

Fifagate and Conmebol in a Brooklyn court

Presentation at Play the Game 2017 by Ezequiel Fernandez Moores

A whistleblower from Argentina is today world news in FIFA-gate. His name is Alejandro Burzaco. He was at the Au Lac Bar in Zurich when the probe into FIFA exploded in May 2015 and has confessed to the US justice that he paid 160 million dollars in bribes to more than 30 directives and leaders. He also accused Televisa, Fox and Globo; powerful TV broadcasters.

Burzaco was Julio Grondona's right hand man, the now deceased Argentine vice-president of FIFA. Burzaco, chief executive of a TV company, became a millionaire with Grondona. Today he accused him of being far more corrupt than we already knew him to be.

We are in Holland now. Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the 1978 World Cup. The final in which Argentina beat Holland in Buenos Aires. Back then, Amnesty International asked Dutch players to boycott the World Cup because my country was suffering the worst of its dictatorships. Their worst concentration camp could be found just 700 meters away from where Argentina and Holland were playing the final. Kidnappings, tortures and deaths.

It was the Brazilian Joao Havelange's first World Cup as president of FIFA. The Argentine dictatorship paid a lot of money to secure the World Cup from FIFA. My sources assure me that Televisa of Mexico provided a great part of that sum. And that Havelange, since the Argentina '78 World Cup, realised this 'world cup toy' was worth its weight in gold.

How much is the Qatar 2022 World Cup worth today? Has the French press not told us by now that then president Sarkozy ordered Michel Platini of France to vote for Qatar? And is it not the case also that the German press have told us that Angela Merkel exerted pressure for Germany to also vote for Qatar? Gas, airplanes, petrol. Big businesses that have nothing to do with football.

Burzaco doesn't denounce South America for voting under political pressure, which could be a form of corruption. South America voted for personal corruption. Yes, Conmebol are a bunch of crooks. But not a criminal organisation like the Medellin cartel, which killed judges and presidential candidates and put bombs all over Colombia.

Last week at the Brooklyn court, the prosecutors said Burzaco was in tears because Manuel Burga, president of the Peruvian federation, had gestured to Burzaco, mid-hearing, suggesting if Burzaco talked he (Burga) would slit his throat. They asked that Burga go straight to jail. And that they would request at least 20 additional years to his sentence. The story was reported everywhere, but in the hour of truth, nobody could see such a gesture. The prosecutors put on a show to influence the jury. To say that Burga is Pablo Escobar.

The ethical side of sport applauds the justice of the United States. However, this is not what the sportsmen of the United States do. For months they have, in their hundreds, fallen on their knees when the national anthem is played because they claim black people have no justice. They say black lives matter. Colin Kaepernick inspired the protest. They kicked him out of the National

Football League. Fired. As commanded by president Trump. Kaepernick is my Muhammad Ali. He would have never played that world cup in 78.

To conclude I return to my country. Some say that Burzaco is almost a hero. But he was corrupt. Today he only talks to reduce his sentence. He doesn't do it for the good of sport.

If I had to choose an Argentine whistleblower I would choose Mario Goijman. He was the 'maker' of the 2002 Volleyball World Cup. The country was in crisis and he invested his personal fortune to hold a great World Cup thinking that the international federation would refund the money. But he crashed when he hit the corruption of Mexican Acosta. He lost all his money. His house, his car, his family. The IOC (International Olympic Committee) didn't so much as thank him for denouncing the corruption.

Play the Game recognised Goijman's fight in 2011, with an award. Jens Sejer Andersen sent a letter to the IOC gathered in Buenos Aires, and wrote to the sporting authorities in Argentina. In 2018, Buenos Aires will host the youth olympic games. In 4 years, the games increased their budget by 766 percent. It's a record increase in Olympic history. They'll cost 450 million dollars. Goijman is claiming back just 1 million, but nobody takes his calls.

Wasn't it that the IOC implemented an austerity policy? The new resembles the old. In FIFA, they said that Blatter was the demagogue. But Infantino arrives and his first big decision is to increase the number of teams in the World Cup to 48.

Goijman attempted suicide the other day influenced by an Argentine lawyer who threw himself under a train after Burzaco named him in Brooklyn. "Mario," I told him, trying to soothe him. "You are not corrupt."

But I've spent years unable to say anything else to calm his depression. Unable to explain sport, old and new, doesn't protect the decent.