

Luis Suárez banned for four months for biting in World Cup game

Fifa takes unprecedented action against controversial striker . Suárez fined £66,000 and banned from entering any stadium . . .

Owen Gibson in Rio de Janeiro

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In an unprecedented move Fifa has banned Uruguay's Luis Suárez from all "football-related activities" for four months for biting Italy's Giorgio Chiellini, ruling the striker out of the rest of the World Cup and the start of the domestic season - although not a potential move to Barcelona.

The Liverpool player will not be able to play or train for his club or country for four months after Fifa's disciplinary committee handed down the hefty sanction, which will be appealed against and has provoked dismay from Uruguay and a guarded response from Anfield. The biting incident, the third in which Suárez has been involved in his career, has also led Fifa's disciplinary committee to prevent the player from entering any football stadium during the ban.

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Suárez has also been banned for nine competitive international matches, beginning with Uruguay's last-16 game with Colombia on Saturday, and fined £66,000. However, Fifa clarified that Suárez's ban from all "administrative" tasks related to football did not block any possible sale from Liverpool during the period. Any potential deal would not be done on the cheap, though, with only Barcelona and Real Madrid realistically having the financial resources to buy the forward.

Suárez signed an improved £200,000-a-week long-term deal last December, which included a buy-out clause thought to be around the £80m mark. Liverpool are understood to be calm about the prospect of being without their main asset for 13 matches - nine league games, three Champions League ties and one Capital One encounter - and are not looking to offload the forward. It is not known if the club will continue to cover Suárez's wages or if he will be fined for his latest misdemeanour. Liverpool will review the full disciplinary report from Fifa before making any decision or comment on what they will do next.

"Such behaviour cannot be tolerated on any football pitch, and in particular not at a

World Cup when the eyes of millions of people are on the stars on the field,” said Claudio Sulser, the chair of the disciplinary committee, which met late into the night in Rio de Janeiro.

“The disciplinary committee took into account all the factors of the case and the degree of Mr Suárez’s guilt in accordance with the relevant provisions of the code. The decision comes into force as soon as it is communicated.”

Although Uruguay will appeal against the decision, it will not stop Suárez being banned from Saturday’s match because under article 124 of the Fifa disciplinary code the appeal does not have a “suspensive effect”. Before Fifa announced their judgment, the Uruguayan FA and even the country’s president had weighed into the issue in support of Suárez. They claimed that Suárez was the target of a conspiracy among the Italians, the English media and the Brazilian hosts to make more of the incident than it warranted.

“We are preparing our appeal now, we have three days to do it,” Uruguay federation president, Wilmar Valdez, said following the verdict. “It is an excessive decision and there was not enough evidence and I have seen more aggressive incidents recently. It is a severe punishment.

“I don’t know exactly which arguments they used but it is a tough punishment for Suárez. It feels like Uruguay has been thrown out of the World Cup. We all know what Suárez means to Uruguay and to football around the world - not having Suárez would be a loss to any team. Luis in the next few hours will travel to Montevideo to be with the rest of his family to recover.”

Asked about rumours that Uruguay would now boycott the Colombia game in protest Valdez added: “No, that is not a possibility. Uruguay continues playing at this World Cup. We have good players who can come in.”

Television pictures of the incident seemed clear. The ban - added to previous penalties for racially abusing Manchester United’s Patrice Evra and for biting Chelsea’s Branislav Ivanovic, mean that Suárez will have been suspended for 48 matches since 2010 without receiving a red card on the pitch.

Fifa vice-president Jim Boyce, from Northern Ireland, said the sanction was deserved. “I think the punishment handed out by Fifa to Luis Suárez is fully justified,” he said. “Hopefully he will realise now that behaviour of this type will not be tolerated under any circumstances.”

While online gambling company 888.com were still reviewing their relationship with the striker, one of Suárez’s main sponsors, Adidas, said they would be reminding the player of his responsibilities but made it clear that they would not be dropping him. In a statement the company said: “Adidas certainly does not condone Luis Suárez’s recent behaviour and we will again be reminding him of the high standards we expect from our players. We have no plan to use Suárez for any additional marketing activities during the 2014 Fifa World Cup.”

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