TO THE MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS OF FIFA

Circular no. 1749

Zurich, 5 February 2021

SG

COVID-19 and the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players

Dear Sir or Madam,

As we embark on a new year, the football community stands alongside the rest of the world in optimism that 2021 will see the suppression of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of a return to normality for football and society as whole. The past year presented us all with an unprecedented challenge, and FIFA believes that the manner in which this challenge was met by the entire football community proved beyond all doubt the strength and resilience of our sport, its values and its systems of governance.

You will recall that during the second half of 2020, several important decisions were taken by the FIFA Council which facilitated the staged return to international football in certain parts of the world. This return to play was delivered under the implementation of strict health and safety protocols, and was an important milestone in showing how, through proper planning, discipline and collaboration between parties, football was able to successfully adapt to this new reality. Similarly, the FIFA Council took several decisions that provided much-needed flexibility in the regulatory environment for domestic and international transfers in light of the disruptive effect of the pandemic on competition calendars.

Unfortunately, as we are all too aware, the prevailing circumstances around the globe have remained acutely challenging, and there is still a significant degree of uncertainty around international travel and quarantine restrictions, as well as the organisation of domestic sporting events in certain parts of the world. As we wait optimistically for the various vaccination programmes to gather pace, the first international windows of 2021 will mark another significant and positive milestone, with more national teams than before set to resume playing since the onset of the pandemic.

In order to continue the momentum that successfully facilitated the stable, safe and successful return to international and domestic football in a manner that is accepted by all stakeholders, the Bureau of the Council has taken several decisions regarding the extension and/or adaptation of temporary amendments that were introduced to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) last year.

1) Release of players to association teams

The amendment to Annexe 1 of the RSTP regarding the release of players to association teams that proved successful last year has been extended again, this time to the end of April 2021. This extension consequently applies to two international windows for women (February and April), one international window for men (March), and two international windows for futsal (March and April). The current versions of the men’s and women’s International Match Calendar are enclosed for reference and are also available on fifa.com.
The extension to the temporary amendment is identical to that in place for 2020 as per the following wording (underlined or struck through):

1. These temporary amendments shall apply to all international windows for men’s football, women’s football, and futsal scheduled for the remainder of 2020 until the end of April 2021.

2. All international matches taking place in those windows are required to apply FIFA’s Return to Football – International Match Protocol or an equivalent protocol of the relevant confederation compliant with said Protocol.

3. The rules relating to release of players to association teams, as provided for in Annexe 1, apply as normal, except where:
   
   i. there is a mandatory period of quarantine or self-isolation of at least five (5) days upon arrival in:
      
      a. the location of the club which has an obligation to release the player to an association team; or
      
      b. the location where a representative team match is scheduled to take place; or
   
   ii. there is a travel restriction to or from either location (a. or b. above); and
   
   iii. a specific exemption from the relevant authorities relating to the above decisions has not been granted to players of a representative team.

2) Registration of players and the Transfer Matching System

The disruptive effect of the pandemic in 2020 led to the need to amend certain aspects of the RSTP related to player registration to reflect the adapted schedules of many competitions across the world. While the situation has improved immensely from last year and domestic competitions have resumed in the majority of member associations, there remains the need to retain the flexibility that was integrated into the regulations as the pandemic continues to disrupt competitions in parts of the world. As a result, the following amendments to the RSTP have been now been approved (underlined or struck through):

Article 5 paragraph 4
4. …

i. During the following period, players may be registered with a maximum of three clubs and are eligible to play official matches for three clubs during one season:

   a) for associations following a dual-year calendar: the 2019/20 and 2020/21 seasons; and
b) for associations following a single-year calendar: the 2020 season and 2021 seasons.

Article 5 paragraph 1 of Annexe 3

1. …

i. For associations following a dual-year calendar (2019/2020 and 2020/2021 seasons) and associations following a single-year calendar (2020 season), associations may, at any stage:

a) request to extend or amend their season start date and end date;

b) request to extend or amend their registration periods that have already commenced, provided that their duration complies with the maximum limit (i.e. 16 weeks) established in article 6 paragraph 2;

c) request to amend or postpone their registration periods that have not commenced, provided that their duration complies with the maximum limit (i.e. 16 weeks) established in article 6 paragraph 2.

The updated Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players containing the above temporary amendments are enclosed for reference and are also available on fifa.com.

Please do not hesitate to contact James Kitching, Director of Football Regulatory, at psdfifa@fifa.org should you have any questions on the above matter.

FIFA would like to wish all those member associations that are scheduled to play in the upcoming windows the best of luck and the best of health.

Yours faithfully,

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Fatma Samoura
Secretary General
Enclosed

- Men’s International Match Calendar 2020-2024
- Women’s International Match Calendar 2020-2023
- Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players