



'We can't wait' - Marcelo eager for La Liga's return

Real Madrid TV - Spanish football was suspended in March due to Covid-19, and the Real Madrid full-back says he has been eagerly awaiting the game's return.

Real Madrid star Marcelo said he cannot wait for the La Liga season to resume following the coronavirus pandemic.

La Liga was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 crisis but the league will return with the derby between Sevilla and Real Betis on June 11.

On Friday, Spain's Higher Council of Sport (CSD) said it had agreed the resumption plans with the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) and La Liga.

The CSD issued a statement that confirmed plans for the season to end on July 18-19.

Real Madrid were two points behind defending champions and leaders Barcelona with 11 rounds remaining, as La Liga's title race remains wide open as players prepare for a return to play.

With that race still on and after missing out on games for nearly three months, Marcelo says he can't wait to get back on the field to compete again.

«We'd never gone so long without being able to train out on the pitch and our desire to play foot-

ball has been growing ever since we stopped," Brazilian full-back Marcelo told Real Madrid TV. «Now we're close to getting going again and we can't wait.

«It's been different to what we're used to. We have to take the positives from it and now we're used to the routine; it's not like it used to be but everything's good.

«We're all healthy, the training sessions have been fantastic in recovering our rhythm. Having not touched a ball for so long, when you go back out on the pitch you've lost your touch a bit, but now we just can't wait to start playing games.»

Marcelo has featured in 18 matches for the club this season, with 10 of those appearances coming in La Liga play.

While Real Madrid remain in the title chase in La Liga, the Spanish powerhouses are also still alive in the Champions League.

Real Madrid booked their spot in the round of 16 after finishing second behind Paris Saint-Germain in the group stage, sealing a clash with Manchester City.

The English side won the first leg, 2-1, with goals from Kevin De Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus canceling out a finish from Isco.



Preview: Borussia Monchengladbach vs. Union Berlin

Bundesliga.com - Jadon Sancho is pushing for his first start since play resumed when Borussia Dortmund attempt to avoid another Strela Mamba-inspired banana skin against Paderborn on Sunday.

Mamba was an injury-time Marco Reus equaliser away from inspiring Paderborn to all three points in the reverse fixture. The forward, who until this season had never played higher than the third tier, shocked the Signal Iduna Park faithful with a first-half brace before Gerrit Holtmann secured a 3-0 half-time lead. Sancho, Axel Witsel and Reus ultimately spared Dortmund's blushes, but that game was indicative of what Paderborn can do.

Steffen Baumgart's men may be bottom of the table but if they do go down they will be one of the better sides to have suffered that fate. They have drawn each of their three games since the restart - against Fortuna Düsseldorf, Hoffenheim and Augsburg - but with just one goal scored, Baumgart could be tempted to play both of his strikers against Dortmund. There will be no place for Klaas Gjasula, however. The midfielder is suspended having picked up 15 yellow cards. One more would match former Duisburg defender Tomasz Hajto's single-season record of

16 for Duisburg in the 1998/99 season.

Dortmund will be keen to put on a display having been edged by Bayern Munich in Der Klassiker, with Joshua Kimmich's moment of magic enough give the champions a 1-0 win, leaving BVB seven points back as their closest pursuers. With 14 goals and 16 assists, Sancho has had a hand in the joint-most goals this season alongside the league's top scorer, Robert Lewandowski.

The young Englishman is still pursuing 100 per cent match fitness, but his chances of starting for the first time since play resumed have been strengthened by the fact that Erling Haaland has been ruled out of the trip to the Benteler-Arena due to knee injury. Thorgan Hazard is expected to lead the line, freeing up a wide attacking berth in Lucien Favre's preferred 3-4-3 formation. Gio Reyna can also be optimistic of some minutes from the bench. Emre Can is further along his injury recovery than Witsel, and is likely to start alongside Thomas Delaney with Mo Dahoud having been ruled out for the rest of the season with a knee injury.

Baumgart's side led BVB 3-0 in the reverse fixture, a game that ended 3-3. Mamba scored twice, but has not found the net since.



Serie A to resume with games in hand, Coppa Italia final on June 17

Goal - The leftover games from matchday 25 will get the league back underway, with the cup final to take place before league fixtures.

Serie A has decided the season will recommence with the four outstanding games in hand on the weekend of June 20-21, with the Coppa Italia final confirmed for June 17.

Italy's top tier was on Thursday given the green light to return, as sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora announced the intention is to resume the fixtures from June 20.

During his statement, Spadafora confirmed the Coppa Italia would take place the week before, though no specific dates were set for the last three matches – the two semi-finals and the showpiece.

But a Serie A statement released on Friday said there was a unanimous agreement that the remaining games in hand from matchday 25 will go ahead on the first weekend.

It was also confirmed the Coppa Italia final shall be played on June 17, though dates for the semi-finals are still to be determined.

The statement read: «The assembly of Lega Serie A met today [Friday] in the presence of all 20 associated clubs in a video conference.

«The clubs welcomed the green light to the re-

turn of Serie A communicated yesterday by minister Spadafora and unanimously voted on the dispute of the four matches of the 25th matchday (Atalanta v Sassuolo, Hellas Verona v Cagliari, Inter v Sampdoria and Torino v Parma) on the weekend of June 20-21 and the planning of matchday 27 starting from Monday, June 22.

«Furthermore, welcoming the wish of minister Spadafora, the sporting activity of the 2019-2020 season will resume immediately with the Coppa Italia, of which the final is scheduled for June 17.

«Dates and times of the matches will be announced by Lega Serie A in the coming days.» Juventus were a point clear of Lazio at the top of the table with 12 games remaining when the league season was suspended in March.

It was also confirmed the Coppa Italia final shall be played on June 17, though dates for the semi-finals are still to be determined. They were due to face Milan in the second leg of the Coppa semi-final in Turin on March 4, with the first leg having finished 1-1.

The other semi-final was also finely poised, with Napoli 1-0 up against Inter ahead of their second leg at the San Paolo.