



To Members of the EFA

Circular No. 173

Mbabane, 24th September, 2021

Commencement and Realization of the 2021/2022 Football Season

Eswatini Football Association (EFA), would, at the inception, like to reiterate her appreciativeness to the unrelenting indulgence, cooperation and perseverance demonstrated by the EFA Members in alliance with the football communal and stakeholders, amid the tenacious contest of the COVID-19 pandemic. EFA members and partners exercised unparalleled comprehension of the dynamic and cumbersome decision-making ecosystem confronted by EFA, in regulating the practice of the football industry during such a period.

EFA, does conversely, take pleasure in the fact that some of the business of football was partially instigated during this period, in particular the accomplishment of all international football activities, the Premier League and the National First Division League, over and above various training and education workshops and courses, all of which, have guaranteed the existence of the football industry, albeit partially, owing to the restrictive effects of the Covid-19 health threat couple with EFA's commitment of placing the health of all of the participants of the game as a threshold to the execution of the football business. EFA, therefore, greatly appreciates that all competitions which were resumed in the intermediate of the Covid-19 atmosphere for the 2020/2021 football season, were successfully implemented to conclusion.

Decision on the inauguration and the implementation of the 2021/2022 football season

Pursuant to the tenacious COVID-19 pandemic, as it relates to the practice of the football industry, the Executive Committee (*in conformity with the EFA Statutes on cases of force majeure, COVID-19 being a force majeure circumstance*), through innumerable constructions engaged in deliberate extensive discussions in the domestic and international dominions, as part of EFA efforts, to judiciously scrutinize the commencement and discharge of the football practice in the forthcoming 2021/2022 football season and prospectively.

During this protracted period of extensive and exhaustive discussions, diverse circumstances have been explored, culminating to a meeting of the Executive Committee on the 22nd September 2021, wherein, after critical analyses of this *force majeure* episode of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has already consigned a superior segment of football into an unparalleled interruption, since March 2020, and its responsibility to reassure the restoration of football at all levels that have been interrupted throughout this period and the continued practice of the football business prospectively, in an optimal environment even within the Covid-19 infested environment, decided that the 2021/2021 football season competitions, commence earnestly as from the 8th October 2021 until they conclude in May/June 2022.

Staggered reintroduction of football leagues competitions across all football leagues nationwide in response to the Covid-19 evolution

The EFA Executive Committee supplementary decided that the 2021/2022 football season will commence in a staggered reintroduction of football leagues and competitions, as a response to the fundamental requirements for the instigation of football competitions across all levels and contemporary engagements with the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini on the COVID-19 evolution and mitigation strategies, on assuring an innocuous return of football. The resumption of football competitions is therefore directed to be implemented as follows:

- ⇒ The Premier League, the National First Division League and the Women Football National League were decided to commence their respective leagues' competitions for the 2021/2022 season on the weekend of the 8th/9th/10th October 2021.
- ⇒ Regional Super Leagues and other Regional leagues are decided to commence, when most probable from the 6th/7th November 2021, subject to contemporary engagements with the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini on the execution of lower leagues.
- ⇒ A direction on the implementation of youth and development competitions will be communicated in due course, considering the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic and any other impending factors.

Resolution reflections

The resolution has taken into reflection amongst others the subsequent:

- ⇒ The contemporary restrictions, as prescribed by the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, in the contest against the universal catastrophe of COVID-19, particularly the restrictions on the exercise of sport, which to this date has explicitly sanctioned football competitions at the level of the Premier League, the National First Division League, the Women Football National League and international competitions;
- ⇒ The issue of the registration of players and clubs, including the status and transfer of football players, where most significantly, a greater number of football clubs, particularly at the lower levels, could not register players in the recently concluded 2020/2021 season;
- ⇒ The indispensable extended time required the Regional Football Associations, in view of the magnitude of the number of football clubs under their membership, and the football clubs themselves requiring an extended time to organize themselves for the readiness to participate in the forthcoming 2021/2022 season, having last participated in the 2019/2020 season halted and concluded in March 2020, and without any football competitions business in the 2020/2021 football season.
- ⇒ The impact of the application of the established football vaccination strategy, especially, the time needed to execute the strategy, in relation to the commencement of the 2021/2022 season;

Consigning the health of every individual as a threshold to the practice of the football business

In all the rigorous and widespread analyses to the exercise of the 2021/2022 football season, EFA has to remain in conformity with the guiding principle of placing the health of all individuals, groups and clubs, who participate in the game of football at various levels first. This has remained the commitment of the organization, where she has also collaborated with Government in piloting a very imaginative Covid-19 vaccination vigor that can aid to reunite all football participants and stakeholders with the game of football at all levels.

Focus on the preparation for the commencement the 2021/2022 football season

Substantial efforts will now emphasize on the preparations for the commencement of the new season; 2021/2022, with the registration of football clubs and players already opened, as from the 13th September 2021, through Circular No. 172. All administrative preparatory logistics for the successful implementation of the 2021/2022 season, which include registration and licensing workshops, match officials' workshops and courses in readiness for the new season, have already commenced implementation, with some, especially those affecting the leagues to commence in October 2021, already concluded.

Engagement of respective sponsors and pertinent partners

EFA hereby directs EFA members and their respective leagues to consequently engage with their respective sponsors and pertinent partners on this development to finalize the logistics of the commencement and implementation of the 2021/2022 season. In this regard, competitions that encompass the participation of national and regional leagues, are scheduled to be introduced within the course of the implementation of the season when all leagues, applicable, have resumed.

Guide on the effect of promotions and relegations

EFA, on account of the fact that only the Premier League and the National First Division Leagues, owing to the force majeure circumstance of the Covid-19 pandemic, were implemented in the 2020/2021 football season hereby directs as follows on the subject of the structure of the leagues in the forthcoming 2021/2022 football season:

- ⇒ The Premier League relegations shall be effected as per the directives of Circular No. 163, where the bottom two (2) teams at the conclusion of the 2020/2021 season will be relegated to the National First Division League;
- ⇒ With respect to the National First Division League; the top two (2) teams at the conclusion of the 2020/2021 season will be promoted to the Premier League division, with **no relegations** effected.
- ⇒ No promotions from the Regional Super Leagues to the National First Division League will be effected.

The following factors, amongst others were considered at arriving at a decision on the structure of the leagues in the forthcoming 2021/2022 football season.

- ⇒ The Premier League is not affected by the current Covid-19 environment as the league below the Premier League, being the National First Division League was also implemented successfully and as such the normal relegations from the Premier League to the National First Division League and likewise the promotions from National First Division League to the Premier League shall apply.
- ⇒ No football competitions were implemented the Regional Football Associations.
- ⇒ The contemporary restrictions, as prescribed by the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, in the contest against the universal catastrophe of COVID-19, particularly the restrictions on the exercise of sport, which to this date has explicitly sanctioned football competitions at the level of the Premier League, the National First Division League, the Women Football National League and international competitions.
- ⇒ The Covid-19 environment is still persistent, with restrictions on playing football with fans and in open venues still prohibited. The consideration of the preservation of the current number of football teams in the event regional league football still continues to be prohibited in the light of the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic, with Regional Super Leagues competitions ordinarily in a majority of cases implemented in open venues, where there is minimal crowd control, in relation to the current Covid-19 restrictions.
- ⇒ The Premier League and National First Division league are scheduled to commence earlier, as they are already sanctioned, with the decision of the return of regional leagues still under consideration.
- ⇒ The need to assure a number of teams in the National First Division League that will assure an acceptable minimum number of matches over the course of a season, which is very critical in the development of quality players for premier league football.
- ⇒ Safeguarding of sporting merit. The very essence of the promotions and relegations is to promote teams from lower divisions through the implementation of a league competition, which unfortunately could not be the case in the recently ended 2020/2021 football season. No regional league was implemented in the 2020/2021 season, and as such no sporting merit basis to warrant a promotion to the National First Division League of the teams from the Regional Super Leagues.
- ⇒ Outstanding matches for playoffs from promotional leagues to Super Leagues at the regional associations. This in itself suggests that even the composition of the Regional Super leagues is not yet complete from the outstanding playoffs competitions as a result of the promotions that were due be implemented.

It must be stated that EFA, once the Covid-19 health threat subsides will reconstitute to revert back to the original structure of the leagues before the Covid-19 pandemic era or a desired structure of of football competitions.

Implementation of Club Licensing System and other football applicable licensing

The implementation of the club licensing system, as applicable with the various leagues countrywide in terms of the applicable club licensing regulations for the 2021/2022 football season as determined by EFA, CAF and FIFA, where applicable, remains in effect. In this regard all affected parties are expected to fully comply with the requirements of all applicable football licensing systems and regulations, as are and will be determined by pertinent authorities, with the applicable sanctions in effect in the forthcoming 2021/2022 football season.

Inauguration of the Football Covid-19 Vaccination Vigor

EFA, in an effort to expedite the resumption and the sustenance of the football industry at all levels, without inhibitions, inaugurated her Covid-19 Vaccination Vigor, dubbed,

“Tight Marking against COVID-19, VACCINATE and Relive our passion, the Football Spirit”.

In this view, EFA hereby implores her member associations, football clubs, officials and players together with the wider football community of football fans to vaccinate against the Covid-19 disease, a stance which can assist in the revival of the football business activities, more particularly the competitions and the most significantly the return of fans, who are the principal consumers of football and significant economic contributors.

In Conclusion

Further guidance and directions on the implementation of the football business in preparation for the 2021/2022 football season, particularly in the light of the contemporary engagements on the implementation of football during this persistent COVID-19 infested environment will be communicated as and when they fall due, in response to the evolution of the pandemic and any applicable pronouncements by the pertinent authorities.

Wishing every the best as they continue preparations for the commencement of the 2021/2022 football season.

Yours in Football,

Eswatini Football Association,


Frederick Mngomezulu

Chief Executive Officer



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- Executive Committee
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