

SPFL chief says it is “absolutely imperative” that Premiership season kicks off on 1 August

SPFL chief executive Neil Doncaster has said it is “absolutely imperative” the 2020/21 Scottish Premiership season kicks off on 1 August and claims that the possibility of finishing the 2019/20 season on the field was “not real.”

The SPFL released the fixtures for the 2020/21 top-flight campaign yesterday with Hibs starting at home against Kilmarnock but that could be in doubt due to legal action by Hearts and Partick Thistle who are seeking for either their relegations to be overturned or for compensation totalling £10million.



Ladbrokes Scottish Premiership – Hibernian v Livingston.
Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.
22/02/2020.

Pic shows: A hard fought 1-1 draw as Hibs play host to Livingston in the Scottish Premiership at Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

If they are successful, Scottish football will be thrown into chaos with Dundee United, Raith Rovers and Cove Rangers being denied promotion despite having won their respective leagues.

A new fixture list would be required to be produced as it is not as simple as just replacing one club with another.

Doncaster told Sky Sports: "We welcomed the decision last week that made it clear the case would be decided by the Scottish FA arbitration.

"We're committed to that process and we've instructed our lawyers to progress that as soon as possible and create as much clarity as soon as possible.

"We're planning on a 1st of August start, that's absolutely imperative. That'll be the earliest date we're allowed to get competitive games back underway. Clearly we will deal with whatever eventuality arises.

"I think it is important to note that none of this is of anyone's making. Covid-19 has come along. The suspension of the game in Scotland which started on the 13th of March, we've not been able to play games since then, there's been a complete shutdown of football and not even any contact training. It was not until last week clubs were able to return to full contact training.

"Anyone who has suggested there was an alternative that somehow we could have postponed games and get them played before the start of the next season is just not real. I think the start was vindicated, there was no alternative but to curtail season 19/20 and we're now very much looking forward to the season starting on the 1st of August."

Doncaster also confirmed the 42 member clubs would be required to pay any court expenses.

"The league is the clubs," he added. "We don't hold any reserves. All of the money that comes into the league each year after the cost of running the league are netted off, that gets distributed between the 42 members. Whatever expense, whether it comes from litigation or any other source, ultimately the cost of that will be borne by all 42 clubs.

"We're here at the pleasure of the clubs and the board. We're

servants of the board and we're here to serve the interests of all member clubs. Over 80 per cent of member clubs voted for the resolution that led to the curtailment of last season. All 12 Premiership clubs last season accepted the season needed to be brought to an end. There was no viable alternative so we are where we are and we just need to make the very best of the situation we find ourselves in.

"I think we have got an opportunity in August with so little other sport going on. Scottish football has an opportunity to be shown in its best light and we're looking forward to the return of the passion, drama and excitement that Scottish football is so renowned for."