

# Shaikh Khalid assures protection of sportspeople during pandemic

TDT | Manama

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa affirmed that efforts would be maintained to implement the directives of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor, President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports to bolster the measures taken to protect the society in general and sportspeople in particular from COVID-19 pandemic.

The First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and Bahrain Olympic Committee President's remarks came during chairing the weekly meeting with directors and officials in Bahrain's sport and youth field which was held through a video call in implementation of HH Shaikh Nasser's instructions and the Coor-



HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa during a meeting with Sports Directors and Officials over the internet

minating Committee's decisions to deny the spread of the virus in the Bahraini society.

Among the attendees in the meeting were many leading figures in the sports and youth area

in Bahrain, including Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Aymen bin Tawfiq Al Moayed, Minister of Youth and Sports, HE Dr Abdulrahman Sadiq Askar, Assistant Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Mohammed Hassan Al Nusf, Secretary-General of Bahrain Olympic Committee and Mohammed Hamad Al Ajmy, Advisor to the President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

At the beginning of the meeting, HH Shaikh Khalid welcomed the officials, thanking them for the efforts being exerted to maintain the precautionary measures against the virus. Thereafter, he discussed with them executing HH Shaikh Nasser's directives in an effort to shield the sports society in Bahrain from contracting the virus.

# KHK Heroes calls for a national challenge

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With the devastating impact the Coronavirus Pandemic is having on the global community, KHK Heroes called on the nation for a united cause; helping those who need it now more than ever.

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa directed KHK Heroes Boards of Directors to initiate campaigns to support the vision HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier and HH Shaikh Nasser bin

Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

KHK Heroes called on Bahrain to make food donations, contribute financially, volunteer time to the KHK Heroes or create and post a video online and nominate someone else to pay it forward.

The initiative is targeted to help anyone who is struggling during the Coronavirus Pandemic; the gesture could be big or small, anything helps!

# Ecclestone says 2020 Formula One championship should be cancelled



Sebastian Vettel shakes hands with Bernie Ecclestone before the 2017 Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix (file photo)

AFP | London

Bernie Ecclestone says this season's Formula One championship should be cancelled because it appears unlikely that enough races can be completed for it to be valid due to the coronavirus crisis.

The opening eight rounds of the 2020 season have been either cancelled or postponed, with doubts over a number of the other 14 races as the pandemic continues to overshadow the sporting calendar.

A minimum of eight races are required for the championship to be valid, but former F1 chief executive Ecclestone believes that will not be possible.

"We should stop the championship this year and start again

next year, hopefully, because I can't see it's going to be possible to get the right amount of races in that count for a championship," the 89-year-old told BBC Radio.

"There's got to be eight from memory, and I can't see them getting that in. It's a difficult situation."

Lewis Hamilton was this year aiming to match Michael Schumacher's record of seven drivers' titles, though there have been suggestions a truncated season would diminish the achievement.

But Ecclestone, set to become a father for the fourth time, said: "I don't think it will make a lot of difference to Lewis. He would win whatever the race number, whether it be eight, 16 or 20."

# Australia coach says empty stadiums an option on resumption

Reuters | Sydney

Australia coach Justin Langer says playing cricket without fans in the stadiums is an option worth considering if it helped get the game going again after the worst of the coronavirus crisis has passed.

As with most sports, efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have forced the shutdown of cricket around the world and Langer thinks teams would be keen to play in empty stadiums upon resumption if the alternative was a longer furlough.

"When you started off playing underage cricket, there's no crowds there," the Western Australian told BBC radio.

"Maybe your mum and dad came and watched, or your brother and sister were bored and playing on the swings somewhere else.

"You played it because you



Australia coach Justin Langer looks on during nets (file photo)

loved playing the game, you loved playing with your mates and you loved playing the game."

The Australian team had the experience of playing behind closed doors in the opening match of their most recent ODI series against New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground on March 13. The final two matches in Sydney and Hobart were scratched as measures to control the spread of the coronavirus took hold, while a return series in New Zealand was also cancelled.

# Rooney says handling of PL pay row 'a disgrace'

AFP | London

Wayne Rooney has criticised the government and the Premier League for placing footballers in a "no-win situation" over proposed pay cuts after players were urged to make sacrifices during the coronavirus crisis.

The former England captain, now playing with Championship side Derby, penned an impassioned column in the Sunday Times saying his fellow professionals were "easy targets" in the wider response to the pandemic.

It came after the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) said a proposed 30 percent pay cut could hurt the National Health Service because it would hit tax receipts.

Rooney said he had both the means and the will to make financial contributions, either in the form of salary reductions or direct donations to the NHS, but felt the public pressure being exerted on players was unhelpful. The Premier League's suggested strategy involving a combination of pay cuts and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of wages, was discussed in a conference call with players' and managers' representatives on Saturday.

Initial talks were already taking place before key political figures, including Health Secretary Matt Hancock, called for action.

"If the government approached me to help support nurses financially or buy ventilators I'd be proud to do so -- as long as I knew where the money was going," wrote Rooney.

The 34-year-old added: "I'm in a place where I could give something up. Not every footballer is in the same position. Yet suddenly the whole profession has been put on the spot



Derby County's English striker Wayne Rooney reacts during a match (file photo)

**"I'm in a place where I could give something up. Not every footballer is in the same position. Yet suddenly the whole profession has been put on the spot with a demand for 30 percent pay cuts across the board. Why are footballers suddenly the scapegoats?"**

WAYNE ROONEY

with a demand for 30 percent pay cuts across the board. Why are footballers suddenly the scapegoats?

"How the past few days have played out is a disgrace."

The Premier League has been seen as lagging behind other European leagues in its response to coronavirus and was accused by one British lawmaker of operating in a "moral vacuum".

But Rooney questioned the wisdom of the Premier League in preempting behind-the-scenes talks involving players with its own proposals for sweeping reductions.

"In my opinion it is now a no-win situation," he said. "Whatever way you look at it, we're easy targets."

He said the Premier League's contribution of £20 million to the NHS was "a drop in the ocean" compared with the amount clubs would save with wage cuts.

And he questioned why stars from other sports were not the focus of similar attention.

Former England striker Gary

Lineker echoed Rooney's sentiments, telling the BBC that footballers he had spoken to were "desperately keen" to offer help but were an easy target.

"Why not call on all the wealthy to try and help if they possibly can rather than just pick on footballers?" he said.

"Nobody seems to talk about the bankers, the CEOs, huge millionaires. Are they standing up? Are they being asked to stand up? We don't know."

## PFA warning

The PFA said its members wanted to play their part but warned that a proposed 30 percent salary reduction would cost the country 200 million pounds (\$245 million) in lost tax receipts.

England manager Gareth Southgate has reportedly taken a 30 percent pay cut, although the Football Association is yet to confirm the move.

A handful of top-flight clubs, including last year's Champions League finalists Liverpool and Tottenham, have opted to furlough non-playing staff using the safety net of the government's job retention scheme.

But former Liverpool players Jamie Carragher and Stan Collymore strongly criticised the move by the European champions, who in February announced pre-tax profits of 42 million pounds (\$51 million) for 2018/19.

Rooney's former England and Manchester United teammate Gary Neville, now a leading broadcaster, was highly critical of the Premier League.

"The PL are handling the cv (coronavirus) crisis terribly," he wrote on Twitter, before outlining a checklist of perceived missteps including their slowness in imposing a lockdown and the "PR disaster" of furloughing.