

Moscow Fears Flare Over Racist Rioting

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The specter of nationalist rioting prompted a court to revoke bail for a Dagestani-born martial arts champion accused of killing a Muscovite with a single blow, news reports said Wednesday.

Football fans — many of whom are ultranationalists — have laid plans to stage an unsanctioned rally after the Spartak-CSKA local derby at the Luzhniki stadium on Sunday, Interfax reported, citing an unidentified law enforcement official.

The rally is to honor the memory of 19-year-old Ivan Agafonov, who died after being hit on Aug. 13 by Rasul Mirzayev, a champion in four martial arts, including sambo, and set to debut in the United States this fall.

Investigators say Agafonov, a police college dropout and a suspected robber, flirted with Mirzayev's girlfriend outside the Garage nightclub on Pushkin Square and insulted her when she turned down his advances, which prompted Mirzayev to hit him. Agafonov died in the hospital four days later.

Mirzayev, who has admitted striking Agafonov, was granted bail of 5 million rubles (\$172,000) on Monday, but the Moscow City Court overturned the decision Tuesday.

Authorities put the athlete back in detention to placate the nationalists, an unidentified police official told Kommersant, adding that a violent rally similar to one staged on Manezh Square in December was in the works.

A crowd of some 5,500 football fans and nationalists clashed with police by the Kremlin walls in December to protest what they called a stalled investigation into the death of a fellow fan, who was shot dead in a brawl with Caucasus natives now on trial.

Nationalist-minded football fans planned to rouse the after-game crowd Sunday into an unsanctioned rally on Komsomolsky Prospekt, possibly ending with a march to the Garage nightclub, Interfax said.

Spartak and CSKA fans have even agreed to put aside their longstanding rivalry to stage the rally, the report said.

Police have seized a batch of posters depicting a hooded and masked football fan with the slogan: "Moscow's a war zone. No stepping back."

Mirzayev's family decided Wednesday to apply for state protection, which may also be extended to his girlfriend, unidentified law enforcement sources told Interfax.

A separate motorist rally in Agafonov's memory is also planned in Tver on Saturday, TverNews reported Wednesday. An organizer said the motorists "wouldn't allow any disturbances" but wanted Mirzayev to be "punished."

Mirzayev wishes to meet Agafonov's relatives and "has plans to make it up" to them, his lawyer said Monday, RIA-Novosti reported.

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