



**2<sup>ND</sup> RGNUL SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT LAW NATIONAL MEDIATION COMPETITION**  
**06-08 MARCH 2020**

**QUARTER-FINALS\***

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

FC Cadillac is an Indian professional football club based in Goa that competes in the Indian Super League which is a professional football league that is conducted under the aegis of the All India Football Federation (“AIFF”). The club was launched on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014 and represents Goa, which is the only state or union territory to declare football as its official sport. FC Cadillac have never won the Indian Super League but have made the finals of the tournament three times. FC Cadillac have a reputation of being one of the most attack-oriented teams in the League which has also proved to be the ultimate downfall of the team in their three finals appearances.

John Centineo is a former footballer turned coach who made a number of appearances in the 1980s for various teams in the third and fourth tier of English football. He played primarily as a defensive midfielder and was considered as a role player with dangerous physical ability. Shortly following his retirement in the year 1989, he decided to take up his coaching badges and 8 years later, he took charge of the Tranmere Rovers FC for his first stint as a coach. Ever since then, he’s coached teams all across Europe primarily in the lower divisions. He developed a reputation as a man with a strong defensive mindset in his football philosophy and the ability to improve the conditioning of the teams he coached.

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## **DISPUTE FACTS**

Following their loss in the finals of the 2018-19 edition of the Indian Super League, the coach of FC Cadillac – Mr. Ralf Ragnick – decided to move on back to his homeland of Germany leaving the management of FC Cadillac on the lookout for a new coach. After many weeks of scouting and internal discussions, the representatives of Mr. Centineo were contacted in order to discuss a potential new opportunity and challenge for him to tackle in the Indian Super League.

Mr. Centineo had only ever managed an Asian team once before which was a three-year stint at New Radiant Sports Club until 2012. The experience left Mr. Centineo with a hunger to spend more time with Asian teams and he was therefore delighted to receive word that an Indian team was looking at him as an option. He agreed to meet with FC Cadillac's management team to discuss the possibility of a stint as coach of the team.

Over the course of three weeks and multiple meetings, various essential terms were discussed including the broader plan for the team going forward. The Board of FC Cadillac were desperate to create a specific organic culture within the team that could withstand changing personnel and be self-sustaining for consistent positive results in the League. Looking at the models created around the world by successful clubs, the Board of FC Cadillac were further adamant that the coach undertake a larger role in the administration of the youth academy of the club along with the scouting network expansion and so on.

All of these details were discussed at length with Mr. Centineo and his representatives. Mr. Centineo was quick to ensure that a few of his own personal conditions were fulfilled as well as he wanted his family to move to India with him for the period of his tenure as coach and he wanted the club to make that transition as smooth as possible.

2 months before the start of the 2019-20 season, Mr. Centineo was announced as the new coach of FC Cadillac with announcements across all the social media handles of the club. The fans of the club and the league were excited for what the club described as *"the dawning of a new era at FC Cadillac."* The club began the season with aplomb winning 5 of their first 7 league games. The impact of the coach was evident with the dramatic defensive shift that the team was putting in while noticing up 5 clean sheets in these 7 games.

Behind the scenes however, there were certain tensions that had begun to rise as Mr. Centineo's family had not yet gotten clearance to travel to India and be with him. Immediately following the 7<sup>th</sup> game of the season, Mr. Centineo received word that the visa request for his family had been denied as a result of the lack of formality clearance by the management at FC Cadillac and therefore the process would have to be reinitiated from scratch. This left the coach in an incredibly conflicted situation as he was enjoying the start to this new job of his, but it was absolutely essential to his peace of mind that his family be with him.

The next day, he approached the CEO of FC Cadillac to have a discussion with him regarding the same, but the CEO refused to meet with him. This went on for a week with a whole array of excuses which infuriated Mr. Centineo as it was the CEO who had assured him that all appropriate arrangements would be made for his family. Angered by the attitude of the CEO and his refusal to meet to discuss a pressing issue, Mr. Centineo vowed to catch his attention.

The following week in practice was as rigorous as it had ever been in the history of the club. The players were put through 4 sessions a day and were left tired and sore without exception. FC Cadillac lost its next three games in the league by ridiculous margins with pundits criticizing the training regimes that had sucked the life out of the players. In the course of three games, 6 separate players had been ruled out of the rest of the season with muscular injuries.

The management of the club made a swift decision and a few hours following the third loss, Mr. Centineo's was sent a notice for breach of contract with the club demanding his resignation and damages for the injuries caused to the players as well as the club's reputation. Before, the matter could escalate further, Mr. Centineo's agent suggested that the parties attempt to mediate the issue.