlantic in 2014. Discussing the causes and aftermath of a number of violent situations associated with the support, Wen generally concludes that a number of factors, from socioeconomic differences to nationalistic tensions, often foment an atmosphere that is conducive to violent conflicts. Professor Ramon Spaaj, who was quoted by Wen, suggests that a heavy police presence at soccer games sometimes makes for a tense environment, as well.

A scholarly study entitled “National Cultures and Soccer Violence,” authored by Edward Miguel, Sebastián M. Saiegh, and Shanker Satyanath in 2008 found “a strong relationship between the history of civil conflict in a player’s home country and his propensity to behave violently on the soccer field,” measuring their findings through the issuance of penalty cards. While Argentina was not discussed at length in that particular study, it’s worth noting that the people of that South American country suffered under extreme political repression during the “Dirty War” period of 1976 to 1983.

In addition to sociocultural matters, Argentina’s soccer scene has also been tainted by the presence of various factions of rival gangs, known collectively as the “barra bravas.” A 2011 report by the New York Times noted that the barra bravas are blamed for most soccer-related violence in that country since 1924, including 257 deaths.

[Photo by Oli Scarff/Getty Images]

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