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‘Football will never be the same’ - Messi thinks coronavirus pandemic will change the game forever

El Pais - Lionel Messi thinks football “like life, will never be the same again” as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, as the Barcelona superstar prepares to return to the field with La Liga poised to restart.

Covid-19 has killed hundreds of thousands of people around the world and caused the banning of mass gatherings in most countries, meaning football has had to take a back seat for several weeks amid the battle against the virus.

There are plans for a return to a certain normality in the coming weeks, however, with several major football leagues in Europe having either restarted or are planning to resume their 2019-20 seasons.

La Liga is scheduled to start again on June 11, with Messi’s Barcelona aiming to maintain their two-point advantage over Real Madrid at the top of the table.

However, Messi has admitted it is tricky to focus on football given the immense impact of coronavirus, speaking out about the “frustration” of being unable to save or protect loved ones, and his belief that football - as with the rest of life - will have to face up to enormous changes because of the pandemic.

Messi told El Pais: “Most of us are left with doubts about what the world is going to be like after everything that has happened. Beyond the confinement and the situation that took us by surprise, many people had a really hard time because this situation affected them in some way, as it happened with all those who lost their family and friends and could not even see them.

”I think there were a lot of negative things in this crisis, but there can be nothing worse than losing the people you love the most, that creates enormous frustration for me and seems to me the most unfair thing of all.

”Soccer, like life in general, I think will never be the same“.

Despite the immense toll the lockdown has taken mentally and physically on players, they will return to action in Spain in a couple of weeks, as Messi’s team-mate Luis Suarez says Barcelona remain as determined as ever to “win all we can.“

He told Sport: “The ambitions are the same, win all we can and I think that we’re in good shape to do that, I see the team doing well and it’s hopeful“.

There are 11 games left in the Liga season, while Barcelona are also in the last 16 of the Champions League, although it is unclear when or if that competition can be finished.

Gasperini reveals he had Covid19- during Valencia game and feared for his life

Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini revealed he was positive for coronavirus during his side’s clash with Valencia at Mestalla in March.

Gasperini said he was ill as the Italians beat Valencia 4-3 behind closed doors in the Champions League, when the Serie A side reached the quarter-finals via an 8-4 aggregate victory.

The 62-year-old said he thought about death as he struggled with Covid-19, which has killed more than 371,000 people worldwide.

“I was scared. The day before the game I was sick, the afternoon of the game worse. The two nights after I slept little,” Gasperini told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

“If you look at the pictures, I did not look good on the bench. That was March 10. The two nights afterwards, I did not sleep well. I didn’t have a fever, but I felt like I did.

“Every two minutes, an ambulance would go past, as there’s a hospital near the training ground. It sounded like a warzone. At night I would think: ‘What will happen to me if I go into that hospital? I can’t go now, I have so much still to do.’

“It was in a way a joke with myself to lighten the mood, but on the other hand, I really did think about that. Then, on Saturday March 14, I had the toughest training session in years, an hour on the running machine, plus a 10km run. I felt strong, wonderful.”

Gasperini said he also lost his sense of taste, a common symptom of coronavirus.

“The day after, the team received food and 2008 Dom Perignon from a Michelin-star chef who is a fan of Atalanta. I tasted it and said: ‘This is water...’ The food tasted like bread. I had completely lost my sense of taste,” he revealed.

The former Inter boss said a recent test showed he had coronavirus antibodies, confirmation he battled the illness earlier this year.

“Ten days ago serological tests confirmed that I had Covid-19,” Gasperini said.

“I have the antibodies. It doesn’t mean that they are now immune.”

Meanwhile, he is hopeful that the trauma that Bergamo has come through due to the virus will be of help to the team.

“It’ll take time before we can see the joyful scenes in the square or at the airport again, but the people of Bergamo are the burning embers under the ash. They will slowly emerge again,” he said.

‘He’s got a lot of problems’ – Sane to Bayern would be a disaster, warns Sagnol

Goal - The long-time servant of the Allianz Arena club says that they should spend a little more and get a reliable alternative.

Bayern Munich should be wary of signing Leroy Sane from Manchester City, legendary full-back Willy Sagnol has told his former club.

Sagnol spent nine years playing with FCB, turning out for them on more than 250 occasions and helping them to five Bundesliga titles and the 2001 Champions League.

The former France international also has experience in the dugout, even taking charge of Bayern for one match on an interim basis, but has since gone into punditry and says that Sane, who has spent the whole of the season to date recovering from a serious knee injury, would be a major gamble for his former side.

”He doesn’t correspond at all to Bayern in terms of his character,” Sagnol told RMC of the 24-year-old. “He’s someone whose form is very inconsistent and who is very withdrawn.

”For me, he doesn’t suit the club at all. He’s had a lot of problems at Manchester City and with the national team“.

Sagnol even went so far as to suggest an alternative to Sane, who had been on the brink of signing for Bayern last summer before his Community Shield injury against Liverpool.

”We’re talking about a cost of €80 million (£72m/$89m). In that case, I would prefer to put another €20m down and sign Kai Havertz“.

The Bayer Leverkusen star has caught the eye for much of the season and has attracted the attention of many of Europe’s biggest clubs.

The 20-year-old has scored 11 goals and laid on five more in 26 Bundesliga matches this term and has looked particularly sharp since the Bundesliga resumed after the coronavirus suspension, scoring five goals in four matches, including the winner in Friday’s 1-0 success over Freiburg.

Meanwhile, Bayern continue to lead the way in Germany, opening up a 10-point advantage to Borussia Dortmund at the summit of the table after a resounding 5-0 win over Fortuna Dusseldorf on Saturday, in which Robert Lewandowski netted a brace .Hansi Flick’s side have, therefore, won all four matches since the resumption, including a critical midweek win over their nearest rivals, who will tackle Paderborn in the late Sunday kick-off.

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