

# Russia's Only Foreign-Born Player Thanks Fans

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Maxim Shemetov / Reuters

Russia's Brazilian-born defender Mario Fernandes thanked fans for their support in an [emotional](#) Instagram post on Sunday.

"I thank God for having brought me to Russia," he wrote. "I'm thankful for the honor of defending [the country's] colors as part of the national team. I'm really very happy here," he wrote.

The 27-year-old accepted Russian citizenship in 2016 after spending four seasons at CSKA Moscow, becoming one of the best players in the Russian Premier League.

Fernandes, who was Russia's only foreign-born player in the tournament, scored a crucial goal in overtime against Croatia on Saturday, forcing the game into a penalty shootout. He was one of two players who missed a spot kick, costing Russia a ticket to the semifinals, but has nonetheless been lauded as one of the heroes of the squad.

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