



Belarus's extraordinary players and their legal battle to ban themselves from the international game

- A group of Belarusian athletes and footballers are heading to CAS in an attempt to get UEFA to ban their own country's participation in international football.
- Players say that UEFA haven't investigated allegations of match-fixing and political interference, and allege that UEFA and FIFA facilitate Belarus's dictatorship via solidarity payments, which total around €10 million over the past year.
- **Why it matters:** Athletes seeking a legal path to their own exclusion from international sport is almost unprecedented.
- **The perspective:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has awakened governing bodies to the human rights dimension of sport, but while Russia has been banned, its ally Belarus has had limited sanctions.

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Top Stories Of The Week



1. Leading UK agent faces FA charges

The former agent of England star Raheem Sterling has been charged by the FA after breaching rules on signing matters

Aldy Ward and his company, Colossal Sports Management, had been under investigation by the FA since March 2021 after allegedly paying the parent of a young English player in violation of FA rules for him joining Ward's agency before the permitted age of 16.

Ward was subsequently the subject of a BBC Panorama documentary in which further allegations about his conduct were made.

The FA released the following statement on Thursday evening:

"Adrian Ward and Colossal Sports Management LTD have both been charged with a breach of FA Rule E1(b) in relation to both Mr. Ward's personal activity as a registered intermediary and the activity of Colossal Sports Management LTD.

"Approaching a player to enter into a representation contract before 01 January in the calendar year of their 16th birthday is contrary to Regulation BB and B8(i) of the FAs Working with Intermediaries Regulations. It is alleged that Adrian Ward either directly or indirectly made an approach to a minor on behalf of the Colossal Sports Management LTD between 01 January 2019 and 31 December 2019.

"Adrian Ward has until Friday 15 April 2022 to provide a response to these separate charges."

Ward – whose clients include the Liverpool star, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain – has previously denied the allegations.

2. French League approves private equity deal

The French League body, LFP, and private equity group, CVC Capital Partners, announced the signing of an investment commitment agreement in connection with the minority investment of CVC.

Following a meeting of the LFP General Assembly, there was unanimous approval for the creation of the deal, which will see €1.5 billion invested in LFP in exchange for a 13 per cent stake, valuing the league at €11.5 billion. LFP are expecting the deal to be concluded by July.

The LFP describes the new partnership as a continuation of its structural reforms "undertaken in order to transform and accelerate the development of French professional football."

"This project is a major step for the development of French football and a historic step forward for sport in France," LFP president Vincent Labrune said in a statement. "We are delighted with this alliance with CVC, a partner that perfectly matches our project for Ligue 1 and for French professional football."

The LFP is advised by Centerview Partners and Lazard Frères as financial advisors, and Darius Villy Mallot Brochier as legal advisor. CVC is advised by Rothschild & Co as financial advisor and Weil, Gotshal & Manges, Mayer Brown and White & Case as legal advisors.

Last year CVC concluded a €2.4 billion 50 year deal with LaLiga, but a similar proposal for Serie A was rejected by Italian clubs.

3. Everton report £120.9 million loss and confirm talks with Premier League over P&S rules

Everton have confirmed they are in contact with the Premier League about the club's compliance with the league's Profitability & Sustainability regulations after reporting a £120.9 million loss for the 2020/21 financial year.

The rules state that clubs are only permitted to lose a maximum of £105 million over three years. Everton have recorded combined losses of about £373 million from 2019 to 2021.

The spending rules have been altered as a result of the pandemic, with the three-year assessment period extended to four. Everton still appear at risk of being found in breach however, leading them to petition the Premier League for allowances to be made due to Covid.

The deficit for 2020/21 came despite record turnover of £933 million. The club attributed losses of at least £170 million to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with £103 million of that figure coming in the 2020/21 financial year.

It admitted that "continued investment in the playing squad" had also contributed to the latest results and the accounts also reveal that the club's wage bill has increased from £164.8 million to £182.6 million.

In a press release Everton, who are 17th in the Premier League and embroiled in a relegation battle, stated that they remained in a "secure financial position thanks to the continued unwavering support and commitment" of owner Farhad Moshiri.

A share issue was completed during 2020/21 that involved the introduction of £100 million of new funds from the owner, with a further injection of £97 million confirmed after the year's end.

4. Juventus among 11 clubs referred to Federal Court for capital gains cases

Eleven Italian football clubs have been referred by the Public Prosecutor's Office to the National Federal Court following the investigation by the Italian FA (FIGC) into suspicious capital gains from player transfers.

In a statement, the FIGC confirmed that the clubs being referred are Juventus, Napoli, Genoa, Empoli and Sampdoria from Serie A, Pisa and Parma from Serie B, Pro Vercelli and Pescara from Lega Pro, and two clubs who are now defunct – Novara and Chievo.

The clubs are accused of violating Article 31, Paragraph 1 of the Code of Sports Justice, having "accounted for capital gains and rights to the performance of the players for values exceeding those allowed to an extent to affect the federal requirements for the issuance of the National License."

In addition, 61 individuals, including club directors and administrators, have been referred to the court.

5. FIFA approves new loan rules

The FIFA Council has approved new regulations concerning the loan of players in international football.

The new regulatory framework will include:

- The requirement of a written agreement defining the terms of the loan, in particular its duration and financial conditions
- A minimum loan duration, being the interval between two registration periods, and a maximum loan duration, being one year
- A prohibition on sub-loaning a professional player who is already on loan to a third club
- A limitation on the number of loans per season between the same clubs: at any given time during a season, a club may only have a maximum of three professionals loaned out to a single club and a maximum of three professionals loaned in from a single club
- A limitation on a club's total number of loans per season. These will be restricted to six players over the age of 21 from the 2024/25

FIFA says the regulations, which will come into force on 1 July 2022, will "promote competitive balance and prevent the hoarding of players by clubs."

6. Ex-Bayern Munich CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge urges major reform to 50+1 rule

Former Bayern Munich CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has called for major changes to German football's 50+1 rule and has warned that if the rule is not reformed Bundesliga clubs will be left behind financially by their European rivals.

Speaking to the *Tomorrow* podcast, Rummenigge said the rule is "a huge giant handicap" and asked: "How long can we afford more tradition than competitiveness?"

He continued: "Tradition is a great asset in our country, which is also very much appreciated by certain fans. But if we don't get 50+1 into a fit shape at some point, so that investors can still invest in the Bundesliga, then the question arises as to how long the Bundesliga can maintain competitiveness."

While he did not go into detail about how he thinks the rule should be changed, Rummenigge said: "At some point you have to think about whether it would not be better, more modern and more competitive to adapt this rule for the competitiveness of the German league but also for international comparison."

Pointing to the growing financial dominance of English Premier League clubs, he added: "The international competition is only decided on the transfer market and we can't keep up with the English."

7. Normalisation Committees for Cote d'Ivoire and Namibia

Convening in Doha last Wednesday the FIFA Council - at its first face to face meeting since October 2019 - extended the mandate of the existing normalisation committee for the Ivorian Football Association until 30 April 2022 and appointed a normalisation committee for the Namibia Football Association until 30 April 2023.

In a letter to NFA General secretary Franco Cosmos detailing FIFA's position its general secretary Fatma Samoura said they found that he "had largely contributed to the strong divisions among the members of the executive committee, which eventually led to the split of the committee into two groups, whose positions had become irreconcilable".

In Cote d'Ivoire, federation election were again postponed in March over eligibility issues, following delays of two years.

Here's what else is happening

- **Staines Town Football Club have announced** "that pursuant to third party breaches of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and other information that has come to light, we are forced to temporarily suspend all primary operations including but not limited to competitive fixtures, until a thorough investigation into the practices of Downing LLP has been concluded by the relevant authorities."
- Alejandro Dominguez has been re-elected as **president of CONMEBOL**.
- LOSC Lille sports coordinator **Sylvain Armand** has been suspended for the rest of the season.
- The UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body announced that it had sanctioned **AZ Alkmaar** due to its fans' improper and potentially hazardous behavior during the UEFA Europa Conference League match against FK Bodo/Glimt.
- The FAs list of all **fees and transactions** involving Intermediaries registered in England from 2 February 2021 to 31 January 2022 has been published.
- St Mirren Football Club have secured a sponsorship deal that will see the men's team, women's team and youth teams wear the same strip sponsored by **Digby Brown Solicitors**.
- A teenager has been jailed for six weeks for **racially abusing Marcus Rashford** on Twitter after the Manchester United player missed a penalty in the shootout against Italy in the Euro 2020 final.
- The Scottish professional footballers union, PFA Scotland, are **supporting footballer Rico Quitongo** in his race discrimination claim against his former club, Scottish League One side Airdrieonians, and a club director.
- The Italian Football Federation, FIGC, has published the **updated versions of the FIGC Organizational Protocol for Professionals, Women, Spring, Referees and Amateur Football**.
- The Asian Football Confederation's Executive Committee has outlined ambitions to further elevate elite club football and will comprise members from the **"Elite Club Competition Task Force"** which will comprise members from Football Australia, Chinese Football Association, Japan Football Association, and the Korea Football Association.
- The Brazilian Football Confederation have announced **Ednaldo Rodrigues** has been elected unopposed as its new president.
- **FIFPRO and Sports Law Institute** have signed an agreement supporting professional players and FIFPRO member association staff to study football law in Spanish.
- **List of CAS hearings next week:**
04.04.22
CAS 2021/A/8286 Guangzhou R&F Football Club v. Eran Zahavi & PSV Eindhoven
TAS 2021/A/B213 Club Tijuana Xoloitzcuintles de Caliente c. Matias Aguirregaray Curuceaga & FIFA
05.04.22
CAS 2021/A/8120 Sint Maarten Football Federation v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)
CAS 2021/A/8377 FC RFS v. Aigle Noir FC
06.04.22
CAS 2021/A/8282 Pedro Sacramento v. Al Nassr SC & FIFA
07.04.22
CAS 2021/A/8375 FC Okzhetpes v. Alexandr Sheplyakov

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Commercial Sports Associate - 2-SPQE, *Pure Search*, London, UK
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Junior Legal Counsel, *DFL Deutsche Fußball Liga*, Frankfurt, Germany
Operations & Legal Manager, *U.S. Soccer Foundation*, Washington, US
Associate - Commercial Sport (Mid-Level), *Bird & Bird*, London, UK
Associate - Commercial - Gambling, Media and Sport (Mid level), *Bird & Bird*, London, UK
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