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NATIONAL League to use EFL choice as a guide

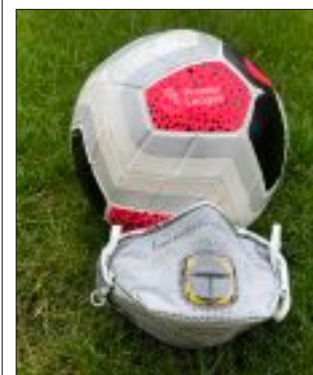


Wealdstone still do not know if they will be promoted from the National League South into the National League

Picture: MontImageMedia

Friendlies get the go-ahead

CLUBS CAN PREPARE WITH FRIENDLY MATCHES



Picture: PA Wire

CLUBS in England could be in action before the June 17 Premier League restart date, after they were given the go-ahead to organise friendlies ahead of the competition's resumption.

Top-flight action has been suspended since March due to the coronavirus pandemic, but 'Project Restart' is well under way and play is set to resume later this month.

Players stepped up from socially-distanced, small group training to contact sessions last week, with some clubs going on to take part in in-house 11-a-side matches.

It is now understood that Premier League clubs are allowed to organise friendlies at training grounds or stadiums to fine-tune ahead of the resumption of action.

The league sent guidelines to the 20 teams on Tuesday outlining restrictions, including the need for a full risk assessment to take place before matches that members of staff would have to officiate instead of referees.

Clubs are not allowed to travel more than 90 minutes for these friendly games. And players must go in their own cars as social distancing and hygiene measures are implemented.

The development will come as a surprise to some expecting intrasquad matches to be the only way to prepare in an 11-a-side match.

Liverpool and Sheffield United are among the sides to have done internal matches, with the latter increasing the workload as fitness improves.

Blades' Ben Osborn said: "I think they might be trying to (get friendlies), if it gets passed by the Premier League or Government, but at the moment we're just gearing up the minutes."

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*Source: Omniture Q3 2018

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Stones wait continues

WEALDSTONE will have to wait until at least next week before they learn about their promotion prospects, with the National League waiting for the English Football League to make a decision before it can find a suitable way to conclude its seasons.

The EFL will meet on June 8 to rubber stamp its plans for finishing its three divisions, which include relegations and promotions, and the National League are willing to wait for that outcome before deciding how to wrap up its leagues.

While it has been decided that the remainder of the National League's regular games will take place this season, the issue of promotion and relegation is one that is yet to be resolved, with Wealdstone right at the middle of it.

Currently they sit at the top of the National League South with games in hand on the teams immediately behind them.

The league have not ruled out playing playoffs behind closed doors, nor which teams would be involved in such a scenario.

By Ryan Gray

The EFL board "unanimously" agreed upon a framework at a meeting last Wednesday, but now need clubs to approve it.

The new framework was laid out on May 21, including promotion, relegation and play-offs remaining.

Teams in League Two have already indicated they wish to end the season without any relegations, but League One sides remain undecided.

Championship clubs are hoping to resume their campaign this month.

The EFL said it needed agreement before making changes, stating: "A decision on whether or not to curtail the season is a matter to be considered by clubs in any affected division, but only once a framework for resolving open issues in such circumstances has been agreed by all members across all divisions through a regulation change."

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