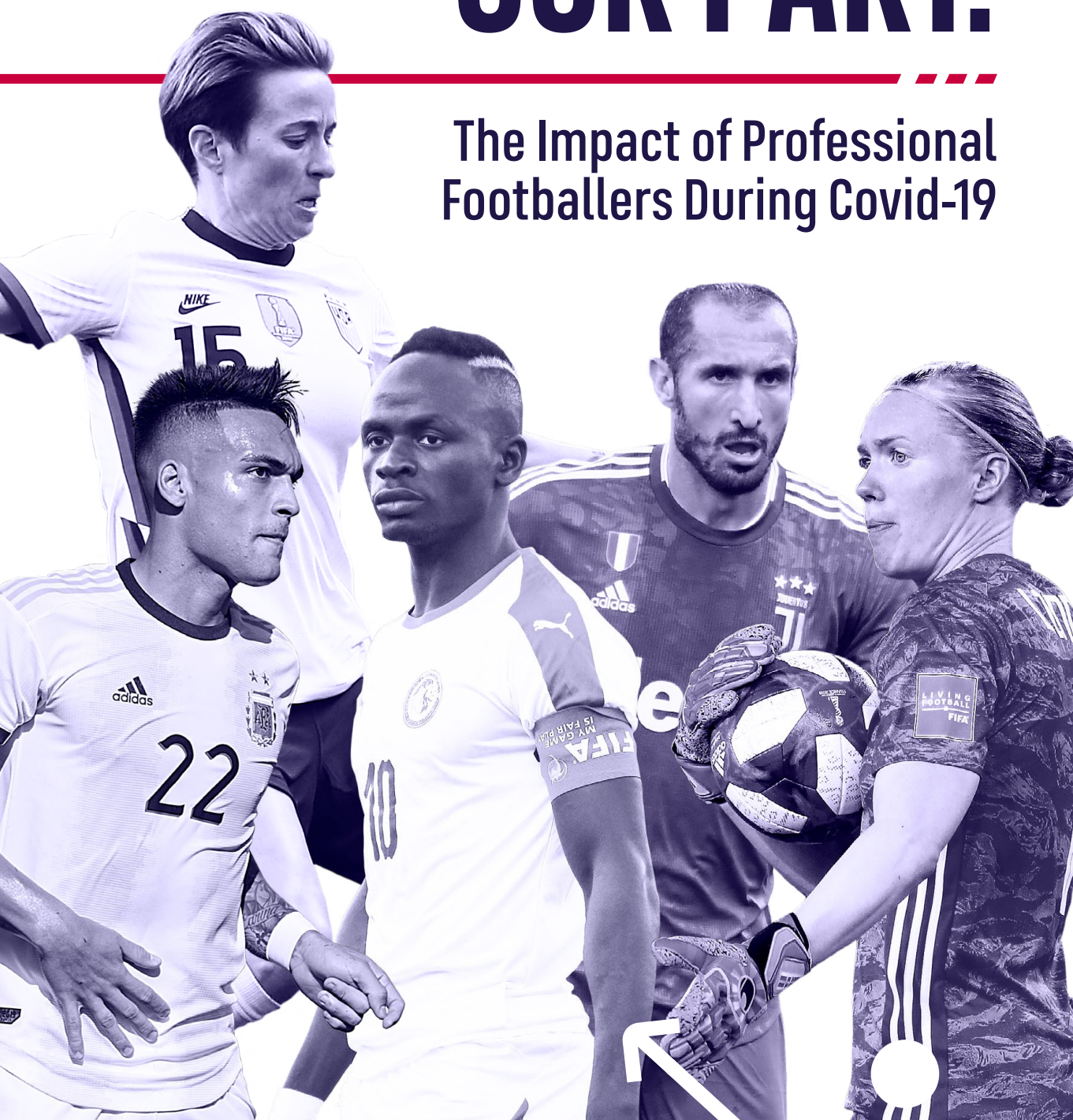




PLAYING OUR PART:

The Impact of Professional
Footballers During Covid-19



Contributions to the recovery of
communities and the football industry

#PlayingOurPart





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ABOUT

The following report is part of the ongoing work of FIFPRO to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the football industry and in particular on professional players. It serves as background information for player unions, football stakeholders, public authorities and media to outline the importance of player contributions during this global pandemic and documents the impact by professional footballers around the world.

The report analyses the role footballers are playing to help in the fight against COVID-19, both in the emergency response and in contributing to the recovery of the sport and society. It seeks to debunk wrongly developed perceptions and concepts of player solidarity, and to protect players against the abuse of inappropriate financial demands and unbalanced expectations during this global crisis.

In addition, it showcases the needs of many players around the world for support as they are facing a range of uncertainties – including unemployment. This paper sits alongside, and can be read in conjunction with other FIFPRO documents covering the COVID-19 impact on the football industry.

Ultimately, this background document will help:

INFORM

Players, member unions, other football stakeholders, public bodies, governments and the media on the impact of COVID-19 on the football industry and professional footballers, and on how they have come together to support the recovery effort.

ENGAGE

Players, member unions, stakeholders and football's decision-makers on the issues that matter to players during this time, and on ways they can support the recovery effort.

GUIDE

The football industry on a way forward out of the crisis, that protects players and allows them to make an impact on the issues that matter.

FOREWORD

During the crisis, standing together has become paramount to the way we live through and eventually beat the COVID-19 virus. Supporting the sick, caring for our neighbours, assisting our communities and respecting the advice provided by medical experts – these are the living examples of solidarity, demonstrating how society has come together, that we will need to maintain and preserve long after this period is over. This applies to all aspects of our lives – including the world of work and how we ensure to protect the most vulnerable amongst us.

The individual activism, collectivism and contributions shown by so many during this crisis is an incredible sign of what we can achieve together. Health care and emergency services, from essential workers to delivery drivers, as well as countless individual and collective initiatives to support people in need, have been reminders that we are stronger when we work together and help each other.

The recovery from this crisis requires significant private, corporate and public contributions for our societies to cope with the immediate impact and the knock-on effects of this virus. No effort in this context is too little. While government support and the role of public institutions are key in the recovery process, private and corporate contributions in all forms have an important role to play to support public efforts and to help on a needs basis.

// During the current crisis, professional football players and athletes across sports have developed incredible initiatives around the world to help their communities, their clubs and teams and often their teammates.

around the world to help their communities, their clubs and teams and often their teammates. The public perception of athletes not living up to their social responsibility could not be more wrong. Therefore, this paper will examine how players have contributed to fighting the crisis – what they do to support their colleagues, sport and community – and address current misconceptions.

At the same time, the prospect of losing clubs to insolvencies, cutting wages and making players, sporting staff and other club officials redundant, is a concern across our membership. Beneath the surface, there is a fragmented,



precarious and diverse economic and social situation evolving for players. As with many workers, some football players are currently facing a threat to their careers and ability to provide for their families.

Unlike the 2008 financial crisis, the impact of this crisis on the global economy and society will not leave global football markets unharmed. Several months into the crisis, it is evident that player contracts, at all levels of the football industry, are coming under pressure.

The uncertainty of the current situation requires us to find new approaches to strengthen the future of the football industry. An uneven economic recovery will pose a serious threat to economic division in the football industry. International leadership in football is needed to correct some of the weaknesses in the governance of the professional game, establish safeguards for those whose livelihoods depend on football, and establish a new solidarity to ensure that the sport remains viable around the world.

The courage to change and collectivism between players, clubs, leagues and federations will be essential to find fair and sustainable measures to create a better future for the football industry.

With kind regards,

Jonas Baer-Hoffmann
General Secretary

PLAYER IMPACT: KEY ASPECTS

The social and financial impact of COVID-19 has triggered an intensified public debate on how players can contribute to help mitigate the consequences of this crisis. Here is an overview of how players contributed to the emergency response and supported the recovery, what support they often need themselves, and how collective solutions can strengthen communities and the football industry.

1

MANY PLAYERS ARE HELPING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AT RISK OR IN NEED IN MULTIPLE WAYS.

The crisis has confirmed the increasing societal role of players and their contributions to the recovery of the crisis. Through voluntary individual or collective activism, creating dedicated funds, setting up charities, donating to food banks, funding medical equipment, and using their platforms, there are numerous examples of footballers helping those in need.

2

DURING THE CRISIS PLAYERS HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR CLUBS.

Players have immediately been confronted with financial demands from employers, highlighting the often fragile finances in football. While players have participated in the recovery of their clubs, despite sometimes having limited means, they need a thorough understanding of the financial situation and the future use of these amounts before agreeing collective measures affecting their salaries.

3

AS THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF PLAYERS VARIES THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR SUPPORT AND PROTECTION.

For many players the employment conditions in smaller markets and lower leagues due to COVID-19 are more precarious than ever. While the expectations towards players have reached new heights, they do not always correspond with the economic reality of a large numbers of players in the wider industry.



PLAYER IMPACT: SUPPORTING THE RECOVERY

The following considerations and recommendations detail some of the main priorities to support players and their contributions to the recovery from this crisis. The COVID-19 crisis will undoubtedly alter global and domestic policy priorities in our society and football will not be immune from these changes. The crisis has highlighted the importance to come together as people and societies and football is certainly no different.

CONSIDERATIONS

Player hardship is a key symptom of this crisis in the football industry. Many players need support themselves. Players in lower leagues, smaller markets and women's footballers carry the greatest risk of hardship. From mental health to the financial uncertainty of contracts, and the possible reduction of future job opportunities, players are – and will continue to be – severely impacted by the pandemic. of the professional game.

RECOMMENDATION

The football industry must work together to support players suffering hardship. Appropriate measures include contract extensions, salary guarantees, and the protection of non-financial obligations at club level. The access for players and player unions to specific funds provided by the industry (such as the FIFA COVID-19 Relief Plan or similar confederation based funding programs such as UEFA HatTrick) is fundamental.

CONSIDERATIONS

The crisis has highlighted the need to improve (financial) sustainability in the football industry. There is no doubt that the structural, regulatory and business models underpinning professional football have come under pressure in the current crisis, and need to be reviewed. We need a collective vision by stakeholders on joint solidarity and redistribution mechanisms in order for football to emerge from this crisis stronger than when it began.

RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen the vital role of collective governance and player unions. To build a fair, balanced and sustainable future of the football industry, we need to reinforce joint solutions between clubs, leagues, player unions, federations, supporters and governments. The support and services of player unions has been fundamental in managing and addressing the immediate needs in this crisis.

Players have a long tradition of contributing to clubs and to their communities. Football has a rich history of collective activism, and social engagement. Around the world, professional players have been giving back and supporting their clubs and communities since the advent of the professional game.

Develop a common understanding and vision of player engagement and impact. For the football industry, public institutions and the public it is important to have a realistic and fair understanding of what players can and cannot do. This will help empower players to be socially engaged and effectively use their platforms to achieve social change.

The lockdown has restricted the ability of athletes to do their job and the public to be active and play sport. The suspension of organized sport has triggered tremendous organizational and personal uncertainties – including at grassroots level and in youth development. This has impacted sport's role in the community, in the mental and physical health of the population, and in the important contribution it makes to the economy.

Public institutions must support the sports industry to reinforce its key role in the community. It's important for governments to protect the sports sector and athletes from further massive economic and structural damage by actively supporting the recovery of the industry at both the grassroots and elite level because of the important function it has in our communities on many different levels.



PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Across different levels of the game players have cultivated a strong purpose to give back – either through the institutionalised settings of the game or through their own channels and on their own terms and conditions.

Players engage and provide impact to many different social causes through a range of different channels and platforms. Public discourse is divided on what this means, and the expectations are constantly changing – from fans, governments, the media and football industry alike.

According to various FIFPRO studies, life for a majority of footballers outside the elite is frequently uncertain and highly competitive. In men's football, more than 45% players earn less than 1,000 USD a month, 41% receive late pay and in most cases have short contracts.¹ In women's football, the recent reporting shows that, while average club salaries have risen in the women's game over the last three years the majority of players were paid less than 600 USD a month.^{2,3} Many players across the men's and the women's game are therefore rather in need of solidarity than being in a position to give back.

Solidarity can be defined by how we understand and act upon our relationships and responsibilities to one another. It encourages people to unite behind a shared cause – whether that's climate change,

racism and discrimination, gender inequality, or a global pandemic. As societies, we have defined solidarity not just through voluntarily actions, but also through social welfare systems, progressive tax schemes and a range of other policy or regulatory frameworks. Professional athletes and football players are contributing to these schemes like other citizens.

Over the last decade, we have also seen the end of social responsibility as a peripheral activity and its rebirth at the heart of most organisations and stakeholders, required to demonstrate they provide a genuine benefit to society through philanthropic or corporate social responsibility initiatives. The societal role football has to play, and players’ engagement, have also evolved to reflect and respond to these expectations, especially with younger generations.



PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH THE INSTITUTIONAL FOOTBALL INDUSTRY SETTINGS:



Community activities run by their club



Collective projects of the player union



Projects organised centrally by the league



Projects managed by sponsors and other corporate third-parties



Initiatives operated by the federation

PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH PLAYER DRIVEN INITIATIVES:



Engagement through player foundations



Ad-hoc crisis relief and support



Collective and athlete driven platforms (e.g. Common Goal)



Individual and non-institutionalised activism



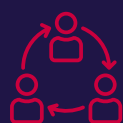
Player partnerships with international non-for profit organisations (e.g. UNICEF, etc.)

1 THE ECONOMIC & SOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

The impact of this public health crisis is unprecedented. The following section provides a brief summary of the general impact this crisis has had so far on our societies, economies, the football industry and its players.



1 THE ECONOMIC & SOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

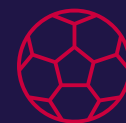


THE IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND THE GENERAL ECONOMY

Well over 10 million people have now tested positive for COVID-19 across the world, and the death toll has been severe. Loss of life on this scale leaves a generational impact on our society, with ramifications that go far and wide.

It has forced the lockdown of towns, cities, and countries around the world. And it has resulted in the effective shutdown of entire industries, turning people's livelihoods upside down. The world economy is forecast to shrink between 5% and 9% in 2020 if a second wave of the virus is being avoided, according to the latest Economic Outlook published by the OECD. The Outlook emphasises that the pandemic has triggered the most severe recession in nearly a century and government support to help people and businesses will need to evolve and remain substantial. In this period, the recovery plans by governments have included some of the largest stimulus and financial support packages in the history of many countries.

The impact the outbreak has had on sport is no different. The industry has effectively been put on pause for the last few months, with event after event being cancelled or postponed. While the economic impact on the sports industry at large will be analysed in detail over the coming months and years, the impact the crisis has had on citizen's physical and mental well-being, through the cessation of grassroots sport, must be addressed by the industry and governments.



THE IMPACT ON THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

The global football economy is experiencing a decrease in revenue, primarily as matchday revenue has been hit with postponements and cancellations, and as media and commercial deals might be at risk, should games not be able to return behind closed doors.

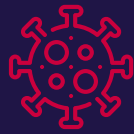
FIFPRO's economic impact assessment with data of the KPMG Football Benchmark⁴ has found that the economic impact of the crisis affects big and small market leagues and clubs alike. The exact risk exposure must be analysed for each market individually. In leagues where matchday revenue constitutes the biggest income source the impact may be more severe.

Women's football faces an almost existential crisis. It will take a similar hit to the men's game, but does so with less established professional leagues, low salaries, a narrower scope of opportunities, uneven sponsorship deals and less corporate investment. Many of these could simply collapse, if action is not taken.

Uneven economic recovery and returns to play pose serious threats to economic division and further fragmentation of the football industry. How the industry continues to respond to the crisis will therefore be crucial.



⁴ FIFPRO has carried out an economic impact assessment of COVID-19 for 6 international football leagues (with both football and summer calendar seasons) to assess the potential revenue losses for various scenarios, including the cancellation of leagues or competitions being completed behind closed doors.



THE IMPACT ON PLAYERS

From the player perspective, the underlying challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are diverse. Players carry the greatest risk, financially and socially in the context of return to play scenarios. Like many workers and businesses, players across the industry are currently facing a challenging employment environment in the football industry.



HEALTH IMPACT

The primary concern is always the health and well-being of our players and members. Footballers do not exist in a vacuum. They are just as susceptible to this disease as any other member of the public and some early studies suggest even specific risk factors for high performance athletes. Indeed, some of football's most elite players have contracted the virus in countries across the globe. The number of publicly known cases continues to grow due to the return-to-play testing taking place in some leagues.



WELL-BEING

All of the above must be considered when analysing the mental health of players during this time. A high level of uncertainty creates a stressful situation for many players. In the current situation, they are often stranded away from their families and with unclear perspectives on their return to football, and their future career paths.



FINANCIAL IMPACT

Then we must consider player financial well-being. Most players have short contracts and no financial or job security during this time. The spread of the virus has impacted all levels of the football economy, driving demands from employers and the public on players to defer salary payments, or reduce wages.

In some cases, player unions across the world are distributing food packages to professional footballers who have not received their salaries, or whose salaries were reduced, after leagues were suspended to stop the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.



PLAYER HARDSHIP

In many cases, across all global football markets the crisis leads to immediate player hardship situations, threatening the livelihood of individual players, their families and children. The lack of recognition of players as workers in certain countries has made the situation for players even harsher, as the government funds for workers do not apply to them.



UNCERTAIN JOB PERSPECTIVES

As many workers across industries, a lot of players are currently facing uncertainty towards their future employment perspectives. Players who are running out of contract at the end of the season are facing a difficult employment market in the mid- and lower-level leagues of the global football market. This also includes minor and youth players in the academy system who are faced with uncertainties concerning their first employment contracts in the football industry.



2 THE ACTIONS AND IMPACT OF PLAYERS

Since the start of the crisis, players have reacted in multiple ways to help fight COVID-19 through individual or collective activism, solidarity or philanthropy – supporting charitable projects, frontline healthcare workers as well as communities and fellow players in need. Those initiatives have often started collectively, but in many cases, players also decided to offer individual support to the causes that matter most to them, as citizens and people.

These are examples of players showing solidarity with communities and society through activism.



2 THE ACTIONS AND IMPACT OF PLAYERS



PLAYER SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AT RISK

In the period since the crisis has spread across the world, players have been active in the battle against COVID-19, supporting charitable projects, frontline healthcare workers and communities in need.

All of these initiatives have often started collectively with other players or partners, but in many cases, players have also decided to offer individual support to the causes that matter most to them. A large number of players have been generous and creative, creating dedicated funds to respond to COVID-19, setting up charities to donate to food banks and funding medical equipment in hospitals as well as participating in awareness-raising campaigns to protect people from catching the virus.



PLAYER (UNION) TO PLAYER SOLIDARITY (IN HARDSHIP SITUATIONS)

Individual and collective action by players and player unions have driven the direct support for fellow players and colleagues in need. The direct impact of COVID-19 on players has triggered a range of collective solidarity measures under the stewardship of player unions and in many cases between players themselves.

The measures itself address a range of topics including basic needs, mental health and well-being support, public support for teammates in return to play scenarios as well as direct financial support.

All in all, the player community has shown incredible solidarity for one another and supported their peers for a number of different reasons.



PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

Players are the heart of the game and are the most significant factor to create the value of the football industry with their skills and performance. Players naturally participate in the value they create and player contracts are therefore one of the immediate targets to reduce operating costs. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, players have helped and shown their commitment to identify quick and pragmatic solutions to mitigate the consequences of the virus on the global football economy.

However, it is important that any financial support by players to their clubs is in principle based on the fundamental principles of (1) collective negotiations, and (2) financial transparency.⁵

In certain situations, the use of (partial) salary deferrals has been the exemplar of how some players may support their clubs to address liquidity shortages and the need to restructure financial commitments. A salary deferral is akin to an interest free loan, whereby players agree to receive their salary in arrears, providing their club with the liquidity to navigate the current crisis without the need for redundancies or pay-cuts. Naturally, this is only possible in some scenarios where the income of the player is such that he/she can still pay personal living costs despite the deferral. In many smaller leagues, this has saved clubs from financial turmoil and even insolvency.



⁵ The need for financial transparency outlines the requirement for players to fully understand the financial situation of their employer before entering into potential negotiation on contract amendments and committing to a potential deferral or reduction of monthly remuneration. Players must be clearly informed for what purposes potential savings will be used by the club.

3 WHAT PLAYERS ARE DOING IN THE CURRENT CRISIS

Since the outbreak, players and player unions have been committed to fighting the negative impacts COVID-19 is having on all levels of the game. There are many examples of professional footballers across the world demonstrating, individually or collectively, their solidarity towards each other, their clubs and their local communities.



3 WHAT PLAYERS ARE DOING IN THE CURRENT CRISIS



PLAYER SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AT RISK

Players have shown tremendous solidarity towards their communities to help fight the impact of COVID-19 individually or collectively.

However, while some players have the ability to financially support their own foundations, large global efforts or specific charities, many professional players offer non-financial support and community service through (club) programs or individually.

In all corners of the world, and at all levels, players have stood up during the pandemic to support their communities. The response of football's elite has been well-documented – from fundraising and awareness raising, to sourcing Personal Protective Equipment and volunteering. However, this is only part of the story in terms of their response.



CASE 1. #WEKICKCORONA IN GERMANY⁶

Leon Goretzka and Joshua Kimmich started this collective initiative to support charitable associations and social institutions -those who help others- to make a contribution to community resilience and recovery.

With an initial **donation of € 5 million**, the player driven initiative has not only shown extraordinary leadership by players but has brought athletes across sports together for a common cause and **supported 400 projects**, so far. "We only beat Corona as a team. With #WeKickCorona we want to help those who help others," German National Team player Goretzka stressed. His colleague Kimmich added that solidarity is now necessary in both small and large scale.

Many of the players and athletes, men and women, who support this collective initiative also contribute through other individual actions.

WWW.WEKICKCORONA.COM



Christof STACHE / AFP
⁶ <https://en.wekickcorona.com/>



CASE 2. JAPANESE FOOTBALLERS HELP HEALTH AUTHORITIES⁷

Five football players with two second-division clubs in Japan have **donated medical supplies** to regional health authorities to help fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic that has claimed more than 900 lives in the country.

Kentaro Oi and Hiroki Yamada, who play for Jubilo Iwata, gave **1,000 liters of antiseptic solution** to Fujieda prefecture: "Let's support each other and help each other to overcome this situation", Hiroki said. For their part, Takanori Maeno, Daiki Nishioka and Kentaro Moriya, who are with Ehime FC, **donated face masks** to their local prefecture with the same purpose.

In addition, a series of players from other clubs in Japan's football leagues have **promoted the importance of hygiene** to reduce the risk of infection, posting social media videos of them singing while washing their hands for 30 seconds.



WWW.J-PFA.ORG.JP



⁷ Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/ehime_fc/status/1265830747937468422> and <https://t.co/ckDnCV3dK?amp=1> and <https://twitter.com/J-PFA_NEWS/status/1269801381415620609?s=20>. Last visited 10.06.2020.



CASE 3. ESTEBAN GRANERO FIGHTING COVID-19 WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE⁸

Esteban Granero, a player for Second Division B club Marbella and former Real Madrid player, uses his **Artificial Intelligence company to fight the coronavirus.**

As the CEO and founder of Olocip, a pioneering international company specialised in the implementation of AI in the business world and professional sports, Granero provided the resources and technology to develop epidemiological models to **predict the future evolution of the pandemic** at a national level and in each autonomous community in Spain.

The initiative **provides real time and evidence-based information** to public institutions and others to tailor and adjust their crisis response and health measures.



WWW.OLOCIP.COM

WWW.AFE-FUTBOL.COM

⁸. <https://www.olocip.com/about-us/>



CASE 4. THE ONE GOAL & THE #TOGETHERAGAINSTCORONA CAMPAIGN⁹

The One Goal is a worldwide charitable organisation that works locally and internationally to raise funds from the women's game and community to then put back into organisations that are using sports as a method to help people and communities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, **The One Goal raised £20,492**, by teaming up with some of the biggest names in women's football who donated their match-worn signed jerseys to raise money.

80% of the funds raised will be donated to the World Health Organisation COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, with the remaining amount to go to a charity, project or cause of the donating player's choosing. The players that participated range from Sweden to Brazil, with many of the game's biggest stars providing jerseys, including Pernille Harder and Lucy Bronze.

WWW.THEONEGOAL.ORG/TOGETHER-AGAINST-CORONA

⁹ <https://twitter.com/TheOneGoalOrg>





CASE 5. ABDERRAZAK HAMDALLAH PLEDGES CARE FOR 1,000 FAMILIES¹⁰

Moroccan player Abderrazak Hamdallah is **supporting 1,000 families affected by the Coronavirus in his home country**. Indeed, Hamdallah, who plays in Saudi Arabia for Al-Nassr, made the pledge on his Instagram page in March as the pandemic spread to Morocco, where there have been more than 6,000 cases. "Given the difficult circumstances, and in solidarity with our brothers in Morocco, I have decided to take the responsibility to look after 1,000 families," the 29-year-old former national-team player said.

Morocco imposed a strict one-month curfew on March 20, hitting the salaries of many workers, and then extended it by an extra month.



WWW.ASSOCIATION-MAROCAINE-FOOTBALLEURS.ORG



CASE 6. MARCUS RASHFORD CAMPAIGNS FOR SCHOOL MEALS FOR 1.3 MILLION CHILDREN¹¹

Marcus Rashford successfully led a campaign which persuaded the **U.K. to extend a free school meals scheme**, benefiting **1.3 million children** whose families are struggling with low incomes during the pandemic.

The 22-year-old England forward, who told how he did not always have enough to eat as a child, **raised GBP 20 million with charity FareShare UK**. He then convinced the government to provide an **extra GBP 120 million** to prolong the meals scheme during the six-week school holidays.

"Look at what we can do when we come together," Rashford told BBC. "We have to understand the pressures that families are under right now. This will help kids from the families that really need it."



WWW.THEPFA.COM





CASE 7.

KEITA BALDÉ ARRANGES HOTEL FOR HOMELESS WORKERS¹²

Keita Baldé arranged accommodation for **200 Senegalese workers who lost their jobs** in hotels and restaurants in Spain when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Baldé found out about the plight of the workers, who had travelled to the northeast region of Lleida to take seasonal fruit-picking jobs but had nowhere to stay. He **paid for 80 of them to sleep in two hotels** in Lleida and, with local hotels unwilling to accommodate more, he **helped arrange for 120 to spend the night in a municipal pavilion**.

Baldé, the son of Senegalese parents, was born and raised in Catalonia, near Lleida. He now plays for Monaco, and Senegal's national team. He found out about the homeless workers in a video. "I don't cry very often in my life but this time I shed some tears," Baldé, 25, said. "It was then **I decided to take action personally, to help them and solve the problem.**"

"They work so hard in the day and have nowhere to sleep so I wanted to help my people, I do that with my heart."

¹² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-immigrants/soccer-player-puts-spotlight-on-plight-of-migrant-fruit-pickers-in-spain-idUSKBN23Q221>
<https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11095/12010135/keita-balde-qa-monaco-winger-using-his-platform-for-good>



CASE 8.

THE COMMON GOAL COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND

Common Goal is a social impact movement that encourages professional football players, managers, officials and clubs to **donate a minimum of 1% of their salary** to football-based initiatives that drive progress towards the Global Goals.

The Common Goal Covid-19 Response Fund was launched to tackle the immediate effects of the pandemic, and also ensure that **support continues beyond the initial response** with a focus on young people in underserved communities and conflict settings. The fund will use Common Goal's existing network of community organisations which annually serves over **2 million vulnerable young people in 90 countries**, enabling football industry leaders and the general public to make a positive impact on those affected by the Coronavirus.

**COMMON
GOAL**

WWW.COMMON-GOAL.ORG/



PLAYER (UNION) TO PLAYER SOLIDARITY (IN HARDSHIP SITUATIONS)

Players and their unions have shown tremendous solidarity towards their colleagues to help collectively in the most difficult situations of player hardship faced by this crisis.

The hardship faced by male and female professional footballers, hit by the coronavirus in particular outside western Europe, is extremely concerning but hardly reported on internationally. The work that national player unions are doing to support their members in these exceptional circumstances is essential. Here are some exemplary cases of this work being done.



CASE 1. COLOMBIAN UNION SUPPORTS WOMEN PLAYERS¹³

The Colombian player association **organised the delivery of food and water for 101 players** left without a salary or social security when the coronavirus forced the suspension of the national women's league.

Many of the players quit their regular jobs to enroll in a three-month professional league, but were sent home in March during preseason, almost all without the security of a contract. Player association ACOLFUTPRO together with the Colombian government is working so that the professional League scheduled for this year takes place, "We are **providing assistance to the players who followed their dream** of being professional footballers but are now in a difficult social situation", Carolina Rozo, director of women's football. at ACOLFUTPRO. "We are working to ensure that they obtain decent working conditions".



WWW.ACOLFUTPRO.ORG



¹³. <https://ligadeportiva.com/acolfutpro-y-min-deporte-entregan-mercados-a-futbolistas-mujeres-con-dificultades-economicas/>
https://twitter.com/acolfutpro/status/1254864738003021825?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtter-m%5E1254864738003021825&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fligadeportiva.com%2Facolfutpro-y-min-deporte-entregan-mercados-a-futbolistas-mujeres-con-dificultades-economicas%2F



CASE 2. IRISH PLAYERS RALLY TO HELP EACH OTHER¹⁴

A group of senior international Irish players represented by Integrity Sports contributed with different amounts to an **emergency fund of €30,000**, set up to help footballers in Ireland's domestic league going through financial difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and the temporary cessation of football in the League of Ireland.

The administration of the fund is managed by player union PFA Ireland and a Committee oversees and approves all applications. Graham Barrett, in charge of Integrity Sports and a former player told The Irish Times "As footballers, we belong to a community. **At times of need, communities support each other.**"

Many other player unions have carried out similar initiatives in their countries such as AIC in Italy for example.



WWW.PFAI.IE

¹⁴. <https://www.independent.ie/sport/soccer/league-of-ireland/league-players-get-some-relief-from-funds-donated-by-irish-internationals-39242987.html>
<https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/national-league/ireland-trio-donate-25k-to-support-airtricity-league-clubs-1.4207110>



CASE 3. PFA AUSTRALIA & THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT HUB¹⁵

The Professional Footballers' Association Australia (PFA) worked in partnership with The Mind Room to **specialise their offerings for players** during the COVID-19 health pandemic.

With their members isolated and some facing unemployment, they jointly launched the Player Development Hub, to centralise information and resources.

The Hub focuses on four key areas: **1. Mental Health & Well-being; 2. Career & Education; 3. Football Fitness; 4. Hardship support.** They released important articles such as "How Culture Helps Us Through Dark Times."

They offered tailored advice for encouraging players to continue a structured lifestyle, stay connected and healthy. They also offered mental health support, with the first three appointments with a counsellor paid for by the PFA.



[WWW.PFA.NET.AU/](http://www.pfa.net.au/)





CASE 4. BOTSWANA UNION SUPPORT ITS PLAYERS WITH FOOD

Already before the pandemic, some clubs did not regularly pay players their salaries. The situation turned worse during the lockdown, as seven clubs were “really struggling”, not paying their players up to 6 months of their salaries and various footballers facing eviction from their house. According to the Footballers Union of Botswana -FUB General Secretary Kgosana Masaseng. In this context, the Union supported players with food. Indeed, the FUB **distributed food to players** at seven clubs and to 50 female players as well. Furthermore, the FUB also turned to the government for help. Thanks to this request, the government established a **relief fund for players**.

Many players had difficulties doing groceries, as people were only allowed to leave their house with a special permit. “They were running out of everything, so players asked for food hampers. They didn’t want any money”, said Masaseng. “We gave them food supplies for two months.”



FUB.DIVISIONAFRICA.ORG



PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

There are numerous instances of players embracing the shared responsibility of footballers and the industry towards fighting this virus, by accepting significant changes to their contracts and salaries to support the football industry.

Before entering solidarity discussions with employers, players deserve full disclosure of the relevant financial structures at club level if they are expected to defer or reduce their salaries.

Despite the personal and professional pressures this crisis is placing on players, where that information has been supplied, we have seen examples of solidarity from footballers around the world.



CASE 1. COOPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTIES OF THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY.

In the Netherlands, the players' union and the association of clubs agreed in May 2020 upon a package of measures for professional football.

The package included a detailed recommendation on a reduction of salaries for a limited period of time which both the players' union as well as the association of clubs deemed reasonable but necessary in light of the COVID-19 crisis. The reduction of salaries was guided by the principle that **the strongest should carry the heaviest burden**. Up until a certain amount no reduction would be recommended. After the pre-fixed amount that would not be reduced, the higher the salary, the higher the percentage within a range from 5% up to a maximum of 20%.

Clubs were also strongly urged that expenses saved should not be used for hiring new players. Considering it was merely a recommendation, the players and clubs still needed to individually agree on a reduction of salaries. Yet, the **vast majority of players and clubs followed the recommendation** of the social partners in the Netherlands, the players therewith having substantially assisted the clubs during this crisis. At the same time, the players' union and the association of clubs decided to also extend the collective bargaining agreement for another 3 years, exemplifying the excellent cooperation on national level.





CASE 2. **PLAYERS TO THE RESCUE OF CLUBS** **IN FINANCIAL TURMOIL**

In Costa Rica, the players' union ASOJUPRO signed an agreement with the league and the federation for the period from March to June 2020 by means of which they agreed that salaries of players would be reduced until the competition would resume.

Similarly, to the Netherlands, the most vulnerable players on the lowest salaries would be exempted, whereas others would take a temporary pay cut in order to **help the clubs going through the financial turmoil**.

The percentage of the temporary salary reduction varied depending on whether the season would restart and on whether fans would be allowed back into the stadium. The agreement in Costa Rica was one of the first ones in the region and resulted from **the league and federation engaging proactively with the players' union**.



WWW.ASOJUPRO.COM



CASE 3. WAGE AGREEMENT IN MEN'S PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL IN FRANCE

As soon as professional competitive matches were suspended in France, the labour-relations partners entered talks, overseen by the Ligue de Football Professionnel (LFP), on a **package of financial support measures** to help clubs cope during these unprecedented times.

A number of key challenges quickly came to the fore: **(1)** It was impossible to put an exact figure on clubs' losses or loss of earnings (impact on club revenue) because of uncertainties about future developments; **(2)** it was impossible to secure the buy-in of all individual players for a collective (temporary or permanent) wage-bill reduction scheme due to the fragmented situation; **(3)** there was no comparability from one professional club to the next, since clubs' income was heavily dependent on the share of TV broadcasting rights they had already received for the 2019-2020 season and, more importantly, on their financial health prior to the pandemic; **(4)** the picture was equally inconsistent for the financial and contractual situation across professional players, meaning a purely collective approach would prove impossible.

Having taken stock of these challenges, club and player representatives quickly settled on **an innovative and progressive approach to build a flexible implementation scheme designed to enable players to provide tailored contributions to the recovery of their clubs** while respecting important labour relations standards (players agreed to allow clubs deferring part of the salaries payment. The deferred portion would depend on the player's initial wage. The higher the player's wage, the greater the percentage the club could defer until its cash-flow situation had at least partially recovered). This scheme also integrated pragmatic solutions due to COVID-19 restrictions such as electronic solutions for contract amendments and working methods.



WWW.UNFP.ORG



Vincent Michel/Icon Sport

THE RECOVERY OF COMMUNITIES AND THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

There is an opportunity to influence, establish and redefine the relationship between the football industry and society at large, as nations and sports go through a generational change. Football will play a part in the recovery of communities and society and will be an important bellwether of the crisis coming to an end. Looking ahead, the football industry must reinforce its purpose to society.





A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF PLAYER IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT

As has been evidenced in this report, the crisis has brought out the best from individual players, with many examples of social engagement and contributions being shown as individuals and as a collective. Many players have also decided to contribute to causes that mattered to them without sharing any information or disclosing their contributions. While it's important that these acts are recognised, this is nothing new. Players have been activists in their communities and on the issues that matter to them for generations.

The belief that footballers live carefree and wealthy has led supporters and the general public to have high expectations when it comes to players' shared responsibility towards fighting the virus. But many players during this time have even relied on food parcels and financial support packages to survive. It means we must discuss players' capability to respond to the virus carefully. There has been a steady rise in player activism and contributions in recent times and this crisis has brought that to the fore. For the football industry, public institutions and the public it is important to have a realistic and balanced understanding of what players can and cannot do.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND NEEDS OF THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

The cessation of organised sport triggered tremendous organisational and personal uncertainties about the future of a sector – including the grassroots and youth development – which has been shaped and grown over decades and provides a key societal function as well as an important economic contribution globally, nationally and in local communities.

Public institutions should reinforce the vital contributions of the sports industry as a driver for societal, physical and mental health benefits. Evidence shows that regular physical activity significantly contributes to overall well-being and health which has been shown to be critical to individuals avoiding the most severe reactions to COVID-19. As we emerge from months of a lockdown that has restricted the ability of athletes to participate in their livelihoods as well as the opportunity of citizens to exercise their sport, it is essential that governments protect the sports sector from further massive economic and structural damage by actively supporting the recovery of the industry at the grassroots and elite level.



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THE VITAL ROLE OF PLAYER UNIONS AND COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION

Player unions have been vital in this period. Their support and services for players and the football industry have been fundamental in managing and addressing the immediate needs in this crisis. Also, the recovery plans of domestic football markets will benefit from a well-structured dialogue and decision making with players.

Player unions have carried out vital support mechanisms for players. Many of these services, such as legal or mental well-being support as well as financial advice have been in high demand by players. At the same time the collective representation of players has contributed not only to protecting the players but also helped to reach important agreements for the financial sustainability of the industry in the midst of the crisis.

STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE GOVERNANCE IN THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

While everyone in the football industry is facing the same crisis, domestic circumstances differ significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to establish dialogues between clubs, leagues, player unions, federations – and in the relevant areas, government – to try to find fair and sustainable measures for the future of our industry.

There is no doubt that the structural, regulatory and business models underpinning professional football will need review. There needs to be a collective vision and case set forward for football to emerge from this crisis stronger than when it began. To achieve this, there will need to be a clear emphasis on social partnerships and collective dialogue, to ensure a better outcome for everyone involved.



FAQ

HOW DO YOU DEFINE PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS, BOTH DURING THE COVID-19 AND OUTSIDE OF IT?

Player contributions are a widely used reference in our societies today. They are often interpreted in different ways alongside or in contrast with concepts including solidarity, social engagement, activism, philanthropy and charity. These definitions can vary in intention, forms, methods and outcomes. This document does not aim to clarify the intricacies of these terms, nor does it try to define the different types of player engagement we are observing during the crisis. We also acknowledge that contributions in response to the COVID-19 crisis have given this type of action by players a new dimension of meaning and impact. However, players are often contributing to enrich society in a number of ways, that go largely unseen when there is not a public health crisis to react to and media attention on this.

ARE PLAYERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO COMMUNITIES AND THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY?

The impact of COVID-19 on global societies and the economy has caused a large-scale economic recession. There is no single actor in the world private, corporate or public who could compensate this impact. However, players often can and do act as local or even global

community leaders and use their profile to rally and inspire people, and to set an example in a challenging situation. We as the collective representation of players take great pride in their actions and belief in the causes that they take upon themselves. They contribute to the issues and communities that matter to them because of their personal conviction, and not for public praise or position.

HOW MUCH ARE PLAYERS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUPPORT AND RECOVERY OF COMMUNITIES?

It is near impossible to capture an exact figure of how many players are contributing to the recovery due to the impact of COVID-19. Many players do this without a coordinated communications effort and often outside the eye of the public. Also, the ways players are giving back can be so diverse that it is very difficult to define this precisely. Indeed, contributions are not only financial but include other forms of support such as mental health support or in kind assistance. Media reports are only part of the picture but they already show how deep the commitment of players is towards the communities they grew up in, or in which they are playing in, or the ones they feel most strongly connected to.

HAS COVID-19 TRIGGERED AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PLAYERS HELPING OTHERS?

The special circumstances of COVID-19 have reinforced a public debate on how people

can support each other. Certainly, this has also had an impact on players themselves and how they individually want to contribute in this context. It is difficult to compare it with the level of engagement in other periods, but it is clear that players have engaged in new activities and contributed in forms or in areas they have previously not necessary been involved in. At the global scale, the societal norms and the culture of giving back are often slightly different across cultures. It is therefore difficult to compare all players, rather every player has to be seen in his or her local context.

HOW CAN PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS BE MISUSED?

While collective action and personal activism have demonstrated how the sport is banding together to best manage the crisis, the crisis cannot be used as a carte blanche for players contracts or salaries to be amended, deferred or annulled without due process, in the name of 'solidarity'. Asking players to take a personal financial hit via salary deferrals, reductions or part-time working, for other reasons than the protection of the club or its staff, is a misuse of player contributions. The preservation of club finances, and profit margins via amendments to player contracts would be a grave misuse of player support to the industry. Amendments to player contracts can only be the last resort when other forms of restructuring have failed or have proven to be insufficient. In addition, future transfer spending has to be analysed in the context of the overall financial situation of the club, including potential overdue payables and individual or collective demands towards players.

WHAT IS FIFPRO DOING IN THIS CONTEXT AS THE GLOBAL REPRESENTATIVE OF PLAYERS?

By definition FIFPRO is an organisation which carries principles such as solidarity and activism in the core of its institutional DNA. On a daily basis we support member unions and players in need which require our legal or institutional support for contractual, well-being or health and safety issues. This core work of our organisation was also the guiding principle throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

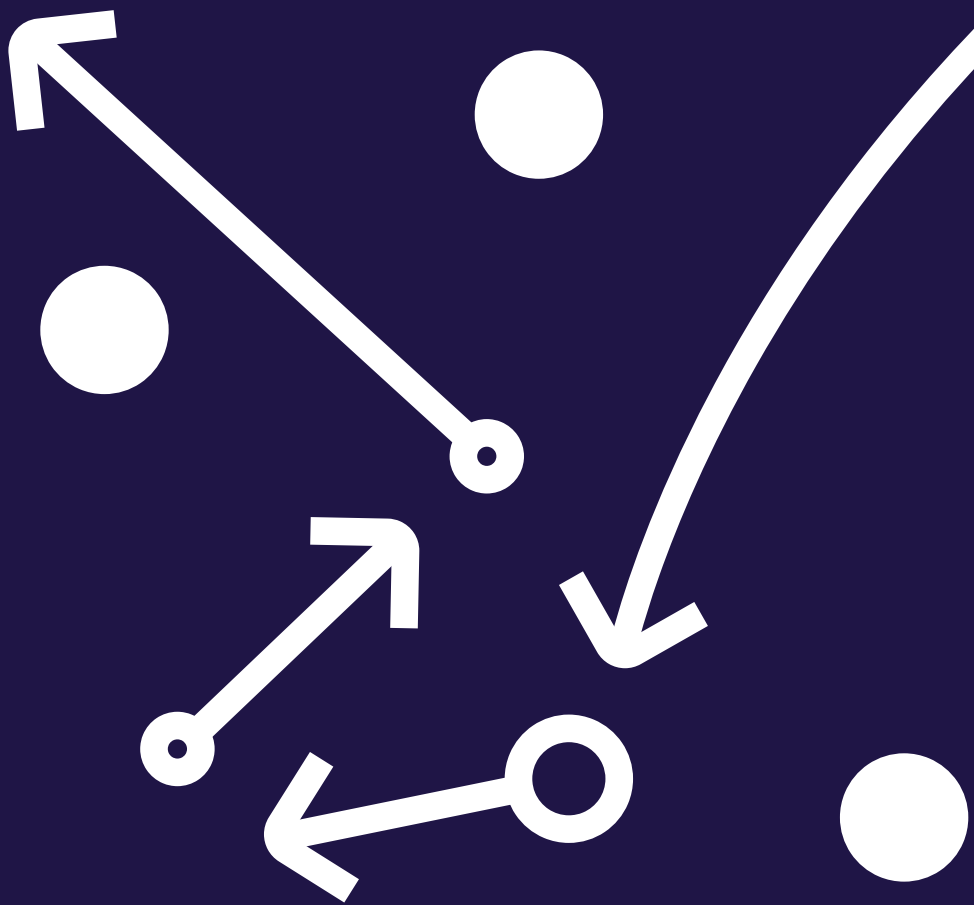
While many of our members, both players and unions, have contributed in their local context to the recovery of the pandemic, we have focused first and foremost on the needs of our most vulnerable members. It is our ambition in the current situation to identify a suitable vehicle to provide players with support and guidance to turn their local or global efforts in the COVID-19 crisis into a long-term legacy.

FIFPRO is committed to supporting player activism on the matters that are relevant to our players:

<https://fifpro.org/en/rights/fifpro-commitment-to-player-activism>



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