

Luis Suarez bites Giorgio Chiellini during Uruguay's World Cup victory over Italy

Victim Giorgio Chiellini challenges Fifa to kick Uruguayan out of the finals but striker claims 'things like that happen all the time'



Photo: REUTERS

By Mark Ogden, Natal

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Giorgio Chiellini demanded that Fifa show the “courage” to ban **Luis Suárez** from the **World Cup** after becoming the third opponent to be bitten by the controversial Uruguayan striker.

The **Italy** defender was left with visible teeth marks on his left shoulder after clashing with Suárez in the 79th minute of **Uruguay**'s 1-0 victory in Natal, a result which confirmed their progression from Group D and eliminated the Italians.

Fifa immediately opened an investigation into what was one of the most shocking episodes of player behaviour in World Cup history.

With Fifa's disciplinary code stipulating a maximum suspension of 24 matches or two years for offences of an extreme nature, Suárez could yet find himself being penalised with a record ban for an on-field incident.

After reacting furiously on the pitch following the incident, which went unseen by the Mexican referee Marco Rodríguez, Juventus defender Chiellini branded Suárez a “sneak” who is protected by Fifa because of his high-profile status.

Suárez served a 10-game ban in the Premier League in 2013 for biting Chelsea’s Branislav Ivanovic, having committed the same offence playing for Ajax three years earlier.

“Suárez is a sneak and he gets away with it because Fifa want their stars to play in the World Cup,” Chiellini said. “I would love to see if they have the courage to do anything against him. It was ridiculous not to send Suárez off. It is clear, clear-cut. And then there was the obvious dive afterwards because he knew very well that he did something that he shouldn’t have done.”

Suárez said of the 'bite' claims: "These situations happen on the field. I had contact with his shoulder, nothing more, things like that happen all the time." He added of possible action by the game's governing body: "I don't know anything, if Fifa analyse each case separately it's going to be complicated."

Despite photographic evidence supporting Chiellini’s claim to have been bitten, the centre-half was accused of “crying” by Uruguay’s injured captain Diego Lugano.



“The worst of everything is the attitude of Chiellini,” Lugano said. “He’s a great player with an enormous status, but it doesn’t correspond with Italian football as sportsmen leaving the field,

crying and appealing against a rival. As a man, he disappointed me totally. I had him as a reference point.

"You need to show me what happened because I didn't see anything. Did you see it today or did you see what happened in other years? You couldn't have seen it today because nothing happened."

A Fifa spokesperson said: "We are awaiting the official match reports and will gather all the necessary elements in order to evaluate the matter."

Mauro Tassotti, the Italy defender, currently holds the record for the longest ban issued at a World Cup having been suspended for eight games in 1994 for breaking the nose of Spain midfielder Luis Enrique with an elbow.

Jim Boyce, the Fifa vice-president and chairman of the referees' committee, hinted at a lengthier suspension by insisting that the governing body should "take whatever action necessary" if Suárez is found to have bitten Chiellini. "I have watched the incident several times on television," Boyce said.

"There is no doubt Luis Suárez is a fantastic footballer but, once again, his actions have left him open to severe criticism. Fifa must investigate the incident seriously and take whatever disciplinary action deemed necessary."



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Meanwhile, Michel D'Hooghe, a Fifa executive committee member, said: "It is very, very sad for everybody who loves football."

Suárez, who was suspended for seven games by the Dutch Football Association for biting PSV Eindhoven's Otman Bakkal while playing for Ajax in November 2010, grinned as he walked through the post-match interview area when asked repeatedly whether he had bitten Chiellini.

Despite the shocking nature of the incident, Suárez was defended by the Uruguay coach Óscar Tabárez, who accused the media of pursuing the player in an attempt to report on his mistakes. “There seems there is animosity against this football player,” Tabárez said. “He just came out of a difficult moment and he has been penalised, but there are people hiding behind the tree waiting for something to happen.

“Suárez is a preferred target of certain media. I’d like to see the images. I didn’t see it. And if it happened, the referee probably didn’t see it.

“Suárez is an important person. He’s an important person within the group and I can already say if he’s attacking as you’ve already started to do we will see how to defend him because this is a football World Cup, it is not about cheap morality.”

The Italy manager, Cesare Prandelli, who announced his resignation following his team’s defeat, supported Chiellini’s claims by admitting he had seen the injury to the defender’s shoulder. “I didn’t see the images of Suárez but I did see the bite marks in Chiellini’s shoulder,” Prandelli said. “It is a shame, a real shame. The assistants of the referee were so busy, they didn’t see anything.”

Suárez has courted controversy on several occasions in recent years. Aside from the Bakal and Ivanovic incidents, he was also sent off for a deliberate handball against Ghana at South Africa 2010 which denied the nation a place in the World Cup semi-finals.

In December 2011, Suárez was banned for eight games and fined £40,000 for racially abusing Manchester United defender Patrice Evra during a Premier League fixture at Anfield.

With Suárez facing the potential of severe punishment from Fifa, which could apply to both club and international football, senior figures at Liverpool are expected to discuss the player’s situation as soon as any penalty is issued.

The forward signed a new long-term contract last December which is understood to include an £80 million release fee should a club from outside the Premier League make an offer for him.

Sources close to Suárez have claimed in recent days that the player, named Footballer of the Year and PFA Player of the Year last season, has “nothing left to prove” in the Premier League and that he would be prepared to move to Spain this summer.

However, with the player’s future under a cloud following his latest descent into controversy, any potential transfer could be affected by a Fifa suspension.

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