Against the Odds

Russia Thumps Saudi 5-0

In the lead-up to the World Cup’s opening match Thursday night, the head of Russia’s Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, called on believers to pray for the host nation. Against the odds, their prayers were answered.

Russia sailed to an unlikely 5-0 victory over Saudi Arabia in a match that pitted the tournament’s two lowest-ranked teams against each other. Some 78,000 fans roared at the final whistle as Russia dispatched a campaign of negativity that predicted complete World Cup failure.

Dmitry, 35, a long-time Russia supporter, told The Moscow Times that he didn’t expect the score to be so high. “We were very worried going into the match because of how badly we were playing.”

It was not only Russia’s first World Cup victory since 2002. The tournament hosts also went into the opening match without having won in seven consecutive matches.

Before Thursday’s opening goal in the 12th minute, followed by the second in the 43rd, the national side had recorded just one shot on goal in their previous two games.

With three goals in the second half — two coming in extra time — Russia has moved closer to getting out of the group stages of the World Cup for the first time since 1986, when it was still the Soviet Union.

Russia can now breathe easy until its game against Egypt on June 19. “Of course we’ll lose to Uruguay, but I think we can beat Egypt next and come in second in the group to advance,” Dmitry told The Moscow Times.

Russia’s coach Stanislav Cherchesov sounded relieved when speaking with reporters after the match.

“Yesterday, I mentioned that no one has ever won anything by just speaking,” he said. “Today, we have proved with our actions that we want to be worthy hosts of the World Cup.”

Police Ordered to Censor Out Negative News

Russian police have reportedly been instructed to stop publishing their usual crime reports for the duration of the World Cup. Media reports of robbed and scammed tourists have multiplied in the run-up to the tournament. However, regional outlets reported earlier this week that local Interior Ministry press offices have been told to self-censor any reports that could spark concern about crime rates.

Russia’s Mediazona news website on Wednesday quoted an Interior Ministry order, which said that local branches should “suspend publication” of reports between June 5 and July 25.

Police spokespersons in the Belgorod, Krasnodar and Tver regions confirmed the “no bad news” trend to Mediazona, but did not directly attribute it to the World Cup.

“We’re not breaking our heads about it. We write about things that could spark interest, things that are cheerful. We’re not making things up,” Alexei Goncharuk, a Belgorod region spokesman, was quoted as saying.
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Slutsky denied all accusations of harassment.
Graffiti Fine

A first-year student at Moscow State University paid a 1,500 ruble ($24) fine on Thursday for inscribing graffiti on a World Cup stand earlier this month. The student, Dmitriy Petelin, wrote the words “no fan zone” on the stand, a continuation of protests by local students against a FIFA fan zone that opened on the university campus during their final exams. Petelin’s representative, Oleg Elyseev, reported to RBC that the student was found guilty of petty hooliganism and subsequently given the fine, which he paid in full. The Interior Ministry reported that the damage inflicted by Petelin and two other students earlier this month amounted to 65,000 rubles.

Pray for Russia

The leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, urged Russians on Wednesday to pray for the national football team’s World Cup performance.

“I hope this great event will be a success and will have a positive impact on the mood of our people,” the patriarch said at a meeting of the Supreme Church Council in Moscow. “Of course, this will largely depend on the performance of our team, but we can only hope and pray that everything is right for our people,” the patriarch said at a meeting of the Supreme Church Council in Moscow. “Of course, this will largely depend on the performance of our team, but we can only hope and pray that everything is right for our people.”

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Football Humor

A famous comedian’s song mocking Russia’s World Cup team and questioning the financial logic of the event has touched a nerve.

“Our team is, let’s be frank, sh*t,” sings Semyon Slepakov in “Olé Olé Olé,” which by Thursday had been viewed almost 7 million times on YouTube.

Slepakov imagines Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen leader, accusing of human rights abuses, as the Russian football team’s new but unsuccessful manager. The tongue-in-cheek lyrics have Kadyrov threatening the players with his pistol, cutting off their thumbs so they are not distracted by their smartphones and suggesting they shoot themselves when they lose.

A Chechen official told a Moscow radio station he thought Slepakov should apologize. But Kadyrov himself, in a quip on social media, said only one thing in the song had offended him. “In his song, the team headed by me lost. That is not on,” he also invited Slepakov to travel to Chechnya to write a new song with him.

Not everyone saw the funny side, however: “It would be not so funny if it was not so sad,” wrote one commenter on YouTube.

Graffiti Fine

President Vladimir Putin ushered in the World Cup on Thursday with a speech emphasizing Russia’s love for football and international unity.

“I congratulate you – the whole big, multi-national, friendly football family, with the start of the most important tournament of the planet!”

“We – loyal fans of football – number, without any exaggeration, billions of people on the planet. And wherever we live, no matter what traditions we follow, we all share a love for football,” Putin added before Russia’s match against Saudi Arabia at the packed Luzhniki Stadium.

The power of football, and sport, is in this unity,” he said. “Welcome to Russia.”

Hooligans Barred

More than 1,200 British fans have reportedly been barred from leaving Britain to attend the World Cup. The British Home Office identified 1,312 individuals known for football hooliganism and, beginning on June 4, prevented them from traveling to Russia by collecting passports.

“The World Cup is a festival of football and is no place for violence or disorder,” Nick Hurd, the U.K.’s Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, told The Telegraph. “The UK’s system of football banning orders is unique and means that people intent on causing trouble in Russia will instead be staying at home.”

Russia Supports U.S. Bid

Despite escalating diplomatic tensions, Russia supported the winning bid of the U.S., Canada and Mexico to host the 2026 World Cup. The North American bid received 134 votes, beating Morocco’s bid, which won 65 votes.

Russia’s support for North America went against the Russian Football Union’s previous promise in March that Russia would support Morocco’s bid to host the 2026 World Cup. The North American championship will be the first time that three countries host the event.

MeET THE FANS

Moscow is great, but the weather is too cold. We like being here anyway.

Abdelaziz and Slim from Tunisia

Sex Advice

A lawmaker has warned Russian women against getting too friendly with foreign World Cup fans, especially those of other races.

Tamara Pletnyova, head of the State Duma’s Family, Women and Children Committee, on Wednesday told Russian media that having sex with non-Russians could lead to families in which children are raised by a single parent. “These children will later suffer,” Pletnyova said, citing the aftermath of the 1990 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

Russia’s birth rate hit its lowest level in a decade last year despite government efforts to encourage Russians to have more children. “We should be giving birth to our own children. I’m not a nationalist, but still,” said Pletnyova.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Thursday said he thought Russian women could make up their own minds on the issue. “They are the best women in the world,” he was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

He added that the “Say No to Racism” slogan on FIFA Fan IDs best described Russia’s attitude toward fan relations during the tournament.

UPCOMING GAMES

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Cossack Mercenaries Guard World Cup

Russia’s dismal record has many fans asking: “Who are you going to root for once Russia is knocked out?”

In the weeks leading up to the World Cup, a popular joke circulated among Russian football fans: “Who are you going to root for once Russia is knocked out?”

The tournament’s host almost certainly will be eliminated. And likely sooner rather than later. Despite being in one of the tournament’s easiest groups and playing to home crowds, Russia, according to the latest FIFA ranking, is fielding the World Cup’s weakest squad.

Having gone without a single win in its last seven matches, Russia has done little to inspire the hopes of its fans. Russia lost eight months ago and only because two South Korean own goals prevented the game from ending in a draw. In Russia’s last two matches against teams that failed to qualify for the World Cup, it was only able to muster one shot on target.

These dismal displays have left Russian supporters clear-eyed about their national team’s chances. Of nearly 65,000 respondents to a recent Sports.ru poll on how far Russia will advance in the tournament, 75 percent said the team will fail to exit the group stage. It is a sober prediction. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has never advanced into the World Cup’s knockout rounds.

Even the insatiably patriotic President Vladimir Putin has apparently given up on the home team. “Sadly, our team has not enjoyed great results lately,” he said last week. Although he added that he hopes Russia will “fight to the finish,” he tipped Argentina, Brazil, Germany and Spain to raise the 18-carat gold trophy at Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow on July 15.

Other Russia supporters are more blunt. “We all know we’ll lose pretty early on, so many of us have picked different teams to support,” Sergei, a 40-year-old Muscovite, told me outside Moscow’s VEB Arena last week. “Some people have picked France, some Germany, another person Spain, another England.”

“At the end of the day, we all just love good football.”

According to the state-run Public Opinion Foundation pollster, after Russia, most home fans support Germany, Brazil and Spain, respectively.

Sergei, who wore a scarf decorated with the Russian flag, was waiting to watch his team play Turkey in its last match before the tournament kicks off. Unfortunately, good football did not lie in store. Lethargic and plodding, Russia failed to break down the Turkish squad, which on this occasion consisted of fresh-faced players geared into international playing experience.

Like Sergei, dozens of supporters milling about outside the stadium before the match were clad in Russian regalia, but bled the colors of other nations underneath.

Both Timur Sultanov, 10, and his father Kasyum, 38, could barely contain their excitement over getting to see France play Peru on home soil. “We can’t wait,” Kasyum said. “We’re rooting for both teams,” his son added. “Because we love Antoine Griezmann” — of France — “and Jefferson Farfan” — of Peru, who plays club football for Lokomotiv Moscow. (Timur agreed to be quoted on the condition it was also not broadcast.)

Unlike most football fans at CSKA’s VEB Arena, the Sultanovs were confident Russia would find a way out of the group stage. But that wouldn’t stop some fans, Kasyum said, from rooting for France, Peru and others to hoist the trophy because “Russia will at some point “probably lose,” he explained to Timur.

Nearby, another parent-child duo were less conciliatory. Draped in a Russian flag, Anastasia Krovchenka, 16, and her mother Elena, 47, said they would be supporting their country no matter what. Anastasia, a military cadet, explained on behalf of her and her mother, a civil servant: “We are patriots.”

Still, would the pair not — even just for the fun of it — cheer for another team if Russia crashes out? “Elena squirmed. After a few moments, she replied, “Well be with Russia till the end.”

Evan Gershkovich is a reporter at The Moscow Times. @evangershkovich

By Evan Gershkovich

Even Putin Has a World Cup Plan B

In the weeks leading up to the World Cup, a popular joke circulated among Russian football fans: “Who are you going to root for once Russia is knocked out?”

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Evan Gershkovich is a reporter at The Moscow Times. @evangershkovich
With Russia hosting a massive influx of tourists in 11 cities across the country, the question on many people’s minds is: Is it safe?

Russia is well aware that the world’s attention is fixed on the country this summer and it is eager to show that it can easily accommodate the more than one million foreign fans expected to descend on the country during the World Cup.

Ensuring that the tournament’s matches go ahead without a hitch is a matter of supreme importance to the Kremlin, and the government has spared no expense: Official estimates claim that more than 30 billion rubles ($479 million) have been spent solely on security.

Most foreign fans will be concerned about the threat of terrorism or potential encounters with Russia’s infamous football hooligans — far-right groups known for promoting and participating in violent skirmishes at matches.

**Russia’s terrorist threat**

During the Sochi Winter Olympics four years ago, the Russian authorities named their extensive security measures around the city “the Ring of Steel.”

Before they began, the Caucasus Emirate (CE), an Islamist extremist organization based in the volatile North Caucasus region, threatened to attack the games in nearby Sochi.

In the months running up to the event, Russia experienced several suicide-bomb attacks in Volgograd — another World Cup host city — at tram and bus stations. However, thanks to the Russian authorities’ tight security, the Olympics did not see any violent incidents.

In short: Expect a heavy police presence, metal detectors and checkpoints.

**Cracking down on the hooligans**

After the violent clashes between Russian and British fans at the Euros in France in 2016, many are bracing for a repeat at the World Cup.

However, since then, there has been a marked change of government policy towards the “hooligans,” whose activities the authorities previously appeared to tacitly approve (former Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, for example, occasionally appeared with well-known hooligan leaders in public.)

Many of the hooligan leaders have been blacklisted from attending matches, with facial recognition technology introduced at host stadiums to ensure that they cannot enter and prompt any unrest.

Moreover, the authorities have taken extensive measures to ensure that the games are secure, from introducing Cossack cavalry brigades and deploying drones to monitor the crowd for signs of disturbances, to installing physical measures such as concrete anti-ram barriers near stadiums and metro stations.

Streets around the stadiums have become pedestrianized and metal detectors have been installed on most major railway and train lines.

**Petty crime**

Urban centers like Moscow and St. Petersburg are natural hubs for criminal activity, given the large concentrations of people convening there, particularly foreign visitors.

While overall crime levels in the country are declining — the Interior Ministry in 2017 noted a 4.7 percent decrease year-on-year — petty crime is still likely to pose a risk to foreign fans.

Railway and metro stations during peak hours, as well as underpasses, are all key locations for pickpockets to target foreigners. Many areas around stations and sometimes even sta-

**Russia’s ‘Ring of Steel’**

The Kremlin has imposed stringent security measures. But is its World Cup safe?

BY EMILY FERRIS
AND TIMUR BAIGUZHINOV

Russian security services have cracked down on hooligans and called in the Cossacks in the hopes of keeping football fans safe.
diums are poorly lit at night. The usual precautions apply: Avoid vulnerable situations such as public intoxication or visibly displaying large amounts of cash. Note that cities like Samara, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov-on-Don, Kaliningrad, Saransk, Volgograd and Yekaterinburg do not have any experience with hosting events of this magnitude.

Even with a veritable army of student volunteers, medical personnel and the Cossack brigades, reporting a stolen wallet or asking for directions in Samara will not be the same as checking into an international hotel in Moscow. Weapons and wildfires

Each of the host cities has slightly different security concerns. While places like Sochi and Volgograd are closest to the North Caucasus, the region of Rostov-on-Don abuts rebel-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia rebels are pitted against Ukrainian government forces. Given the multiple military bases in Rostov-on-Don, there is a significant number of weapons circulating in the area, meaning that should conflicts occur — for example, between fans — they could violently escalate without warning. In an attempt to mitigate this, Putin on May 25 issued a moratorium on citizens carrying service weapons or hunting rifles in host cities. Those who violate the rules face a heavy fine.

There is also a serious risk of wildfires during the summer months, a routine security issue that Russia deals with every year. While the Emergency Situations Ministry is on full alert, most of the fire safety resources — including fire fighting planes equipped with water tanks — have been deployed to the western part of the country where the host cities are located. There are concerns that this could leave forested areas of the Far East under-resourced and unable to appropriately respond to wildfires.

Consular complications

Diplomatic relations between Russia and the West have soured in recent years, prompted by Russia’s annexation of Crimea, military intervention in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and allegations of Russian involvement in the U.S. presidential elections in 2016.

In the wake of the poisoning of former British spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Britain in March, the U.S. expelled 60 Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity for its ally. More than 20 EU countries followed suit.

In a tit-for-tat response, Russia expelled diplomats from the countries and closed down the U.S. consulate in St Petersburg. As a result, many consulates, particularly those of the U.S., are now operating with reduced personnel and have warned that in the event of an incident involving their citizens during the World Cup, they may not be able to offer swift assistance. This includes diplomatic intervention should one of their citizens be detained in Russia and the procurement of medical and passport services.

Despite these obstacles, Russia has a good track record of ensuring security at large events, not least the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 and the FIFA Confederations Cup last year. Both of these events took place peacefully, indicating that Russia is likely to have sufficiently strong police capabilities and resources to pull off an event of this magnitude without significant issues.

Emily Ferris is an Associate Analyst for Russia at Control Risks. Timur Baiguzhinov is the Regional Security Manager for Russia & CIS at International SOS.
The Brain Behind Russia’s World Cup Mascot

BY LENA SMIRNOVA

Walk around any of the 11 World Cup host cities and you’ll come face to face with a mischievous wolf, donning a sporty outfit, goggles and a football. This is Zabivaka, the official mascot of the 2018 World Cup. Less conspicuous, however, is Yekaterina Bocharova, the university student who designed him.

Bocharova, 22, grew up in the small Siberian town of Strezhevoi, with a population of around 40,000, before going on to study graphic design at Tomsk State University.

Two years ago, Bocharova submitted one of her drawings to the World Cup mascot contest. After making the shortlist of the top three designs out of more than 500 submissions, her drawing was chosen as the winner in an online vote. The results were announced on the most popular evening show in the country, Vecherny Urgant.

The other contenders—a tiger and a cat—have since been forgotten, but Zabivaka is now a constant fixture on billboards and in shop displays across Russia. Bocharova only received $500 from FIFA for the copyrights to Zabivaka, she says. But her life has taken a significant turn. Two sponsors have given her private funding to move to Moscow to continue her studies and pursue her dream of working at an animation studio.

The Moscow Times spoke with Bocharova about Zabivaka, her new life and plans for the future.

How did you come up with Zabivaka?
When I was first told about the contest, I started looking at examples of different mascots from the Olympics and other competitions. I studied them to see what worked and what didn’t...My favorites were Puleco the Armadillo in 2014 and the long-haired leopard from South Africa in 2010, Zakumi. My dog Tyson was also an inspiration. He formed the basis of Zabivaka.

Tyson is a dog, but Zabivaka is a wolf. How did your dog transform into a wolf?
All dogs were wolves at one point. I used a little imagination to make Tyson bigger and turn him into Zabivaka. In the early sketches, Zabivaka was almost a mirror image of Tyson. He had the same big ears and the same kind, innocent eyes.

What is Zabivaka like as a character?
He is very energetic and very friendly. He is always looking for adventure and is very sociable. And he loves football—that’s obvious.

When your illustration was chosen as the official mascot of the World Cup, what was your reaction?
When I found out I was among the three finalists, I couldn’t believe it. I thought that maybe it was a joke. But then I realized that almost no one knew I had submitted my drawings, and then there was shock and joy, of course. The winner was announced live on air on the Vecherny Urgant program. I was in the studio with all the other contestants. I cried tears of joy.

Why “Zabivaka”?
Zabivaka means “one who scores” in Russian. Former Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko announced the name during the mascot’s unveiling on the Vecherny Urgant evening program in October 2016. However, Mutko later admitted that the name was not his own invention, but instead the result of “collective creativity.” The name choice is not uncontroversial: The word can also refer to an individual who beats others up or gives up on something.

How did your family respond?
They were very happy for me. But the live broadcast was in Moscow and my entire family lives in the east, with a four-hour time difference. So there. They only found out that I had won the next day.

Were you expecting to win?
No, I didn’t have any expectations. Usually it is someone from Moscow who wins. I know that there are a lot of schools and artists across Russia that are a lot cooler. It’s like a lottery and you don’t know what will happen. I just sent off my drawings without giving it much thought.

You recently moved from Tomsk to Moscow. Is the move connected to winning the contest?
Yes, I got help to do this. A couple of sponsors helped me make the move to start studying here. I chose the school where I wanted to study and got help to enroll there.

What are your upcoming goals? You said before that your dream is to work for Disney. Is that still the case?
Of course. That has been my dream my entire life. Right now I am studying computer graphics. It’s given me an insider’s look at the industry and how it works. Before that I didn’t have a clue, but now I look at it in a more sober way. I know there’s a lot of work involved.

Zabivaka is everywhere right now. How do you feel when you see him on souvenirs?
I don’t really have special emotions about it at all. But when I see people walking around with him, that probably means that they like him and I find that more touching.

Do you have any Zabivaka souvenirs?
I have three small statuettes and a soft toy.

Now that you’ve already created one mascot, are there more in the pipeline?
Yes, of course. I drew a lot. After I won the World Cup contest, there was a junior world championship in Tomsk for swimming with fins. They chose my mascot there, too: an otter.

This interview has been redacted for length and clarity.

Once a figment of Yekaterina Bocharova’s imagination, Zabivaka can now be found in stores across Russia.
Tokyo
Unparalleled Excitement
Host City in the Spotlight:

Sochi

Host of the 2014 Winter Olympics, this Black Sea resort of ‘ferocious pirates’ is ready for another international sports event

Sochi’s flagship arena, Fisht Stadium, was completed in 2013, just in time for the 2014 Olympic Games. The primary venue for the Games and the location of the opening and closing ceremonies, it had to look spectacular. The world’s eyes were on this Black Sea resort city, and Russia was eager to improve its image abroad and sell itself as a good place to do business. To accomplish this, the country spent lavishly. At an estimated $51 billion, the 2014 Olympic Games remain the most expensive Games in history. Unfortunately, the severe cost overruns received more media attention than the venues themselves.

Since the Olympics, the arena has had a hard time attracting more than a few thousand fans to any one event – which is hardly surprising, given the city’s population of just 350,000. Sochi had a professional third-tier football team for just one season in 2014-15, after which the team failed to qualify for subsequent seasons. They are now taking a break, although the mayor who sees no obstacles preventing FC Sochi from reaching the top tier, has announced that once the FIFA tournament is over, he plans to transfer the stadium to the local team, albeit with reduced seating.

Sochi officially became a city just a century from that time. Then came the age of the Middle Ages, including Costa, which gave its name to today’s Khosta, a city district of Sochi. The first mention of the name “Sochi” was in the records of the Turkish traveler and statesman Evliya Chelebi, who visited the Black Sea shore in 1661. However, the name refers to the mountains, not the settlement.

The Ottoman Empire took control of the area in the 16th century, spreading Islam along Russia’s southern border. The tension between the two empires led to several wars. As a result of the 1828-29 war, the Russian Empire gained control over the coveted Black Sea shore. The region remained restless, however, because of an ongoing war in the nearby Caucasus, which lasted for almost half a century and ended only in 1864. The result of it was the forced relocation of the native population to the lowlands of Russia or migration to the Ottoman Empire.

At this time, the contemporary Sochi area was settled by people from all over the Russian Empire. By the end of the 19th century, Sochi started to resemble a resort. Wealthy residents of St. Petersburg built their dachas, villas and palaces here, and several parks and gardens were planted, including the famous Arboretum. In 1902, Sochi got its first wellness center: Maltesa. People started calling Sochi the “Caucasus Riviera.”

In 1917, Sochi was officially recognized as a city. A great construction drive began in 1954, after Soviet leader Josef Stalin built his summer residence there. Communist Party members followed suit and Sochi became the top Soviet resort.

By the late 1980s, around five million people visited Sochi every year and it had more than 200 spa and wellness facilities. Vacationing in Sochi was a sign of status in the U.S.S.R., a perk given only to the best workers. Holiday packages were almost completely free – companies paid for travel, as well as room and board.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians began traveling more to foreign holiday destinations. Sochi’s popularity declined, while its infrastructure fell into disrepair. But everything changed in 2007 when the city was selected to host the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Along with the Olympic Park in nearby Adler, a dazzling number of hotels were built both at the seashore and in the mountains. The Rosa Khutor ski resort was completely overhauled. The Lastochka high-speed train was launched, which connects Rosa Khutor to central Sochi.

Four years after the Olympics, Sochi has reinvented itself as a combination sea and ski resort. Once again, it is the resort of choice for Russians.
In the bleachers, fans seem to be in one of two states: either ecstatically happy or insanely enraged.

In honor of the World Cup 2018, I thought I ought to offer the basics of football slang. Here the key word is “basics.” Decades of living next to a stadium – the roar of the crowd, the traffic, the mounted police, the rowdy fans, the loud celebrations and the tendency to use any courtyard as a public toilet – have forever spoiled the sport for me. But I have picked up a few phrases over the years that I’m happy to share so that you know what the fans are screaming about.

Besides, the slang is really fun.

Since this is the World Cup, let’s begin with the mascot: an anthropomorphized blue-eyed wolf named Забияка. Забияка is a cute word for a score, from забиться (to score a goal). The mascot was created by a student at Tomsk State University and beat out a tiger and a cat in a nationwide vote. I’m not sure who dreamed up the name, but it’s clear that the designers of a logo with Забияка in mind must have had a great sense of humor.

It turns out that мусор (mousetrap) is the goalie, who is in front of the ворота (goal netting). Ворота (goal) is actually the goal line itself. Сесть на банку (on the last syllable) (Way to go, guys!) is a short and sweet clenching of fists. Судью на мыло! (Turn the ref into soap) is a very, very angry cry to use any courtyard as a public toilet — have forever spoiled the sport for me. But I have picked up a few phrases over the years that I’m happy to share so that you know what the fans are screaming about.

Best of all is морда в дверь (to hit a door), which is a shot into the top corner of the goal. All together now: Ура! Ура! Ура!

Michele A. Berdy is a Moscow-based translator and interpreter, author of “The Russian Word’s Worth,” a collection of her columns. Follow her on Twitter @MicheleBerdy.

THE WORD’S WORTH

By Michele Berdy

A Butterfly on the Football Field

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DAY TRIPPIN’

Get Out of Town

Do you have a day to spare during your trip and feel like doing some wandering outside of Moscow? There’s a lot to choose from, but here are a couple of good recommendations.

Abramtsevo

The Abramtsevo Estate, just 60 kilometers from Moscow, has a long and eventful history. It began as the center for the Slavophile movement in the early 19th century. Under the leadership of Sergei Aksakov, the estate was frequented by the likes of Nikolai Gogol and Ivan Turgenev. After Aksakov’s death, Abramtsevo was bought by industrialist Savva Morozov, another known patron of the arts, who brought together many of the greatest minds of his time at the estate. Among the artists who spent time and worked at Abramtsevo were painters Valentin Serov, Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan, Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Vrubel.

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The monastery’s architecture is breath-taking. While you’re there, make sure to visit the Trinity Cathedral, which houses Andrei Rublev’s icon “The Trinity.” The Assumption Cathedral is the refectory building built in the Baroque style. Both St. Sergius himself and Tsar Boris Godunov are buried on the site.

You are allowed inside the churches during services, but be sure to respect the monastery’s dress code. Women are advised to bring a scarf to cover their head and modest clothing for all visitors is a must. Near the monastery there is a picturesque park where you can rent a boat and relax after all of the sightseeing.

Sergiyev Posad

The main attraction of Sergiyev Posad, a small town about 70 kilometers north of Moscow, is the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The monastery was founded by Sergius of Radonezh, one of the most revered 14th century Russian saints. The monastery’s architecture is breathtaking. While you’re there, make sure to visit the Trinity Cathedral, which houses Andrei Rublev’s icon “The Trinity.”

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Moscow is a multicultural city, and its international bearing is only increasing in light of the World Cup. Graffiti artists have joined this trend, painting the city walls with murals by artists from every corner of the globe, from Australia to Argentina. Local curators are taking advantage of the growing popularity of international graffiti, as demonstrated by the 2018 MOST Street Art Festival and a new Banksy exhibit on show at Moscow’s Central House of Artists.

Harry Lebrun of Tumby Bay, in south Australia, has never been to Moscow. Thanks to a famous Argentinian street artist named Martin Ron, though, the 10-year-old’s face has quite literally left its mark on the Russian capital ahead of the upcoming 2018 FIFA championship.

The colorful large-scale mural on the side of a five-story apartment block located close to Luzhniki Stadium, the championship’s main stadium, features a boy in a red jersey taking the throw-in. Ron was visiting South Australia’s Eyre Peninsula to paint the Tumby Bay silos when he met Lebrun, the mural’s subject.

Lebrun said he had observed the mural’s progress and was thrilled that millions of people would see it. “Everyone who goes to the World Cup and everyone in Moscow who drives past it to work will see it,” he said.

The World Cup mural by Ron was painted as part of the 2018 MOST Moscow Street Art Festival, which will be held in the city until mid-June.

“Over the past decade, Muscovites’ perceptions of graffiti have changed: Graffiti artists are no longer viewed as just vandals or hooligans,” Ivan Panteleyev, the main organizer of MOST, told The Moscow Times. “Demand for graffiti-style work has been coming from architects, interior designers, stores, restaurants and even city authorities.”

For most of Russia’s recent past, graffiti was illegal. Moscow-based street art curator Oxana Bondarenko told The New York Times in 2010 that “The state invests millions of rubles in hunting down graffiti artists and painting over the works,” resulting in arrests and a warning if an artist was caught. In recent years, street art has become more accepted in major metropolises like New York and London, which have seen a boom in street paintings, and Moscow is no exception.

Besides Ron, Mue Bon from Thailand and Farid Rueda from Mexico have taken part in this year’s mural fest dedicated to the football championship.
Asked about his recent work, Ron explained: “No one has ever painted a mural of a player bringing the ball back into play… The concept is of Russia returning to the World Cup.”

The murals are financed by MOST’s team and the Moscow city authorities. “The World Cup murals will remind Muscovites about the upcoming championship, as well as the benefits of sports for school students and youth. This is why one of the art works includes superheroes and teens playing football,” said a spokesperson for the city committee.

Besides World Cup-specific street art, Muscovites are also getting a glimpse at the most famous graffiti artist of all time. The Banksy exhibit that opened at Moscow’s Central House of Artists on June 2 is the first of its kind in Russia. Featuring about 100 original works, rare prints, photographs and 3D objects, as well as a unique multimedia zone, it combines artworks from the Lilley Fine Art gallery with pieces from multiple museums of contemporary art and private collections. “The immersive exhibit introduces visitors to key works of a street artist whose powerful, satirical designs revolutionized the art world and transformed the culture around street art.”

Having started his career as a graffiti artist in the early 90s, for almost 30 years Banksy has been a powerful anti-establishment artistic voice. Always anonymous, always just a step ahead of the chase, he infuses his works with an active message: anti-political, anti-capitalist, anti-war and anti-moralizing. Commentators have pointed out that it is an ironic testament to his role in the contemporary art world that even as other, lesser-known street artists are picked on, and their works are painted over in a matter of days, Banksy’s art is often preserved behind glass, even right on the street, or celebrated in museums.

This exhibit offers the unique opportunity to not only consider the artistic merits of Banksy’s instantly recognizable stencils-based style, but also to examine the social and political ideas behind the works. "The Avengers," including Iron Man, Spider-man, Captain America and other characters, playing with footballs. The Banksy exhibition runs through Sept. 2 at the Central House of Artists, 10 Krymsky Val, Metro Park Kultury, Oktjabrskaya. See more at banksyart.ru.

Emma Friedlander and Alina Shubina contributed reporting.
The Hottest Bars and Clubs in Town

Model T
Model T is a bit of a dive and underground bar, but it is also a music lover’s dream with great live performances. It offers everything from death metal to experimental folk to avant-garde jazz.
8 1st Yamskaya Ulitsa. Metro Dmitrovskaya, Dostoyevskaya. facebook.com/modelt.musicbar

Gazgolder
Gazgolder is located in a recently renovated historical gas holder tank at the former Arma factory, next to the Kursky train station. The club and historical gasholder tank at the former Arma factory.
5 Bolshaya Sadovaya Ulitsa. Metro Mayakovskaya. gazgolderclub.ru

Time Out Rooftop Bar
This 13th floor bar on top of the Pekin Hotel offers one of the city’s best views. An exciting and extensive cocktail list only adds the enjoyment.
14 Bolshaya Sadovaya Street, Bldg. 6. Metro Mayakovskaya. timeout-bar.ru

Berlin Bar
This bar was founded by celebrity German expat and DJ Chris Helmbrecht. The interior is a creation of award-winning Berlin designer Thilo Ferdinand Reich, known for his work at bars Saint Jean and The Coven. The menu includes Berlin specials like currywurst and other German favorites—meatballs with potato salad and herring rolls.
14 Bolshaya Sadovaya Street, Bldg. 6. Metro Mayakovskaya. facebook.com/from.berlin.to.moscow

Propaganda
It seems that Propaganda—or ‘propka’ as cool Muscovites call it affectionately—has been around forever. Or nearly forever. It first opened its doors in the 1990s and is still packed every weekend. Go there during the afternoon when the kitchen is still open—the food is quite decent. The most popular and crowded parties are the traditional DJ Sanchez Thursdays and gay Sundays.
7 Bolshoi Zlatoustinsky Pereulok. Metro Lubyanka. propagandamoscow.com

Strelka Bar
Dance parties, concerts, lectures, movies, Strelka is the place to be. You’re bound to bump into an editor of an edgy publication sharing a drink with a bunch of clean-cut Moscow hipsters, while expats dance on a Woodkid set.
14 Bersenevskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 5. Metro Parkotkinskaya, Kropotkinskaya. strelka.com

Denis Simachev Shop & Bar
Founded by designer Denis Simachev in the 2000s, this club quickly became a traditional hangout for Moscow’s fashionable sets. The kitschy interior features mirrors, chandeliers and washbasins in the middle of the dance floor. The music is consistently good and so are the cocktails. Simachev also offers some delicious bar snacks. It’s crowded on the weekends, so dress smart to pass face control. (See Lifehack above.)
12 Stoleshchikov Pereulok, Bldg. 2. Metro Lubyanka. facebook.com/stdbar

Ketch Up
Ketch Up is an outpost of a popular St. Petersburg burger chain on weekdays, but it turns into a bar with dancing on weekends. Try any of the 15 burger varieties on offer and combine with cocktails like Pencillin or New York Sour. You’ll find listings for upcoming parties on their Facebook page.
6/3 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most, Bldg. 3. Metro Kuznetsky Most. facebook.com/ketchupmoscow

FOR THE WEEKEND

How Do I Get Past ‘Face Control’?
Face control is a barbaric ritual carried out by stern-faced bouncers at the city’s more upscale establishments. It essentially involves you either getting the nod of approval or the brutal statement “tonight there is a private party.” The latter is often combined with a gesture towards the exit or an aggressive crossing of the arms. Those who are rejected are plunged into an existential crisis. Why me? What did I do wrong?
Waving a foreign passport isn’t going to cut the mustard, and while the decisions and reasoning of heavies at the door are both mysterious and sometimes illogical—you may get in one week, and not the next—there are a few rules of thumb you can follow to improve your chances.
First, dress to impress. There’s no such thing as overdressed in Moscow, unless you’re aiming to get into a grime-but-cool basement club. Second, Moscow is one of the few places where being a girl isn’t necessarily an advantage. If you’re in a large group, split into smaller groups of three or four with a mix of genders. And then the obvious: Be fashionably early, don’t be loud in line and definitely don’t exude the air of being drunk and/or obnoxious. If you don’t get in, take heart that you’ll probably have a better time somewhere else.

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6th Moscow International Biennale For Young Art
All Weekend

The Moscow International Biennale of Young Art has been held since 2008. It has become one of the largest and most ambitious projects in the field of contemporary art in Russia. Luciana Cal- abro Visconti, a young independent curator from Italy, was chosen to headline the 6th biennale. In this project, entitled “Abracadabra,” Visconti focuses on performance, video and sound. She chose 58 artists from around the world to showcase at an abandoned industrial space, “Rassvet” (Dawn), that used to belong to the furniture factory Mair & Meirlius, an imperial court supplier. Recently, the buildings were carefully reconstructed.

“Ideal Age” is the biennale’s special project, shown simultaneously in the courtyard of the AZ Museum and at the Educational Center of MMOMA, a short walk from each other. In the courtyard you can see the sculptures of Ivan Gormishov, an artist from Voronezh, and works by Ygor Kozhevnikov installed on the back wall of the building. The MMOMA exhibit touches on topics such as the cult of youth, ageism issues and the difficulties of growing up.

“Rassvet”
3 Stolovarny Pereulok, Bldg. 1. Metro 1905 Goda.

Museum AZ

Educational Center of MMOMA
17 Vezmolayevsky Pereulok. Metro Mayakovskaya.

youngart.ru

Concert Axwell Λ Ingrosso
June 15
After Swedish House Mafia—an extremely popular electronic trio from Scandinavia—disbanded, two of the participants decided to continue as a duo. Under the new name Axwell Λ Ingrosso, they play pretty much the same electron house, perfect for stadiums and festivals. Last December they released their debut album “More Than You Know.” Their Friday concert at Adrenaline Stadium is part of the supporting tour.

Adrenaline Stadium
80 Leningradsky Prospekt, Bldg. 17. Metro Sokol.
adrenaline-stadium.ru

Ballet Anna Karenina
June 16, 17
The classic Russian story gets a contemporary update in this ballet premiere. Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s original composition is meshed with the music of Alfred Schnittke and Cat Stevens, placing Anna Karenina’s timeless story in the modern age. John Neumeier is the choreographer, set and costume designer, lighting concept author and libretto author for this much-anticipated Bolshoi Theater production.

Bolshoi Theater
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bolshoi.ru
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