



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	Energetyk-BGU	11	7	1	3	13	4	+9	22

#	Team	MPWDL	F	A	G	P
3	Torpedo BelAZ	11632159	+6	21		
4	Shakhtyor	11632163	+13	21		
5	Slutsk	115241616+0		17		
6	Dinamo Brest	115151714+3		16		
7	Isloch	115061216-4		15		
8	Slavia	114341417-3		15		
9	Ruh Brest	113539	10-1	14		
10	Neman Grodno	104241412+2		14		
11	Vitebsk	113531113-2		14		
12	Minsk	9	4141316-3	13		
13	Dinamo Minsk	114161312+1		13		
14	Gorodeya	113357	13-6	12		
15	Smolevichy-STI	100467	16-9	4		
16	Belshina	110389	23-14	3		

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	10	2	45	16	+29	58
2	Musongati	28	15	10	3	42	22	+20	55
3	Aigle Noir	28	11	9	8	44	36	+8	42
4	Dynamik	28	11	9	8	26	22	+4	42
5	Flambeau du Centre	28	11	9	8	36	37	-1	42
6	Vital'0	28	11	8	9	36	29	+7	41
7	Bujumbura City	28	11	7	10	42	33	+9	40
8	Inter Star	28	9	11	8	28	27	+1	38
9	Rukinzo	28	10	8	10	37	39	-2	38
10	Olympic Star	28	10	6	12	47	44	+3	36
11	Kayanza United	28	9	9	10	32	35	-3	36
12	Bumamuru	28	9	8	11	38	34	+4	35
13	Athlético Olympic	28	9	8	11	45	42	+3	35
14	Lydia Ludic	28	7	8	13	18	38	-20	29
15	Ngozi City	28	6	4	18	25	53	-28	22
16	Les Lierres	28	6	2	20	24	58	-34	20

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 6, 2020

Aşgabat 10:00 Altyn Asyr

June 7, 2020

Energetik 10:00 Ahal

Nebitçi 10:00 Merw

Köpetdag Aşgabat 10:00 Şagadam

June 12, 2020

Altyn Asyr 10:00 Nebitçi

June 13, 2020

Merw 10:00 Köpetdag Aşgabat

Ahal 10:00 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	M	P	W	D	L	F	A	G	P
1	Taipower	14	1	12	1	1	34	6	+28	35
2	Tatung	14	1	12	1	1	29	6	+23	35
3	NTPCE	14	1	0	4	9	32	8	+24	30
4	I Shou University	14	6	17	2	13	1-10	19		
5	Hun Sing	14	4	6	13	20	-7	16		
6	NSTC	14	3	29	7	21	-14	11		
7	Ming Chuan Uni...	14	3	0	11	11	134	-239		
8	Fubon Financial	14	2	11	11	0	31	-217		

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.