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Marciniak to keep Champions League final role after apologising for attending far-right rally

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June 3 – UEFA is keeping Szymon Marciniak as the referee for the Champions League final between Manchester City and Inter Milan after he apologised for his appearance at a conference in Poland organised by a far-right politician.

Marciniak said he was “gravely misled” and distanced himself from the conference, but not from Slawomir Mentzen, a leader of the populist Konfederacja (Confederation) party which has been accused of promoting antisemitic, sexist and homophobic views.

In a statement, Marciniak said he distanced himself from racism, antisemitism and intolerance.

“Upon reflection and further investigation, it has become evident that I was gravely misled and completely unaware of the true nature and affiliations of the event in question. I had no knowledge that it was associated with a Polish extreme-right movement,” he said.

“Had I been aware of this fact, I would have categorically declined the invitation. It is important to understand that the values promoted by this movement are entirely contrary to my personal beliefs and the principles I strive to uphold in my life. I am deeply remorseful for any perception that my participation may have contradicted them.”

UEFA had opened an investigation after rights group Never Again said Marciniak “reportedly promoted and participated in a recent event organized by a Polish far-right leader Slawomir Mentzen.”

“We are shocked and appalled by Marciniak’s public association with Mentzen and his brand of toxic far-right politics,” Never Again co-founder Rafal Pankowski said.. “It is incompatible with the basic values of fair play such as equality and respect.”

UEFA had said that “the whole football community abhor the ‘values’ that are promoted by the group in question and takes these allegations very seriously.”

But following the referee’s apology UEFA said they will retain him for the Champions League final on June 10 in Istanbul. In December, Marciniak also led the World Cup final between France and Argentina in Lusail, Qatar.

FARE network chairman John Olivieira welcomed UEFA’s “swift consideration” and “resolution” as well as the referee’s apology. He said: “We thank our colleagues Never Again in Poland for their vigilance. We deplore any threats to them or attempts to discredit them as a consequence of their work.”

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