

*CBS Mornings*

07/06/26

7:00:11 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

GAYLE KING: Ahead, we will be talking FIFA red card drama. How a phone call from President Trump helped overturn a controversial decision. It's causing a lot of outrage.

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7:00:30 a.m. [TEASE]

15 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: World Cup Shakeup]

KING: A stunning reversal ahead of the U.S.-Belgium World Cup matchup after President Trump gets involved in the controversy.

PAUL TENORIO: It changes everything about this game. This is an enormous deal to have Flo Balogun starting for the U.S. It is a preferred lineup now.

(...)

7:02:16 a.m.

4 seconds

KING: We're going to be talking about that red card reversal because people have got lots of thoughts about that.

(...)

7:06:17 a.m.

7 minutes and 29 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: World Cup 2026; FIFA Lifts Suspension on Balogun After Trump Call]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Now to the White House phone call shaking up tonight's World Cup matchup between the U.S. and Belgium. In a surprise move, FIFA lifted U.S. striker Flo Balogun's one-game ban for a red card. He is now eligible for tonight's match. CBS News confirmed President Trump called FIFA's president about the suspension. Nicole Valdez is in Seattle ahead of the U.S.-Belgium clash. Nicole, good morning. A lot of outraged people.

NICOLE VALDES: Yeah, Vlad, good morning. FIFA says its decision was in line with its disciplinary code, but this is the first time since 1962 that it has reversed suspension of a red card

that was issued during a World Cup match. Now, as you can imagine, this phone call is certainly sparking big questions ahead of the U.S.'s biggest match in years. From the beginning it was a contentious call.

RAPHAEL CLAUS [on 07/01/26]: The final decision is red card.

VALDES: Star U.S. striker Folarin Balogun handed a red card after stepping on a player's leg, forcing Balogun to a one-match suspension. Days later in a stunning turn FIFA reversed that ruling allowing Balogun, the top U.S. scorer in this tournament, to play tonight against Belgium.

CHRISTIAN PULISIC: The foul, obviously, was what it was. It was harsh. It was harsh. There's no doubt about it. So, like, to have him back, we're excited.

VALDES: President Trump praised the decision writing, "Thank you to FIFA for doing what was right, and reversing a great injustice!" Sources tell CBS News Trump called FIFA President Gianni Infantino directly just one day after the match and asked for a review of the red card. The call was first reported by *The New York Times*. The pair have gotten close in recent years.

GIANNI INFANTINO [on 12/05/25] [TO TRUMP]: Mr. President, this is your prize. This is your peace prize.

VALDES: Infantino awarded Trump the newly created FIFA Peace Prize in December before the U.S. was set to host hundreds of this year's matches. In a statement, the Royal Belgium Football Association said it was "astonished," adding, "to protect the fundamental principles of fair play," it is "investigating all potential options." The Athletic's Paul Tenorio says FIFA owes fans transparency over a decision that could have a huge impact on the match.

TENORIO: It changes everything about this game. It is an enormous deal to have Flo Balogun starting for the U.S. It is their preferred starting lineup now, and you have to say now no excuses.

VALDES: Now, a Belgian source familiar with this matter told CBS News that FIFA is now reviewing this decision to lift that red card suspension, that same source also told CBS News that the Belgian Football Association has since sent a letter asking for, and I quote, "the full rationale behind the decision, as well as a full report from the FIFA refereeing body," Vlad.

DUTHIERS: Nicole, thank you very much. For more on this we're joined by Roger Bennett, founder and CEO of Men in Blazers an independent media network that covers soccer. Roger, good morning or is it because a lot of people are wondering how FIFA was able to do this. There's this little-known rule, it's called Article 27, that allows it to defer suspension of this type. But when you first heard this Roger — look, you and our football fans, there are always bad calls. There are always things that we are unhappy about that we would like to see reversed, but they don't get reversed.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: World Cup 2026; Roger Bennett on Balogun Red Card Reversal]

ROGER BENNETT: This is a, depends what you're asking, the American football fan may or the fan of global football, which when you're asking, we'll tell you the answer. Emotionally, it's amazing, Flo Balogan is our prince who was promised, he's our lord and savior. He's the gent who can score the goals, they're going to take us to the promised land. But this does feel like something at a WWA [sic], you know, where home cooking is the best cooking. He got a red card, that carries a one match ban. There is no right to appeal, apart from this Article 27, which says that FIFA can review any suspension that they want and no explanation has been given. We later find out that there was a call, as you report, said, from the White House to ask them to reinstate him. And so, the world football fan in me is like, this is not the way football works. You know, if we were playing France and President Macron put in a call to make sure their elite striker was able to play — how would we feel if Saudi Arabia did this?

KING: Yes.

BENNETT: How would we feel? And so, you call between the emotional and the rational and the honest —

KING: I know.

BENNETT: — it destroys the integrity of the competition.

KING: Yeah. Roger, put it in perspective here. Hi, Roger. I mean, suppose there was a bad call in the NFL and President Trump called Roger Goodell, and Roger Goodell reverse a call, how people would feel about that. As Vlad just said, bad calls and sports are how it goes. So, if the U.S. wins and listen, with our USA, go USA, we all hope the USA wins. But if they win, is there an asterisk? Is it tainted, do you think?

BENNETT: I think that, in the eyes of the world, Gayle, you've absolutely nailed it. And we'll say the crazy thing that hurts so much. Well, there's two things. Number one, this World Cup has been the World Cup of the People. We've marveled as the world has fallen back in love with the United States, and the United States has fallen back in love with global football. Lawrence, Kansas, where the town embraced the Algerian football team, in Boston, which became the capital of Scotland as the Tartan Army deliriously, all of these scenes have been ecstatic, and there you have this. And the crazy thing, Gayle, the U.S. team have been playing so well.

KING: Mmhmm.

BENNETT: Our boys have been doing us proud.

KING: Yes.

BENNETT: They're doing great without any of this interference. And now, you're right. In the eyes of the world, no matter what happens, every goal, every game they win, maybe tonight and afterwards, will have a stigma, will have an asterisk — by the way — which will last beyond the World Cup for both the team —

KING: Wow.

BENNETT: — and this poor player, Balogun, who is a great young striker. When you mention his name in 10 years, no matter how many goals he scores, no matter how many games he plays, the world will only remember him from this moment. Balo-gate.

NATALIE MORALES: Oh, yeah. Balo-gate, as you said. Now, a lot of people, though, Roger, would agree that the red card seemed somewhat harsh to begin with for that play in the play against Bosnia. So, the call itself, I mean, do you agree that that should have been reversed?

BENNETT: That's an argument that's kind of self-justifying, that it wasn't a red card. We're telling ourselves these things, it's the right outcome, but it's completely the wrong process. Again, if last night, England got a red card, unfortunately, they don't have a sitting prime minister who's going to put the call in to FIFA to get it revoked. This is not what we've come to, and it's also not why we've watched the sport. It does destroy the integrity of the competition. There is no doubt, but it's not why we watch the sport for kind of geopolitical interference, for courtroom drama. This morning, at four o'clock in the morning —

MORALES: Right.

BENNETT: — FIFA told Belgium that they can counter sue, they have until five. This is the agony, the World Cup — this World Cup has been the greatest in the modern period, the feats on the field, off it have been ecstatic.

MORALES: Right.

BENNETT: Honestly, they're what the world needs —

KING: Exactly.

BENNETT: — and now we're having to go through this.

KING: Roger, you're breaking a lot of hearts.

MORALES: I know.

KING: My dream was USA would win without Flo tonight, and then they would go on just to show that the red card was wrong, but they would still win. But now we'll all be watching. Yeah.

BENNETT: You and me both —

KING: Yeah.

BENNETT: — with my American heart Godspeed, make great memories tonight —

KING: Godspeed.

BENNETT: — irrespective. Big, big love.

KING: All right.

MORALES: All right, Roger Bennett.

BENNETT: Courage!

MORALES: Thank you.

(...)

7:55:46 a.m. [TEASE]  
14 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; World Cup Preview]

DUTHIERS: Ahead, CBS Sports analyst Nico Cantor is on a road trip to every U.S. city hosting a World Cup match. We will talk to him about his epic journey, FIFA's controversial red card reversal, and why he says tonight's U.S.-Belgium is a revenge.....

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8:00:08 a.m. [TEASE]  
14 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Red Card Controversy]

KING: Coming up in this 8:00 hour, American star Flo Balogun will be on the pitch when the U.S. faces Belgium in the World Cup tonight. We will talk with Nico Cantor from CBS Sports about FIFA's very controversial red card reversal.

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8:20:46 a.m.  
2 minutes and 37 seconds

MORALES: But I got to ask you first about the big news that everybody's talking about here.

NICO CANTOR: Yeah, definitely.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: World Cup 2026 FIFA Lifts Suspension on Balogun After Trump Call]

MORALES: Flo is going to play tonight. I mean, the red card ban has now been lifted. With that though comes a lot more controversy, right? Because this came after President Donald Trump made this phone call to the FIFA president. So, where does that put the U.S.? When we're watching this game tonight, what is the feeling going to be watching now?

CANTOR: Yeah, Natalie, Gayle, Vlad, thank you so much for having me. Yes, you know, all this celebration now comes that amid controversy for the United States.

MORALES: Yeah!

CANTOR: I think American fans in the U.S. men's national team would take —

KING: Yes.

CANTOR: — Flo Bolagun back, right? Originally —

MORALES: Yeah!

CANTOR: — we all in the moment believed that it shouldn't have been a sending off. But there really aren't processes in place for the U.S. to appeal that red card. But FIFA is hanging on to an article in their disciplinary code that, in my opinion, it wasn't put there for these types of things —

KING: Yeah.

MORALES: Yeah.

CANTOR: — and it's kind of just given them a blank slate to kind of just do as they wish.

MORALES: Right.

CANTOR: It's not shocking because FIFA historically has done as they wish, but —

KING: The reputation for FIFA doesn't seem so great.

CANTOR: — yeah, and especially with decisions like these, right? Just it's unprecedented to the level that since yellow cards and red cards have been implemented at the World Cup, that's 1974. This has never happened.

DUTHIERS: Because also, you've got the political interference, which is the other sort of aspect of this —

MORALES: Right.

DUTHIERS: — right? And I just want to point out the statement from UEFA, which is a

European football federation —

CANTOR: Yeah, who have a little bit of beef with FIFA.

MORALES: With FIFA.

DUTHIERS: They do, they do, but I just want to point out what they say. Football is — “when the certainty of rules is no longer guaranteed by its guardians the integrity of the game is at stake, and the credibility of competition” —

KING: Yeah.

DUTHIERS: — “is undermined, we express our disbelief at such an unprecedented, incomprehensible and unjustifiable decision.”

CANTOR: Yeah. That’s the European governing body who has historically been at odds, especially very recently with FIFA. These are now, we’re talking about power plays, right? UEFA’s looking on their mind, FIFA, and now we’re getting into the politics of it all, but it is a very unpopular decision.

DUTHIERS: Because could the UK — could the UK make a case, that red card in that match yesterday was absolutely different.

MORALES: It deserved red card.

DUTHIERS: Deserved red card.

MORALES: Right. But another player, another team, could make a call to a political leader and say, “Hey, can you help us get out of this situation?”

CANTOR: With the precedent that FIFA just said by giving Balogun the opportunity to play in this match, absolutely.

KING: [INAUDIBLE]

CANTOR: In all the wrong calls —

MORALES: Yeah.

CANTOR: — any national team can say, “Hey, if you do this for the US, why don’t you do it for us,” unfortunately.

MORALES: Well, to be continued on that.