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This assignment will focus on the Covid - 19 Pandemic and how it has affected the football leagues across the UK and Europe and how it has affected the income that is being generated into each club within the English Football League, The Premier League and the Scottish Premiership, Championship and League One and League Two

How does Coronavirus affect football in the UK and across Europe?

On March 23rd 2020 the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the whole of the UK would be put into lockdown with immediate effect due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Prime Minister stated that gyms, sporting events, pubs and restaurants and places of education would close immediately to help stop the spread of the virus, with social distancing measures put in place with supermarkets allowing one to two people allowed into shops.

Due to this the football leagues across the UK announced that matches would be postponed indefinitely until it was safe enough to resume play, many clubs had several players and managers infected with the virus which included Chelsea winger Calum Hudson - Odoi and Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta being affected with the virus due to this players and staff all had to self isolate.

League One Manager Paul Lambert who is the current head coach of Ipswich Town stated that "Recruitment would change and that may well see more youth players becoming involved".

The Premier League which is the most popular football league in the world made a statement on the 5th of April 2020, where the CEO of the Premier League stated that he held several meetings with shareholders discussed the return of the season, the financial help regarding each of the 20 clubs in the division and to help the NHS staff fighting the Coronavirus as well as helping the lower leagues such as the EFL and the National League who don't have as much money as their Premier League counterparts.

The Coronavirus has not just affected league football, the health crisis has also affected International football as well with the upcoming Euro 2020 postponed until the summer of 2021, with the aim that league football would be able to continue when it is safe to do so.

The president of UEFA Aleksander Ceferin said that "The biggest crisis that football faced in its history".

UEFA formed two groups to help look at the possible ways to resume and finally conclude the current season and the second group to assess the financial, economical and the regularity of

the Covid - 19 outbreak as well as propose measures to try and minimise the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Deloitte which is an accountancy group stated that the Premier League should brace themselves for £500 Million in losses in the income generated at the clubs due to the rebates from the broadcasters, commercial partners as well as the matchday revenue due to games having to be played behind closed doors. This is a massive loss from the 18/19 season with over £5 Billion being generated into the Premier League for the first time.

The suspension of the Premier League in late March has proved to be very expensive with clubs struggling financially, with teams expected to receive 50% of the normal matchday income come the start of the 2020/2021 football season.

Football is a major part of the British economy with the Premier League making Billions of pounds each year which is normally made through Broadcasting rights, matchday income as well as merchandising. Premier League clubs also had to furlough their staff members due to the biggest crisis the world has seen. Several Premier League clubs furloughed their staff as well as their players, the clubs include Brighton, Crystal Palace and Everton etc with only a handful of Premier League clubs paying their staff and players these clubs are Aston Villa and Arsenal.

The Premier League is one of the richest and the best sporting event in the world and attracts thousands of tourists from all over the world every year with tourists having a chance to experience the atmosphere of the Premier League as well as visiting landmarks around the area and also boosting the UK economy, due to the Covid - 19 pandemic this has not been possible with flights being cancelled and major airlines losing considerable amounts of money.

National tourist agency VisitBritain stated in June 2019 that the research that they gathered that The Premier League bringing tourists into the UK, the study stated that the most tourists that come to the UK to watch football are Chinese with 92% of Chinese tourists intending to visit the UK within the next two years to watch football, this shows that the Premier League is not just for fans within the UK but a global brand as well as boosting the national economy.

With the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic this meant that football had to be postponed and when read to resume the football season no fans would be allowed within the grounds, this is a severe loss of income for all Premier League clubs and the staff members who work week in week as without the supporters buying refreshments, match day programs and merchandise would affect not only the staff but also the clubs themselves especially the poorer clubs within the league.

The Premier League is also known for encouraging their tourists to visit many landmarks, tourist destinations and many other parts of Britain to be able to grow the global economy. Also tourists dream is to watch Premier League matches in pubs with the locals. Without the Premier League, pubs lost a lot of money as they were forced to close alongside restaurants, leisure

centres and theme parks etc, Pubs and restaurants without customers means that they will not be able to generate any income into their businesses and is a massive loss into the global economy.

Due to the pandemic the French Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 were forced to cancel their seasons for the health and safety for their supporters and players as well as for the tourists, France was also one of the biggest countries affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic with thousands of people losing their lives to Covid - 19.

The lower English leagues and the Scottish leagues also postponed their seasons, with League One and Two being able to contest their playoffs unless it was deemed safe to do so, this is a major blow for the rest of the lower league clubs as many of them don't have much money as much as their counterparts who are finance stable.

The May Bank holiday weekends were supposed to be days for all supporters to gather for the FA Cup Final and the start of the highly rated Championship playoff finals, but instead due to the Coronavirus outbreak this meant that these big days for football clubs as well as for the football fans and tourists visiting for the usually the busiest time in football was not meant to be as many people were isolating in their homes trying to maintain the spread of the virus as much as they can.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also seen the EFL forced to use salary caps for all clubs in the 2020/2021 season in a bid to try and save money for each club as well as rebuild as clubs could see over 1,000 of players running out of contracts and not able sign new ones until it is safe to do so.

Championship club Luton Town also stated that the pandemic is worse than administration, this shows how scared the lower clubs especially what happened to Bury who were promoted to League at the end of the 2018/2019 football league season who instead were expelled from the professional leagues due to financial struggles and poor ownership.

With the Premier League being able to survive behind closed doors, the lower league clubs need people on the seats and the money as this could see a strain on their finances as well as face administration, Luton Town have been in liquidation three times in their history once in 1999 and for the second time in 2002 and for the third time in 2007, with the club stating that the crisis is the worst that club has ever faced since their existence.

Luton Town chief executive Gary Sweet said that "It's more grave now than it was back then," with him comparing the pandemic and the administration that the club has faced several times.

There have been fears that football could face a year without any supporters, but to how important supporters are in the footballing world how can it be possible to play the beloved game without any fans, as the fans generate the main income within the football industry as well as the tourists who support clubs in England.

With Bury being expelled and Bolton Wanderers nearly facing the same fate, many lower league clubs, the economic issues in League One and Two as well as the National League are all scared that they could meet the same fate as these clubs.

Fan owned clubs such as Exeter who are competing in the League Two play offs will set them back over £400,000 as the players and the staff members will all have to return from furlough as well covering the costs of the Coronavirus testing scheme that the government put in place.

With the lower leagues announcing they would be cancelling their seasons this has had a financial strain especially with the money that the fans bring in on matchdays, this meant that fans had to be refunded for the remaining games, with some fans for fan owned teams like Exeter saying that they would be happy for their club to use the money on their team in an aim to help them get through the Coronavirus pandemic.

Furlough in football:

The furlough scheme is a government funded scheme where those working would be paid whilst not in work. Players and managers within the Premier League agreed to take a 12.5% pay cut. Some Premier League clubs' casual staff members which includes their stewards and catering staff etc will be paid in full until end of April this shows that the clubs are trying to help those who need it.

Some Premier League clubs furloughed over 50 of their staff members but decided to reverse the decision due to the criticism that they had from their supporters who complained about the clubs included AFC Bournemouth, Tottenham and Liverpool, these decisions show that the supporters are like family to these clubs with the supporters watching their clubs week in week out.

Brighton Football Club made a decision not to furlough their staff members as their deputy chairman and chief executive and the manager Graham Potter all agreeing pay cuts so their staff members wouldn't have to be furloughed.

Burnley Football Club were told they could face losing £50 Million if the season does not continue which could be a major blow for the small Premier League club as they would be furloughing their staff on April the 30th.

Chelsea Football Clubs players wanted a 10 % pay cut but the club made the decision to let the club financially, with the players instead helping with charitable organisations and other ways that they can help. The club also announced that no staff members will be furloughed or be made redundant.

The positive impact of footballers during the pandemic?

Former footballing legend Neville Southall urged the public to visit the mountain railway situated on Snowdonia Mountain in an attempt to boost tourism in Wales

The club also announced that they joined up with a charity called Refuge to help raise much needed funds as well as awareness for those who are sadly suffering domestic abuse during the Coronavirus lockdown. The former Everton player who was born in North Wales said that “people need to help Welsh tourism thrive again” with the Covid - 19 lockdown forcing many tourism places in Wales being forced to close which will have a major impact for the long term especially those funded by the government such as Big Pit and St Fagans etc.

Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford also played a major part during the current world health crisis with him wanting free school meals to continue during the summer in aid of those in poverty. Marcus Rashford joined the charity fareshare which is a charity to try and help those children who rely on free school meals, the forward raised £20 Million during the pandemic with several supermarkets helping the Manchester United striker and the charity that he has been helping.

Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho has been helping the local community through the pandemic by volunteering by delivering food packages to the elderly people in the Enfield area of London. The spurs manager has been helping the charity Age UK which is a charity that specialises in helping older people.

Everton striker Moise Kean phoned an Everton fan to wish her a Happy Mothers Day during the pandemic as she has been in remission from Cancer which has forced her to self isolate and protect her immune system, the Everton striker told the Everton supporters that he was going give her children shirts with the forward saying “Jayne, we know you are going through a difficult moment so I want to wish you all the best.” The striker also said “Be strong. Everything is going to be okay, just keep going and I wish you all the best. A good Mother’s Day to you.”

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