

MANCINI READY TO PLAY EUROS IN 2021

Italy coach Roberto Mancini said Sunday he was ready for the European Championship to be postponed until 2021 amid the coronavirus pandemic. “We would have won the European Championship this summer, we can also win it in 2021,” Mancini told Italian television station Rai Sport. “Let’s wait to see what UEFA decides, but I adapt to everything, right now the priority is to save lives.” European football’s governing body meet on Tuesday to discuss all domestic and European competitions, as well as Euro 2020, which is due to take place from June 12 to July 12. Italy are set to host the opening match in Rome on June 12, in a tournament which will be played in 12 countries across the continent. All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3 to avoid the spread of the virus which has killed 1,809 and infected over 24,000.

--AFP



Gremio players wore protective masks to the field for their match against Sao Luiz in Porto Alegre on March 15, a day before the Brazilian Football Confederation suspended all football competitions in the country in the wake of the spread of coronavirus. Meanwhile, (bottom) with all football matches suspended in Europe’s top leagues, stars such as Luis Suarez, Neymar, Paulo Dybala and Robert Lewandowski were spending time working out or in company of their members and posting those pictures on social media.

PHOTO: AFP/INSTAGRAM

Players try to fill the ‘big void’

AFP, Paris

Mowing the lawn, playing football with your dog, turning on the TV... footballers around Europe are struggling to fill the “big void” created by the coronavirus shutdown.

Many are writing about the unfamiliar experience on social media. Some have already come to the conclusion that “there is nothing to do”.

Real Madrid players, forced into quarantine by a case of coronavirus in the club’s basketball squad, have been training at home, where most of them already had facilities and equipment.

Captain Sergio Ramos posted a video on Instagram showing him

sprinting on a treadmill.

Marco Asensio, who suffered a knee injury last summer, posted a video showing that he was continuing his recovery programme in his garden.

But even for sportsmen used to working out, there is a limit.

“I’m here, in my garden, there’s nothing to do,” French striker Karim Benzema said in a video on social media where he appeared alongside his dog, earning him a comparison with Will Smith in the post-apocalyptic film “I am legend”.

Fabien Causeur, a Real Madrid basketball guard, has launched a live video channel to show his quarantine challenge.

He has been taking on athletes

and celebrities in three-minute simultaneous exercise including Thibaut Courtois, the Real Madrid goalkeeper, and NBA star and former Real Madrid teammate Luka Doncic.

At Barcelona, players are following a “specific and personalised” programme set by the club which is monitoring their efforts remotely using biometric tags.

Luis Suarez had been a step ahead of Ramos, posting a video of himself trudging on a treadmill last week.

In Italy, Juventus midfielder Douglas Costa filmed himself practising his dribbling in his back garden with his dog struggling to fill the role of defender.

Alexis Sanchez, on loan to Inter Milan, has two golden retrievers and a much bigger garden but he comfortably outplayed them in a video he put up online. He also posted photos of himself topless, gathering chopped wood.

Jessica Melena, the wife of Ciro Immobile posted a cookery video on Instagram, showing the Lazio striker waving a spatula and mixing a cake while she coached him.

Immobile posted his own video in which he juggled furry toys with his feet.

Napoli’s Belgian forward Dries Mertens posted pictures of a work out with a huge bottle of red wine.

In France, Strasbourg midfielder Adrien Thomasson, was looking ahead to another empty week.

“We’ll have nothing to do, in the middle of the season, it’s never happened before. Our habits have been turned upside down,” he said.

Thomasson is a ski fan but as other sports are also at a standstill that leaves a “big void” for this ski lover.

“I’m going to watch series, movies, it’s going to be really limited.”

Television is also the refuge for James Lea Siliki, a Rennes midfielder, who tweeted the times of a couple of French quiz shows. Later he admitted a passion for a French TV karaoke show adding “I’ll spare you my voice”.

Romain Thomas, a defender at Angers, said his daily routine involved jogging, gardening and watching French reality TV.

Mason Mount plays in park defying self-isolation

REUTERS, Undated

Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount was spotted playing at a football park along with West Ham’s Declan Rice on Sunday, defying the club’s self-isolation protocols which came into place last week.

Chelsea’s first-team players and coaching staff are all in self-isolation after winger Callum Hudson-Odoi tested positive for the coronavirus last week.

The Mirror reported that Mount and Rice, both England internationals, were playing a five-a-side game at the Trent Park Football centre near Barnet.

It is understood that Chelsea players have been reminded about the self-isolation protocols and they are expected to resume training only when they are out of isolation on March 22-23.

West Ham said last week that some club personnel are self-isolating after making direct contact with Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta -- who also tested positive for the virus -- but the players were not self-isolating.

The Premier League has been suspended until April 4 due to the coronavirus pandemic which has been responsible for an unprecedented shutdown of world sport.

Globally, the coronavirus has infected more than 170,000 people and over 6,500 have died. The United Kingdom has nearly 1,400 cases with 35 deaths.

‘Win against Kings not a fluke’

SPORTS REPORTER



Before the start of the 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in the middle of January, prediction from most coaches was that a tough league was ahead of them. And after the end of the seventh round of matches, the 13-team BPL table is reflecting the forecast, with half the teams in title race with a difference of only three points among them.

After the sixth-round matches of last season, only three teams -- Bashundhara Kings, Abahani and Sheikh Russel KC -- remained in the title race with 16, 15 and 14 points respectively. However, this time around Chattogram Abahani have completely changed the scenario by taming all four former champions including holders Bashundhara Kings, whom they handed a 4-3 defeat despite conceding a 3-0 lead in Nilphamari on Sunday.

Chattogram Abahani coach Maruful Haque believes the fightback was not a fluke, instead they deserved to win the match.

“This team (Chattogram Abahani) has so much depth, and it was not a fluke as it happened frequently with us,” said the country’s lone UEFA A licenced coach yesterday.

“The players are being prepared that way for the rest of the season even though coaching method is not always everything. The players have to play an important role and all the credit goes to them, who put up such a never-say-die attitude in the match,” said Maruful, who guided Sheikh Russel KC to a rare treble in the 2012-13 season.

“When I work at any club, I also work with the players’ mental strength and approach apart from the physical and technical aspects,” added Maruful.

Describing the match against Bashundhara Kings, Maruful said, “We were

not in a situation to concede two goals, especially with the way we played and created more chances than Bashundhara. I usually bring tactical changes or brief players about tactical aspects during intervals if needed, but yesterday [Sunday], I just told them that they had good depth to deal with the situation and that they needed to apply things they do in practice. I told them they could even score four goals.”

Beating six-time champions Abahani 2-0 in the previous match might have played a big role in boosting Chattogram Abahani, but Maruful believes the motivation lay on their target of winning all trophies.

“We are hopeful that we can stay in the race and the gap in points between the top teams will be further less as the league progresses,” the coach said.

Bashundhara Kings coach Oscar Bruzon is also optimistic about staying in the title race despite back-to-back defeats against Mohammedan and Chattogram Abahani.

Bruzon said that the loss against Chattogram Abahani was a result of playing a number of games, injury problems and poor performances from the substitute players.

“[it was] an accumulation of games and injuries, poor performance from the substitute players, a collapse in midfield after the small knee problem to Baktyiar (Duyshobekov). And in general, we are badly missing players like Emon Babu, Sushanto Tripura, Mashuk Mia Zony, Matin Mia [who are nursing injuries] and Hernan Barcos [not eligible for the first phase of BPL].”

“Currently the team is lacking a striker and suffering from hectic schedule from the end of 2019. The team is much better than the last two results suggest,” said Bruzon.

“We hope the five key players recover quickly so that the team will get a big benefit,” concluded the Spaniard.



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