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#5 Eric Duda



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 Weight: 185 lbs
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 Birthdate: May 30, 1981
 #5 Eric Duda - D
 Place of Birth: Winfield, IL
 Place of Residence: Chicago, IL
 High School: Glenbard North H.S
 College: Bowling Green State University

Youth Club: Kopion F.C., Sockers F.C.

Coach for Youth Team: Spartan F.C.

Former Teams: Chicago Fire Reserves, Adria S.C.

Hobbies: Golf, sleep, beating Fred Degand in Mario Kart

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Report: Ronaldo set to announce his retirement

Three-time FIFA player of the year Ronaldo will announce his retirement from football on Monday, according to a Brazilian newspaper.

"It's time," Ronaldo was quoted as saying by the website of the Estado de S. Paulo newspaper on Sunday. "I can't keep going. I wanted to continue but I can't. I think about making a play but I can't execute it."

Ronaldo's agent, Fabiano Farah, didn't confirm the report but told local media that it is a possibility. Corinthians has announced a news conference for Monday afternoon at the team's headquarters, without giving further details.

Last week, the 34-year-old Ronaldo was heavily blamed by fans for Corinthians' disappointing elimination from the Copa Libertadores, Latin America's most important competition and the only major tournament the Brazilian club is yet to win.

Supporters damaged players' cars and threw rocks at the team's bus, and Ronaldo said at the time that the fan violence made him consider putting an end to his career.

He had been expected to keep playing until the end of the year, but he is visibly out of shape with his physical condition having deteriorated. He has been struggling to play at a high level and hadn't scored a goal since last year. If the retirement is confirmed, Ronaldo will be ending a stellar 18-year career. He played in three World Cups and remains the tournament's all-time scoring leader with 15 goals. He helped Brazil win the title in 2002 in South Korea and Japan, scoring twice in the final. Ronaldo thrived in Europe after leaving Cruzeiro to PSV Eindhoven in 1993, starring for Barcelona, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and AC Milan before returning to Brazil at the beginning of 2009 to recover

from the third serious knee injury of his career. He won the FIFA player of the year award in 1996, 1997 and 2002.

Ronaldo scored 62 goals in 97 internationals with Brazil, but was never called up again to the national team after a disappointing performance at the 2006 World Cup in Germany. There were calls for his return to the squad after he helped Corinthians win the 2009 Brazilian Cup, but he was never able to get back in shape.

Ronaldo brought a lot of sponsors to Corinthians and is expected to remain linked to the club's football operations, at least until his contract is set to expire at the end of the year.

His announcement to stop playing would come two days after former Brazil teammate Roberto Carlos said he was leaving the club because he and his family were being threatened by fans after the Copa Libertadores elimination.

Bradley made \$818,000 in latest fiscal year

U.S. soccer coach Bob Bradley made \$818,000 in the year ending lasting March 31 and women's coach Pia Sundhage earned \$219,000, according to the U.S. Soccer Federation's annual tax return. Bradley had \$449,025 in base compensation, \$345,000 in bonuses, \$6,600 in deferred compensation and \$17,619 in nontaxable benefits for a total of \$818,244. Sundhage made \$207,667 in base compensation, \$5,100 in deferred compensation and \$6,868 in nontaxable benefits for a total of \$219,635. While the period included the U.S. men qualifying for last year's World Cup, there were no major women's competitions during the fiscal year. A copy of the tax return was released

Monday to The Associated Press. Bradley's monthly salary of \$41,667 last year was up from \$37,500 in 2009 and \$33,333 in 2008, according to an annual financial statement posted on the USSF Web site. He also received a \$100,000 marketing guarantee in each year of the four-year deal. He did not earn any bonuses in 2009. After the U.S. advanced to the second round of the World Cup, the USSF held talks with Juergen Klinsmann, but they broke off. Bradley's contract then was renewed last Sept. 1 for an additional four years. Details on the new deal were not included. Sundhage earned \$13,333 a month in the year ending Nov. 30, 2009, then got a raise to \$14,167 monthly in the year

ending last Nov. 30. She receives \$15,000 monthly through this November, then gets \$15,833 monthly during the following year. Sundhage gets a \$20,000 annual marketing guarantee. The USSF received \$10.56 million from Nike in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, including \$1.56 million in equipment and \$750,000 to account for a prorated share of a \$6 million commitment bonus received in January 2007. The federation's deal with Nike runs through 2014. The federation got \$4.6 million from its agreement with Soccer United Marketing, an affiliate of Major League Soccer, in the latest fiscal year.

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Brazilian forward Cleo joins Chinese football club Guangzhou Evergrande

Brazilian forward Cleo on Wednesday signed a four-year contract with Chinese football club Guangzhou Evergrande Football Club, with a transfer fee of 3,200,000 euros, a new record in China's football league history. The 25-year-old striker was unveiled by club coach and officials. Cleo scored 10 goals in 12 matches in the European Champions League, helping Serbia's Partizan qualify for the group stage. But the transfer stops his endeavor in the top competition among clubs. "No chance for playing in the European champions league? No problem! AFC Champions League is as competitive as European Champions League. I am embracing the new challenges," said Cleo. Cleo scored two goals in two matches against English Premier League giant Arsenal, making him attractive to some top clubs in the Premier league, LFP and Lega Calcio. England media even reported that Cleo's performance had motivated Liverpool's manager to offer a price for him. But the Chinese club won the tag of war for the Brazilian. "It is the hardest talk that I have been experienced," Evergrande F.C. president Liu Yongzhuo said. "But it is a valuable experience for Chinese football clubs' effort to bring in world-class players." Evergrande, a Chinese real property enterprise, showed its ambition in Football after taking charge of the club in 2010. A series of bold actions followed including commercialization and management system reform. The addition of another Brazilian player Muriqui costed the club 350 U.S. dollars in 2010.



Ronaldinho's Flamengo remains perfect in Rio

Deivid scored the lone goal to give Flamengo a 1-0 win over Resende on Sunday for its seventh straight win in the Rio de Janeiro championship. Ronaldinho was held scoreless, but Flamengo will play Botafogo in the semifinals of the Guanabara Cup, the first stage of the Rio tournament, while Fluminense will face Boavista. Vasco routed America 9-0 but had already been eliminated. In the Sao Paulo tournament, goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni scored his 98th goal to help Sao Paulo beat Portuguesa 3-2, while Corinthians - with striker Ronaldo reportedly set to announce his retirement on Monday - was held to a scoreless draw by Paulista. Luiz Felipe Scolari's Palmeiras stayed on top of the standings by beating Americana 1-0 on Saturday. Ronaldinho failed to provide a lot of spark to Flamengo in Macae, but the popular Brazilian club was able to keep its winning streak alive with a 76th-minute goal by striker Deivid after a low cross by Chilean right back Gonzalo Fierro. Ronaldinho, in his third match since signing from AC Milan, was substituted in the 85th.



Flamengo is the only team to win all its matches to start the season and it had already secured a spot in the semifinals of the Guanabara Cup. It will face Botafogo, which was held to a 1-1 draw with Macae at the Engenhao stadium. A victory would have allowed Botafogo to avoid Flamengo in the semifinals and face Boavista, but it was Fluminense which got the opportunity after beating Madureira 1-0 in Volta Redonda. Fluminense's winner was scored in the 79th by recently signed striker Rafael Moura, who has netted five goals in his three matches with the Brazilian champion.

Boavista earned a semifinal spot over Resende on goal difference after a 5-3 win against Nova Iguacu. Max scored three goals for Boavista, including a last-minute score that allowed the team to advance.

Vasco, which began the year with four straight losses, thrashed America in Volta Redonda. Left back Ramon and substitute midfielder Enrico scored a pair of goals each for the four-time national champion, which now has won two in a row with new coach Ricardo Gomes. The winner of the Guanabara Cup will

play for the state title against the Rio Cup champion later in the tournament. In Sao Paulo, Ceni scored his 98th goal by converting a 39th-minute free kick at Caninde stadium. Already the most prolific goal scorer as a goalkeeper, Ceni is just two short of 100th-goal mark, although FIFA says the 37-year-old player has 96 goals instead of 98.

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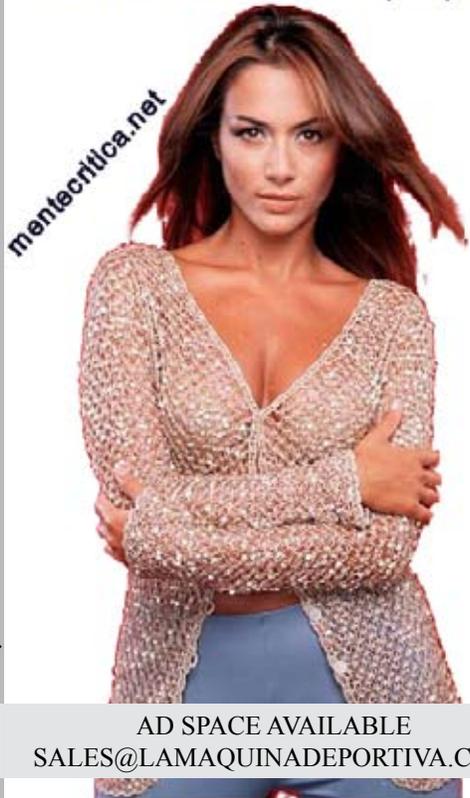
U.S. Soccer Provisionally Sanctions NASL As Division 2 League

The U.S. Soccer Board of Directors on Saturday sanctioned the North American Soccer League (NASL) to operate a Division 2 outdoor men's soccer league in the United States. However, the sanction is provisional, meaning the league will serve as the Division 2 league for 2011, but U.S. Soccer and the NASL will revisit the agreement after the 2011 season.

"Division 2 soccer is an important element in the success and popularity of the sport in the United States and we are pleased the NASL will play professional games in their markets this season," said U.S. Soccer President Sunil Gulati. "The Federation's continued interest is in sustainability and stability at the Division 2 level of professional soccer."

The NASL will have to meet further requirements set forth by the Board of Directors to be granted full sanctioning past 2011. After years of retirement, the NASL monkier returned in 2010, coexisting with the USL, the longtime second division league in America. That setup was provisionary as well, and it appears the league which once boasted the New York Cosmos and the Los Angeles Aztecs has won out to take over the tier below MLS.

Se la fanno ministro non si può più dire



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English FA Warns Players Who Use Social Network Sites

The FA have fired a warning shot to players making offensive comments on social networking sites, as they have maintained that those found to be guilty of breaking any rules would be punished.

Liverpool's former striker Ryan Babel - who recently joined Hoffenheim in January - was previously found guilty of improper conduct, and was fined a sum of £10,000 for posting a doctored picture of referee Howard Webb wearing a Manchester United shirt on his Twitter page.

A statement on the official website of the FA reads: "Participants should be aware that comments made on such sites may be considered public comment, and that further to FA Rule E3, any comments which are deemed improper, bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting may lead to disciplinary action.

"Comments which are personal in nature or could be construed as offensive, use foul language or contain direct or indirect threats aimed at other participants are likely to be considered improper.

"Participants are required to act in the best interests of the game at all times and should be aware of this when using social networking websites. Furthermore, participants are reminded that postings on social networking sites which they believe to be visible to a limited number of selected people may still end up in the public domain and consequently, care should be exercised with regards to the contents of such postings.

"In addition, we would remind participants that social networking postings could also lead to civil proceedings being brought by affected parties."



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FIFA to investigate midweek Bulgaria-Estonia friendly

World soccer's ruling body FIFA has ordered an investigation into the midweek friendly between Bulgaria and Estonia, an official said on Friday.

The match, played in the Turkish resort of Antalya on Wednesday, ended 2-2 with all the goals coming from penalties.

"FIFA contacted us and requested a full report from the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) and also said they would receive a report from the Estonian FA," a BFU official who declined to be identified told Reuters on Friday.

"We will provide full assistance to FIFA."

Earlier on Friday, BFU president Borislav Mihaylov told reporters: "We had some doubts about the refereeing in this match".

There is also confusion over which referee took charge of the game.

Official reports from the BFU and the Estonian FA say the referee was Hungarian Krisztian Selmeczi.

However, Hungarian referees' chief Laszlo Wagner and Hungarian media have indicated the referee was Selmeczi's fellow countryman Kolos Lengyel. Wagner said the three match officials involved would now be suspended.

"I'm shocked because we didn't receive a letter to allow these referees (Selmeczi, Lengyel and Janos Csak) to officiate at this game," Wagner told Bulgarian radio.

"I can say that these three will not officiate any more matches while I'm head of the commission."

On Thursday, Estonia FA spokesman Mihkel Uiboleht told local media that his organisation were told about "possible manipulation" ahead of the match.

"The friendly was organised by an agency with whom we will not work any more," said Uiboleht.

"We received information of possible manipulation even before the game as the same agency also organised the match between Latvia and Bolivia and there was the same scenario there."

Latvia beat Bolivia 2-1 in a game featuring three penalties in a friendly held at the same venue earlier on Wednesday.

FIFA criticized for its management style

FIFA has come under further criticism, with European leagues upset by the way the governing body runs soccer.

The European Professional Football Leagues said Friday that FIFA makes unilateral decisions and appears to interfere in the business of its members. The 30-league group whoed the European Club Association's warning Tuesday that it is losing patience with FIFA President Sepp Blatter's organization. "The EPFL therefore invites FIFA to reconsider its decision-making process and enhance participative democracy," the leagues said in a statement. Europe's leagues and clubs are unhappy that

FIFA leaders publicly debated switching the 2022 World Cup in Qatar to a winter slot, potentially causing chaos for the European club season. They were only partly placated by Blatter's assurance Monday that the 2022 debate was "settled" in favor of a traditional summer slot. Following a board meeting in Madrid, the leagues' group said it "cannot avoid expressing its dissatisfaction with the way such a significant matter was dealt with."

The Qatar situation also stirred up feelings about FIFA's management of the international calendar, which dictates when clubs must release their players for national team duty.

The leagues and clubs both pointed out this week that FIFA's executive committee added eight international match dates to the 2011-2014 calendar last year without consulting them. FIFA did not announce the changes in its official news release following a June 6-7 meeting in Johannesburg, and instead informed national federations in a circular letter two weeks later. "This was another unilateral decision which causes major problems to leagues and clubs, taken without any prior explanation and consultation with those who it affects," the EPFL said. The leagues said they "will not tolerate" calendar changes made in secret, and would "oppose any interference on matters of their exclusive competence, such as the size of national leagues." That

warning apparently referred to Blatter's comment last month that he wanted smaller European leagues with fewer matches because players were too tired to peak at the World Cup.

The EPFL board is led by Premier League chairman Dave Richards and includes delegates from Europe's six highest-ranked leagues: England, Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Russia.

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CHICAGO RIOT EARNS WEEKEND SPLIT, TOPS OMAHA, 12-6

Radonic nets hat trick as Riot picks up much-needed win over Vipers

Chicago Riot scoring leader Bato Radonic netted three goals as Chicago defeated the Omaha Vipers, 12-6, on Sunday in Major Indoor Soccer League action at the Odeum Sports and Expo Center.

The Riot salvaged a weekend split with the third-place Vipers to stay in the hunt for the third playoff position. Radonic has a team-high 15 goals this season. The Riot improved to 4-10 on the season and the Vipers dropped to 7-8. Omaha won the season series against Chicago, 3-1.

Next up for the Riot is a two-game road trip starting with a 6 p.m. match on Saturday, Feb. 19, against the Milwaukee Wave at the U.S. Cellular Arena. Chicago then faces the Missouri Comets at 3:10 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20, at the Independence Events Center.

The Riot's next home match is at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, against Missouri at the Odeum. Tickets for Riot home games start at only \$10. Visit www.ChicagoRiotSoccer.com or call 630-708-6284.

On Sunday, the Riot got on the scoreboard first with a Radonic goal at the 3:38 mark of the first quarter for a 2-0 lead. Eric Duda provided the assisted from the right side, as Radonic had an easy tap-in with Vipers goalkeeper Josh Miller pushed toward the other goal post.

Vipers defender Chris Brunt responded with a goal at the 7:16 mark of the first to tie the score at 2-2. Omaha's Ibrahim Kante started the attack from the back and fed to Brunt downfield. Brunt cut to his left inside the three-point arc and ripped a left-footed strike past diving Riot goalkeeper Ante Cop and into the right side of the net.

Chicago retook the lead, 4-2, with Anthony Maher's restart goal at the 13:36 mark of the first quarter. Sandre "Sunny" Naumoski took the free kick following a Chris Brunt penalty in the box and dished to Maher in the left corner. The shot went just under the crossbar and into the back of the net.

The see-saw quarter continued as Omaha also scored off a restart at the 14:44 mark of the first quarter to tie the score at 4-4. Ryan Junge netted a goal at close range from the right side, with Victor Quiroz assisting. Cop grabbed the ball in the air, but the officials ruled that it already crossed the goal line.

The Riot opened the second quarter with Radonic's second goal at the 24-second mark for a 6-4 lead. Eric Lukin took the initial strike from the right side and missed wide left. The ball deflected off the glass and Radonic was there to rebound and direct the shot into the net.

Semir Mesanovic pushed the Riot's lead to 8-4 with a restart goal at the 11:11 mark of the second quarter, as his left-footed free kick found enough space through the Vipers defense.

Deco halted the Riot's 4-0 run at the 4:33 mark of the third quarter with a power play goal to cut Chicago's lead to 8-6. Chico assisted on the play, capitalizing on a Lukin tripping penalty.

But the Riot responded several minutes later at the 7:44 mark of the third with a Marco Sullo goal to push Chicago's lead to 10-6. Riot target forward Anthony Maher assisted on the play from the left side, finding Sullo making a run in the box and shooting into the left side of the netting.

Radonic gave the Riot its largest lead of the night at 12-6 with a goal at the 11:23 mark of the fourth. Duda pushed the attack up the middle. He had an opportunity to shoot at the top of the key, but instead dished to his left to Radonic, as his shot clipped the crossbar and projected down into the ground across the goal line.

In the net, Cop had nine saves for the Riot and Miller had six saves for the Vipers.

Omaha Vipers (7-8) at Chicago Riot (4-10)

February 13, 2011 -- Odeum Sports and Expo Center, Villa Park, Ill.

Chicago Riot 12, Omaha Vipers 6

Omaha	4	0	2	0	-	6
Chicago	4	4	2	2	-	12

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

1. Chicago Riot -- Bato Radonic (Eric Duda), 3:38; 2. Omaha Vipers -- Chris Brunt (Ibrahim Kante), 7:16; 3. Chicago Riot -- Anthony Maher (Sandre Naumoski), restart goal, 13:36; 4. Omaha Vipers -- Ryan Junge (Victor Quiroz), restart goal, 14:44.

Second quarter

5. Chicago Riot - Bato Radonic (Eric Lukin), 0:24; 6. Chicago Riot -- Semir Mesanovic (unassisted), restart goal, 11:11.

Third quarter

7. Omaha Vipers -- Deco (Chico), power play goal, 4:33; 8. Chicago Riot -- Marco Sullo (Anthony Maher), 7:44.

Fourth quarter

9. Chicago Riot -- Bato Radonic (Eric Duda),

Saves: Ante Cop (Chicago Riot) 9; Josh Miller (Omaha Vipers) 6

Starters: Chicago -- Ante Cop (GK), Miodrag Djerisilo, Eric Duda, Semir Mesanovic, Bato Radonic, Fred Degand; Omaha -- Josh Miller (GK), Chris Brunt, Victor Quiroz, Freddy Moojen, Deco, Fabinho.

PENALTIES:

Second quarter

12:15: Victor Quiroz (Omaha Vipers) elbowing, blue card 13:12: Novi Marojevic (Chicago Riot), hand ball, blue card

Third quarter

3:35: Eric Lukin (Chicago Riot), tripping, blue card

Attendance: 1,112



Hicks, Gillett seeking sale damages

The bitter court battle over the sale of Liverpool soccer club resumed Wednesday with the American former co-owners pursuing a \$1.6 billion damages claim for what they called a “giant swindle.”

The case in London comes as Liverpool’s fortunes on the field have been revived for the first time since Tom Hicks and George Gillett Jr. were forced to sell the club against their will to the owners of the Boston Red Sox in October. Lawyers for Hicks and Gillett need the approval of the High Court judge to pursue damages against the Royal Bank of Scotland and three then-club directors who approved the \$476 million sale to New England Sports Ventures. In October, Hicks and Gillett had to withdraw a temporary restraining order blocking the sale, which they had obtained in a Texas court, to avoid being declared in contempt of the London court. “There is no settled decision by us to sue in England or abroad,” Paul Girolami, representing Hicks and Gillett, told London’s High Court on Wednesday.

Hicks has claimed “the British Establishment” conspired to sell the club for less than half of what it was worth to NESV, which is led by Red Sox owner John Henry. Hicks and Gillett were not in court Wednesday. The case centers around whether three English board members had the power to overrule them and approve the sale to Henry’s ownership group. Hicks and Gillett were forced to put the club up for sale in April after struggling to meet the repayments resulting from their 2007 leveraged takeover. Debts had reached around \$459 million at the time of the sale and Hicks and Gillett want damages for the losses they incurred as a result of the NESV buyout.

RBS, which held the bulk of Liverpool’s debt, and former chairman Martin Broughton are countering to try to stop Hicks and Gillett from the pursuit of damages. Liverpool was facing relegation at the time of the sale in October after the team’s worst start to a season in about 50 years. But the 18-time English champions, who fired manager Roy Hodgson and replaced him with Kenny Dalglish, have won four consecutive matches and are in sixth place in the Premier League.



Beckham helps stranded motorist

David Beckham stopped to help a stranded family whose car broke down on the way to school. Beckham pulled over during morning rush hour near a roundabout in the town of Ware in England. He assisted photographer Paul Long and his two children.

Long had been ignored by other motorists before the soccer star came to his rescue. He said Beckham asked if they were OK, and Long said he asked for a push to the side of the road.

Long told BBC Radio on Wednesday he said, “Thanks David, I love you” as the former England captain returned to his car.

Beckham is training with Premier League club Tottenham until Feb. 22. He’ll soon return to the Los Angeles Galaxy for the MLS season.



USA women to face England

The U.S. women’s soccer team will play a pre-World Cup exhibition at England on April 2.

The game will be at Leyton Orient’s Brisbane Road stadium in London, The Football Association said Monday.

The U.S. and England last met in the quarterfinals of the 2007 World Cup, won by the Americans 3-0.



Chants aimed at female referee on return



Fans have aimed chants at assistant referee Sian Massey in her return to the Premier League after being the subject of a sexism scandal.

Two soccer broadcasters left British TV station Sky Sports last month after making disparaging off-air remarks about Massey before a Liverpool match against Wolverhampton.

Massey made a low-key return to the field last weekend for a fourth-tier match.

But she returned to the topflight on Saturday to work alongside World Cup final referee Howard Webb at Blackpool’s match against Aston Villa.

Blackpool manager Ian Holloway said he “didn’t like some of the shouts.” They included, “There’s only one Andy Gray.”

Gray was fired by Sky, while colleague Richard Keys quit.



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After jail, a chance to rebuild football dreams

Mara Kante saw his dreams crushed when he was convicted of carrying a weapon during riots outside Paris in 2007.

Now the young Frenchman who trained with clubs in England and Italy is getting a second chance.

The powerful left back is trying to rebuild his career, playing with fourth-division club Louhans-Cuiseaux for next to nothing. He hasn't given up hope of playing for one of the world's great leagues.

"Wherever will be my chance, I will go," the 23-year-old Kante said.

"Whether it's New York, Birmingham, Hoffenheim or Arsenal, I will play where my fate is."

Kante was among several men accused of shooting at and wounding police officers during riots that left burned cars and buildings in the town of Villiers-le-Bel in November 2007.

The riots broke out after two teenage boys on a motorbike died in a crash with a police car and rumors rapidly spread that they had been killed by police.

The Villiers-le-Bel riots north of Paris highlighted simmering anger in poor housing projects where many Arabs, blacks and other minorities live, isolated from mainstream French society.

Kante - a French citizen of Malian and Senegalese descent - insisted on his innocence throughout the trial. He was cleared of the attempted murder of police officers, but was convicted of carrying a weapon and sentenced to prison.

"Justice is silly and hidebound," Kante said. "Nobody saw me fire a shotgun. And I was arrested three months after the events after somebody accused me to get a reduced sentence. Justice is not the same for all. I'm black, I didn't graduate, I come from the suburbs. When people look at me, they can't avoid to think with cliches."

Kante's imprisonment began with an 11 month-stay in an isolation building.

"In prison, I was forced to quickly strengthen my mental resources," said Kante, a practicing Muslim. "I didn't care about bodybuilding. I opened books and started to read the works of Malcolm X, Ghandi and Nelson Mandela. During the 29 months I spent in jail, I learned a lot about people and I've also grown up. I understood that I was capable to aim for big things."

The first thing Kante did when he was released was to go see his mother in hospital.

"She was expecting her latest baby," said Kante, one of 13 children. Two months later, he learned from a friend that Louhans-Cuiseaux was looking for a left back.

"At the time I was not thinking about football. I had spent almost three years without playing a ball," he said.

But Kante traveled to the small town in the Burgundy region and worked out for manager Jean Acedo and assistant coach Aliou Cisse, a former Paris Saint-Germain player.

"I signed and went on to win a regular starter position in the team. They offered me €1,500 (\$2,000) a month, but the club is struggling and I'm not paid. They pay for my hotel room and my food. But after what I went through, I can't complain."

At the club, Kante lives in a peaceful environment that contrasts sharply with the violent suburbs where he grew up.

"Besides football, there is not much to do," Kante said. "But I'm not here for fun."

Before the riots, Kante had played with several regional clubs around Paris and had training sessions with English and Italian clubs.

After spells at Cesena and Udinese in Italy, which didn't lead to a deal, he also went to Sarajevo, where a first-division club offered him over \$500 a month. He turned the offer down.

Acedo believes Kante will improve gradually and eventually reach his former level.

"After three years without playing, he had to find back the rhythm at training, but he is making great efforts. It's like if he was coming back from a very serious injury," Acedo said. "He lost 13 kilograms (29 pounds) in four months and I'm not worrying about him, both physically and mentally. He is hungry, he wants to find his level back. He is getting better and there is big room for improvement. As many left-footed players, he's got a good strike and can deliver precise crosses. With hard work, he could quickly become a good third-division player."

Kante dreams of an even brighter future a la Frank Ribery, who blossomed late and shone at the 2006 World Cup before becoming a France stalwart.

"The next France left back? Why not?" Kante said. "God is always testing his children - and all big men suffered before they accomplished big things."

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better way – being sensitive to everyone in the team.”

Coach Jon Spencer will hope Cooper can add his improvements as a teammate to the form he enjoyed during his three years with hometown club Dallas (Kenny Cooper, Sr. played goalkeeper for the Dallas Tornado in the NASL) and internationally (Cooper, Jr. has five goals in 11 appearances for the United States).

New England Revolution Signs Former Manchester City And Lazio Midfielder Ousmane Dabo

Kenny Cooper: It Wasn't A Hard Decision To Come Back To MLS

The New England Revolution announced Friday that they have signed French midfielder Ousmane Dabo on a free transfer.

Dabo, a 34-year-old defensive midfielder, is a veteran campaigner who started his career at Ligue 1 side Stade Rennais and has enjoyed a storied career including stops at Inter, Parma, Monaco, Lazio and Manchester City.



“We’re pleased to bring Ousmane to the Revolution,” club Vice President of Player Personnel Michael Burns said in a release. “He has extensive experience at the highest levels in Europe and we’re looking for him to bring that quality to the Revolution.”

Dabo earned three caps for the French national team in 2003 and won the Coppa Italia with Lazio in 2004 and 2009, scoring the winning penalty in the 2009 final. Additionally, Dabo was infamously knocked out in a training ground scuffle with Joey Barton at Manchester City.

The Frenchman will occupy one of the Revolution’s eight international roster spots pending approval of his U.S. P-1 Visa.

Kenny Cooper has started one game in Europe since April 10, 2010. He hasn’t scored since September. Of 2009.

Needless to say, the past calendar year hasn’t been kind to the gracious and optimistic striker. A miserable loan stint with Championship side Plymouth failed to produce a start or a goal; he missed out on the World Cup, and a broken ankle on the first day of preseason with 1860 Munich hobbled him in July. So when the chance to return to MLS, where Cooper notched 40 goals and 10 assists in 90 games with FC Dallas, arose, the 26-year-old grabbed it. “It wasn’t a hard decision to come back,” Cooper said in a phone interview with Goal.com Thursday.

“It’s a really exciting opportunity for me and one that I’m very grateful to the Portland Timbers for,” Cooper explained. “[It’s] a unique opportunity to be part of a team’s inaugural season.” The former Manchester United youth player was introduced to the press Thursday, will train with his teammates for the first time Friday, and will likely pull on the adidas Timbers jersey for competitive action for the first time on March 19, when Portland takes on the reigning MLS Cup champion, the Colorado Rapids. With a flurry of firsts, Cooper is understandably focused on the present. But it’s more than that. When asked about his goals for the season, Cooper highlighted having a positive preseason. When asked about the future of his career, Cooper brushed the question aside. “I’m not looking anything past the Timbers,” he asserted. “Right now, they’re my focus.” The concentration on his new surroundings is evident. Cooper will be forgiven for trying to forget much of his 18 months in Europe and for blocking out anything beyond a month away.

There’s one thing, though, Cooper did pack with him in Germany: added maturity. “I’ve played for my hometown team. I know what it’s like to be comfortable,” Cooper explained. “What I mean by that, is being able to play in front of family and friends and have your support system right there in your back yard. “And I now know what it’s like to be the new guy, and to be in a country where English isn’t the first language. I think that’s a huge thing; I think it’ll help me relate to my teammates in a

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Two-time Tournament Finalist Toby Imada Brings “Mean Streak” to Bellator Season 4 Lightweight Tournament



Toby Imada will continue his reign as one of the most storied Bellator veterans when he returns for his third Bellator Lightweight Tournament. Bellator Fighting Championships today confirmed Imada as a participant in the Season 4 Lightweight Tournament which will air LIVE on MTV2 beginning in March. Imada became an overnight viral sensation during Bellator Season 1 when the Judo black belt successfully choked-out Jorge Masvidal with a come-from-behind, unheard of inverted triangle. The effort resulted in Imada being awarded the 2009 Submission of the Year. [Click here to view the 2009 Submission of the Year](#)

Coming up just short in the Bellator Season 1 and Season 2 Lightweight Tournament Finals, Imada will admittedly be entering this Season 4 Tournament with a chip on his shoulder.

“I’m a little annoyed, I have a little bit of a mean streak going on right now, a little more of a fire under my butt this time around,” said Imada. “I’m definitely going to be meaner and more aggressive. I’m ready to go out there and give it my all. I’m tired of being the guy that comes up short and doesn’t live up to what people expect from him. I’m going to give it all I have this time around, believe me. I’m going to be mean.”

Imada enters the tournament winning 12 of his last 14 fights, with the only two losses coming in the final rounds of Bellator’s first and second season lightweight tournaments. Additionally, Imada’s last 14 victories have come via stoppage and he has not won by a fight by decision in last five years. In his most recent outing, Imada earned a second round submission victory over Ludwing Salazar in November of 2010, breaking Salazar’s four-fight win-streak.

“Toby’s been just one win away for the last two Lightweight Tournaments. He consistently brings a ‘go for broke’ attitude to the cage and is always looking for the finish,” said Bellator Chairman and CEO Bjorn Rebney. “This Lightweight tournament is stacked; we have a great mix of new fighters and veterans in the field, which will make for some great fights.”

Hoping that the third time will be a charm, Imada plans to use his pent up frustration that he has built up over the past tournaments to his advantage.

“Winning this Bellator Season 4 Lightweight Tournament would be the pay off for all of the sweat and sacrifice I have been putting into this sport for years and years,” said Imada. “It would be a pay off for all of the different things that have annoyed and aggravated me in my career on my way to that point.”

For more information, visit Bellator.com, follow Bellator on Twitter @BellatorMMA or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Bellator

About Bellator Fighting Championships

Bellator Fighting Championships is a Mixed Martial Arts promotional company headquartered in Chicago. Bellator’s founder/CEO, Bjorn Rebney, is an experienced fighting sports and entertainment professional with a deep commitment to the purity and integrity of the sport of MMA and its athletes. Bellator Fighting Championships’ executive team is comprised of top industry professionals in the areas of live event production, television production, fighter relations, venue procurement, sponsorship creation/development, international licensing, marketing, advertising, publicity and commission relations.

