



## FOOTBALL DURING A PANDEMIC – THE LAST HOLDOUTS AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

As the global game and world at large has come to an effective standstill during the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the current coronavirus football situation has led the football community to slowly come to terms with dealing with the effects of it. From closed door games, to cancellations, to dealing with the financial impact to clubs and players... day by day, measures are updated to best manage the situation for all involved.

However, in a limited number of countries, not all has come to a stop. It is a situation that is ever changing, but game of football has not come to a complete stop, with the flame of the game been kept lit in it's last remaining outposts. Some such as **Western Sahara football** are always under trying times, in the current coronavirus football landscape, some as Turkey and Australia held on until cancellations were unavoidable, while in other corners or the globe, the games continue.

### Current Leagues

#### Belarus

The most consistent of these has been the Belorussian league, maintaining a full schedule behind closed doors from their March season start, including Champions League regulars BATA Borisov.

However as the **BBC reports** there is growing pressure from supporter groups to boycott games, in spite of president Lukashenko's resistance to disruption at this time, though no cancellations seem to be on the horizon in Belarus. Despite this, Fifpro and it's general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann have condemned the continuation of the league, saying,

*"It is frankly not comprehensible how this could be going on"*

On the field however, the surprise of the early stages has been two defeats from two for BATE. This leaves BATE to sit level bottom of the table. At the top 4 teams have made perfect starts with Minsk and Energetyk-BGU level on top on goal difference as the early pacemakers.

#### Slavia Mazyr v BATE

#### Minsk Derby

#### Neman v Vitebsk

☐☐ Belarus League Table

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	G	P
1	BATE	11	8	2	1	23	10	+13	25
2	Torpedo BelAZ	12	6	2	4	16	10	+6	22

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	G	P
3	Energetyk-BGU	11	7	1	3	13	4	22	
4	Shakhtyor	11	6	3	2	16	3	+13	21
5	Dinamo Brest	12	6	1	5	23	15	+8	19
6	Slutsk	12	5	3	4	17	17	+0	18
7	Neman Grodno	11	5	2	4	17	13	+4	17
8	Isloch	12	5	1	6	13	17	-4	16
9	Slavia	12	4	3	5	15	20	-5	15
10	Ruh Brest	12	3	6	3	10	11	-1	15
11	Vitebsk	11	3	5	3	11	13	-2	14
12	Minsk	10	4	1	5	14	22	-8	13
13	Dinamo Minsk	11	4	1	6	13	12	+1	13
14	Gorodeya	12	3	3	6	17	9	-9	12
15	Smolevichy-STI	11	1	4	6	11	17	-6	7
16	Belshina	11	0	3	8	23	14	-14	

### Nicaragua

The sole league continuing in the Americas is that of Nicaragua, currently in its Apertura phase of the 2019/20 season. However with case of Corona virus being confirmed in the county, [The Guardian](#) has reported 3rd placed Diriangén has expressed a wish to suspend the league, with fears among there players and staff of the current situation. However with government pressure to fulfill fixtures, and with their funding influence among a majority of teams in the league, no stoppage seems imminent.

In contrast there are opposers of the current situation. The league running as usual is seen as a platform for president Daniel Ortega's domestic display of stability and normality. In this environment, he is unlikely to accept dissenting voices from clubs. Clubs have raised occasional concerns by some such as Real Madriz, but such comments are quickly retracted. On the field Managua from the capital sit two points clear at the top of the table. They lead from Real Estelí, who defeated them after extra time in the 2nd of a two legged Apertura final in December.

### Real Madriz FC v CD Ocotol

### CD Ocotol v Real Estelí FC

### JuventusFC v CD Walter Ferretti

☐☐Nicaragua Campeonato Nacional

#TeamMPWDLFAGP

### Burundi

In contrast to other countries which continue, there is a great appreciation for the scale of the Coronavirus pandemic. With just now the first two officially confirmed cases in the country, no reason has been found to cancel regular events such as church mass, or football games, though it is now in question. Also, on what current coronavirus football measures can be taken. For instance, they refused to select European based players for national duty. This whilst international fixtures were still possible and were among the first calling on CAF to suspend such fixtures.

As such, the league, as the country as a whole runs in isolation to the outside footballing community. Therefore, Aigle Noir are now certain to cede their title won last season, the first in the clubs history. With only four game weeks remaining, Le Messenger have played one game extra, to sit 4 points clear from

Musongati. The league now looks set to go down to the wire.

### Vitol'0 Fc v Musongati

### Athletico Academy v Aigle Noir

### Inter Star Vs Buja City

🇸🇩 Burundi Premier League

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	G	P
1	Le Messenger Ngozi	28	16	1	0	2	45	16	29
2	Musongati	28	15	1	0	3	42	22	20
3	Aigle Noir	28	11	9	8	4	43	36	8
4	Dynamik	28	11	9	8	2	26	22	4
5	Flambeau du Centre	28	11	9	8	3	36	37	1
6	Vital'0	28	11	8	9	3	36	29	7
7	Bujumbura City	28	11	7	10	4	23	33	9
8	Inter Star	28	9	11	8	2	28	27	1
9	Rukinzo	28	10	8	10	3	7	39	2
10	Olympic Star	28	10	6	12	4	7	44	3
11	Kayanza United	28	9	9	10	3	23	35	3
12	Bumamuru	28	9	8	11	3	8	34	4
13	Athlético Olympic	28	9	8	11	4	2	42	3
14	Lydia Ludic	28	7	8	13	1	8	38	20
15	Ngozi City	28	6	4	18	2	5	53	28
16	Les Lierres	28	6	2	20	2	4	58	34

### Turkmenistan

The Turkmenistan football league calendar kicked off as usual on March 6th. While Köpetdag Ashgabat were the dominant force post independence, recent seasons have seen success be in the hands of city rivals Altyn Asyr, winning all titles from 2014-2019. Most often runners up in this time is Ahal, based in Anau, outside the main and some 15km from the Ashgabat Stadium which they share. However yet again in 2020, it seems these two will be those fighting once again for the title.

**\*Update 1-6-20** – Thanks to the work of the people of the Russian “[Other Football](#)” news site, match footage was been captured, including full games, so be sure to check their site for the very latest updates on the 2020 Ýokary Liga.

### 🇸🇩 Turkmenistan League Fixtures

June 7, 2020

Energetik 13:15 Ahal

Nebitçi 13:30 Merw

Köpetdag Aşgabat 14:00 Şagadam

June 12, 2020

Altyn Asyr 10:00 Nebitçi

June 13, 2020

Ahal 10:00 Aşgabat

Merw 10:00 Köpetdag Aşgabat

Şagadam 10:00 Energetik

June 17, 2020

Altyn Asyr 13:00 Şagadam

Aşgabat 13:00 Ahal

### Leagues To Come

## Tajikistan

A new contender to this list though will be that of Tajikistan which has confirmed it plans to play it's season curtain raising Super Cup as planned, albeit behind closed doors. With zero local confirmed cases of Coronavirus, it has been deemed there is no coronavirus football schedule changes. On March 31st Istaravshan heavily defeated league rivals Isfara 6-0 in a pre-season friendly, signalling their intent for the campaign. This gives good preparation for their season opener against Khatlon on Sunday April 5th. However Sunday's opening round of league fixtures will be pre-empted by the curtain raising Tajik Super Cup on Saturday with defending league/cup champions Istiqlol, playing the league runners up Hujand



Istaravshan 6-0

Isfara –@rasulovjr23

### 🇹🇯 Tajikistan League Fixtures

May 2, 2020

CSKA Pomir	12:00	Fayzkand
Istaravshan	12:00	Khujand
Khatlon	12:00	Dushanbe-83

May 3, 2020

Regar-TadAZ	12:00	Istiqlol
Kuktosh	12:00	Lokomotive Pamir

May 9, 2020

CSKA Pomir	12:00	Khatlon
Fayzkand	12:00	Khujand
Lokomotive Pamir	12:00	Regar-TadAZ

May 10, 2020

Dushanbe-83	12:00	Kuktosh
Istiqlol	12:00	Istaravshan

May 16, 2020

Kuktosh	12:00	CSKA Pomir
Istaravshan	12:00	Lokomotive Pamir
Khatlon	12:00	Fayzkand

May 17, 2020

Khujand	12:00	Istiqlol
Regar-TadAZ	12:00	Dushanbe-83

May 23, 2020

Dushanbe-83 12:00Istaravshan

Fayzkand 12:00Istiqlol

Lokomotive Pamir12:00Khujand

May 24, 2020

Khatlon 12:00Kuktosh

CSKA Pomir 12:00Regar-TadAZ

## 🇹🇼 Taiwan

The 2020 Taiwan football season will commence on April 12th. Current champions Tatung FC will look to regain their title from the 2019 season. In contrast to it's Asian neighbours, Taiwan has been largely unaffected by the spread of Coronavirus, with life continuing as usual for locals. For the league participants, it will be the same 8 teams from the 2019 campaign. This includes Red Lions and Ming Chuan survived relegation playoffs to retain their top flight status

### 2020 Participants

- 1 Hang Yuen
- 2 Taipei City Tatung
- 3 Taichung Futuro
- 4 Taiwan Power Company
- 5 Tainan Steel
- 6 Hasus Taiwan Sports University
- 7 Taipei Red Lions
- 8 Ming Chuan University

### Ming Chuan win playoff

☐☐Taiwan League Table

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	G	P
1	Taipower	14	11	2	1	34	6	+28	35
2	Tatung	14	11	2	1	29	6	+23	35
3	NTPCE	14	10	0	4	32	8	+24	30
4	I Shou University	14	6	1	7	21	31	-10	19
5	Hun Sing	14	4	6	4	13	20	-7	16
6	NSTC	14	3	2	9	7	21	-14	11
7	Ming Chuan Uni...	14	3	0	11	13	23	-10	9
8	Fubon Financial	14	2	1	11	10	31	-21	7

The time we now live in with coronavirus football 'chaos' now being the norm, is a tough adjustment. While many clubs and associations adjust for financial realities without the game, others persevere. Though it presents difficult times, the game has gone largely quiet. Some remain, but at what cost, time will tell.



## MATCH REPORT : QATAR 1-0 ANDORRA

A curious fixture took place at the English FA's National Football Centre at St. Georges Park on Wednesday as 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar faced Andorra,

with both teams using the occasion to prepare for their respective upcoming World Cup qualifying games.

**Result – Qatar 1-0 Andorra (Asad, '73)**

Both coaches took the opportunity to use this friendly as an exercise to give squad players some game time ahead of upcoming competitive fixtures. For Qatar this was the final part of a three game tour for new coach Felix Sanchez (The third manager in twelve months) who was promoted from his position with the u-23 at the beginning of July to take the reigns following the sudden departure of Jorge Fossati following disagreements over squad recruitment with the Qatari FA.

### **Promising Form**

Sanchez's "Al Annabi" side had faced English championship opposition in their two previous games on this tour, recording a 2-0 win on August 9th over a Leeds United side, before losing 2-1 to a Nottingham Forest side 2-1 on August 13th, with the sole Qatari goal coming from Ismaeel Mohammad. On Wednesday they looked to bounce back against international opposition, facing Andorra ahead of crucial World Cup qualifiers ahead.

Andorra for their part had been on a remarkable run of form, with no goals conceded since last November, in a total of 342 playing minutes over 277 days. This run was highlighted with wins over San Marino and an impressive competitive qualifier victory against Hungary at home to add to a point from a 0-0 against the Faroe Islands in their preceding qualifier.

### **The Second Half Show**

A sparse crowd was on hand to see Qatar eventually come out as 1-0 winners, with Ali Asad (Ali Asadallah) scoring after 78 minutes from a well worked move down the left hand side, with Abdul Karim Ali laying the ball off to Akram Afif who found Asad in space 12 yards out to receive a well played pass from the byline and slot the ball into the bottom right hand corner of the goal.

It perhaps could have been more, had Andorran keeper Jose Antonio Gomes not excellently tipped a 25 yard thunderbolt onto the crossbar and out to safety. However this attacking action was confined to the second half, whilst Andorra created little in an attacking sense themselves throughout. Tensions spilled over as Sergio Moreno made a dangerous knee high, studs showing challenge during time added on, which saw him sit out the final moments of the game.



A post shared by Qatar football (@qfa) on Aug 16, 2017  
at 12:32pm PDT

However following their victory, Qatar's feelings of the game were reflected by Afif who was very pleased with the result, tweeting.

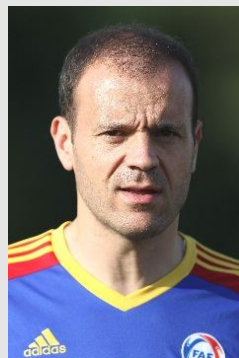
*Well done ☺☺ congratulations for us not easy game but the most important is to win and to play good & we did it ☺.*

[pic.twitter.com/EZzQkoM64N](https://pic.twitter.com/EZzQkoM64N)

– Akram Afif 🇶🇦 🇶🇦 (@akramafif\_) August 16, 2017

### **Moving Forward to Qualifiers**

This game provided a useful opportunity for player experimentation for both coaches, particularly with a raft of change being made during this game as both teams prepare for higher profile games. Andorran coach Koldo will lead his team into two home qualifiers against Switzerland (August 31st) and the Faroe Islands (September 3rd) whilst Qatar have a final warm up friendly, home against Turkmenistan on August 23rd before crucial World Cup qualifiers against Syria (August 31st) and China on September 5th as they look to keep their slim hopes of World Cup qualification alive.



Lima-107 Caps

### **Ildefons Lima – Record Andorra International caps (107)**

A final note from this game was that Ildefons Lima, the longtime Andorran football servant and captain reached 107 international caps to become his countries record appearance holder, overtaking long time teammate Óscar Sonejee.

Aside from Andorra's goal finally being breached, there is little to take from this game, other than a chance to give squad players game time before more important games to come where both teams will be eyeing more significant results in what has already been quite impressive qualifying campaigns.

### **Next Fixtures –**

- ☐☐ **Qatar** – (H) Turkmenistan, August 23rd
- ☐☐ **Andorra** – (H) Switzerland, August 31st



## **MATCH REPORT : SAN MARINO 0-2 ANDORRA**

**Andorra have claimed their first victory since 2004, winning out away to San Marino in a friendly played in tricky weather conditions under poor visibility at what became a very foggy Stadio Olimpico in Serravalle.**

Goals from an Ildefons Lima first half penalty and Cristian Martinez after the break helped Andorra win against San Marino in a very accomplished 2-0 victory, ending a streak of 86 win-less games. This dates back to a world cup qualifier in October 2004, at home to Macedonia, with Marc Pujol and current coach Koldo surviving from that lineup to celebrate this latest victory in San Marino. Lima had added cause for celebration, with his goal extending his own record as Andorra's record goal scorer to 11 on the occasion of his 104th international cap.

### **Andorra Clinical in Front of Goal**

There could have been potential for more than the two goals from this game, though an extremely thick fog descended down over the stadium as the match progressed



making visibility conditions difficult for players and spectators alike. The clinching second goal stemmed from San Marino struggling to play out from the back in this poor visibility, with Martinez taking advantage of a moments hesitation from the centre back on the ball to steal possession before lifting the ball past Simoncini in the San Marino goal.

San Marino's defending was also in question for the opening goal of the game. A long throw in caused nervous defending in the San Marino 18 yard area, with the referee spotting a stray arm from Della Valle as he rose to meet the incoming throw, pointing to the spot with little hesitation. Elia Benedettini, in goal for San Marino for the first half, got down well, low to his right to save the initial spot kick, but Lima was quickest to react to put home the rebound. **(See Andorra v San Marino Highlights....)**

Chances were few and far between, mostly consisting of lofted crosses and hopeful balls from set pieces though San Marino did perhaps have, though rare, the better of the opportunities carving out a couple of long range efforts in the second half, though none to trouble the Andorran goal. Though let that not distract from the Andorran performance, who dominated possession throughout, and perhaps under better conditions may have been better able to extend their lead further.

#### **Manzaroli : San Marino Look to the Future**

Though San Marino coach Manzaroli was disappointed after the game, he spoke of using this result as a learning experience for his players, in a game where both teams used their full allotted six substitutions, going on to say of his team...

*"betrayed by the level of desire to get a result..We have to grow a lot"*

Thus San Marino continue to seek their first win since a 1-0 friendly victory over Liechtenstein in 2004. However for Andorra football, the future holds promise as they now move ahead of San Marino in the world rankings, and can now look to their next competitive fixture, a world cup qualifier against the Faroe Islands, with a degree of confidence. This follows on from a friendly draw away to Azerbaijan last summer, so this latest Andorran win can only boost their hopes of picking up a first competitive point of this campaign.

A post shared by Champions League (@omnisport) on Feb 22, 2017 at 11:45am PST

Andorra are next in action on March 25th at home to the Faroe Islands in a World Cup qualifying fixture, while San Marino host the Czech Republic, also in a qualifier on the following day, March 26th in Serravalle.

#### **San Marino – Andorra : Match Stats**

**Result** – 🇸🇲 San Marino 0-2 Andorra 🇦🇩 (Lima '27, Martinez '65)

**Cards** – 🇸🇲 1 🇦🇩 1 – Vieira '39

**Referee:** 🇮🇹 Irrati

🇸🇲 **San Marino** (4-4-2) Benedettini (Simoncini '45), D'Addario (72 Rinaldi), Della Valle, Simoncini (Hirsch '85), Palazzi, Lunadei (Tosi '45), Golinucci (Golinucci A. '45), Domeniconi, Zafferani (Tomassini '63), Vitaioli, Stefanelli.

Subs not used: *Muraccini, Cesarini, Brolli, Bonini, Selva, Battistini.*

Coach – *Pier Angelo Manzaroli.*

🇦🇩 **Andorra** (4-4-2) Pol, Martinez (Clemente '78), Vales, Lima, Pujol (Josep Garcia '82), Viera, Martinez (Alaez '57), Llovera (Rodriguez '89), Renom (San Nicolas '67), Rodriguez (Moreno '75), Rubio.

Sub not used: *Gomez*

Coach – *De Eulate*

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## CONIFA 2017 EURO CUP : DETAILS ANNOUNCED

Following the CONIFA Annual General Meeting held in Geneva, details were revealed for the upcoming 2017 CONIFA European Football Cup.

The tournament is due to be held in **Northern Cyprus** during the dates of the **4th – 11th June**. It will be an eight team tournament with familiar sides returning to compete in the second installment of CONIFA'S European competition.

### 2017 CONIFA European Football Cup Participants

The teams to compete at the 2017 CONIFA European Football Cup will be: hosts Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia, County of Nice, Ellan Vannin, Karpatalya, Padania, Sapmi, Székely Land.

There is strong pedigree in this lineup with Northern Cyprus previously winning the 2006 FIFI Wild Cup and 2006 ELF Cup (ran in opposition to the NF-Board organised VIVA world cup that year). Both County of Nice and just last year Abkhazia have won the CONIFA Football World Cup, whilst Sápmi and, on multiple occasions, Padania have won the VIVA World Cup. Padania are also reigning European champions following their victory in 2015 edition. Ellan Vannin finish 3rd in that same competition, which was host by Székely Land, who will be both returning for this edition along with a debuting Karpatalya (Hungarians in Ukraine) creating a very competitive lineup of teams, which is sure to produce an exciting, open tournament. Speaking on the official announcement of the tournament lineup, General Secretary Per-Anders Blind said,

*"The 2017 European Football Cup will bring together some of our best teams for what promises to be an exciting week of competition,...The CONIFA family is looking forward to our visit in June!"*

The exact details are yet to be confirmed, the venues for these matches are likely to mirror those used during the 2006 ELF cup with the Atatürk Stadium in North Nicosia being the premier stadium in the region with a capacity of up to 28,000. Also likely venues are the 20 Temmuz Stadium, Dr. Fazıl Küçük Stadium in Famagusta, home of the 15/16 league champions Mağusa Türk Gücü S.K and Zafer Stadium in Morphou (Güzelyurt/Omorfo). Speaking on hosting the tournament, Northern Cyprus KTF representative Orcun Kamali said,



Ataturk Stadium

*“Northern Cyprus has a proud football history. We have a strong semi-professional league on the island, and our national team finished third in the last CONIFA tournament. The decision to host the 2017 European Football Cup was an easy one.”*

#### **Western Armenia Team Withdraw**

A notable absentee will be the side from Western Armenia who recorded a record 12-0 versus the Chagos Islands in the 2016 World Football Cup en route to 6th place finish. **According to Asbarez**, ConIFA Vice-President Dimitri Pagava, Western Armenia would not compete due to a lack of guarantees in relation to their security during any potential participation. There are historical tensions between Armenia and Turkey in relation to the area of Western Armenia, located in modern day Western Turkey. With issues around the ethnic Turkish majority in Northern Cyprus following the fallout of a 1974 Turkish invasion of the island of Cyprus, Western Armenia chose not to be involved in this tournament citing the aforementioned security concerns.

#### **Skåneland Join CONIFA**

Also announced at the General Meeting was the introduction of the newest member to CONIFA, Skåneland, a region in southern Sweden. It previously played one game whilst a member of the NF-Board, a 0-0 draw against Southern Schleswig. Hopes for Skåneland's admission seem to be not separate by any means but rather for regional recognition, particularly for the Scanian dialect with calls to see it accepted as a minority language rather than a dialect.

More details will follow as CONIFA makes official announcements from their General Meeting, but for now the details for the 2017 European Football Cup make 2017 an exciting year for the Non-FIFA Football community.

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## FOLGORE CAPTURE SAN MARINO TITLE

S.S Folgore/Falciano were able to celebrate this past weekend as they secured their first championship victory in fifteen years following an extremely closely contested league final against Juvenes/Dogana.

Folgore, having struggled through the playoffs heading into this final perhaps feared the worst when Lorenzo Gasperoni opened the scoring for Juvenes after 24 minutes, heading in a Mirko Mantovani cross from the edge of the six yard box somewhat against the run of play.

As the first half progressed, Folgore continued to enjoy the better of the chances with keeper Mattia Manzaroli being called into action from a number of long range efforts, before watching a Fabio Bollini effort hitting the Juvenes crossbar after controlling well from a throw in to the box before unleashing a rasping effort on the turn which deserved better. However after 43 minutes, Folgore were rewarded for their persistence when Francesco Perotta tapped in from close range after a brief goal-line scramble for his 8th goal of the campaign to deservedly leave the sides level entering the half time break.

The second half continued in much a similar fashion to the first with both sides creating many half chances, though with neither side ever taking control of the tie as the 1-1 score looked set to remain at the end of 90 minutes, unless one side was given a guilt edge opportunity to change this.

This opportunity and tipping point of the tie came after 85 minutes when after a cross across the edge of the Juvenes box, Nicola Canini dove into a rash tackle to receive his marching orders for a second bookable offence, leaving Folgore a man up and free kick in prime territory. The resulting free kick was well put away by Manuel Muccini through the Juvenes wall in to the bottom corner to keeper Manzaroli's left, leaving Folgore 2-1 ahead with three minutes remaining.

As Juvenes began to push forward chasing the game, they left ever increasing gaps at the back, which was exploited as the clock ticked to 90 minutes as after a quick interception and break from Folgore, Perotta was let in between the two centre backs, one on one with Manzaroli who he calmly beat with a lofted chip over the stranded keepers head to seal the result and send the Folgore faithful into raptures. (A celebration for which Perotta was booked, but certainly didn't matter in the grander scheme of things!)

In a touching moment during the celebrations, the Folgore players wore shirts dedicating their victory to club Physiotherapist Umberto Allasia who was hospitalised in Cesena prior to the game. All that was left was for the team to lift the clubs 4th nation championship in total to complete the double of league and maiden cup victories this season.

Now Folgore can look forward to a place in next years Champions League qualifying following their great domestic success this season.