

COVID-19 CRISIS**FOOTBALL TAKES STOCK****GARETH LAW**

EXCLUSIVE

IT should have been an exciting weekend of football in Scotland.

Instead players were left in limbo as fixtures across the country were cancelled indefinitely due to coronavirus.

With the health of the nation the ultimate priority, nobody can accurately predict what's next.

But as far as John Johnson is concerned, footballers should be using their time of inactivity as a chance to become even better.

The mind guru has worked with players like John Souttar, Chris Cadden and Greg Docherty on how best to deal with the mental side of their professions.

Now Johnson – who runs The Football Mindset – reckons players who react productively could emerge from their spell on the sidelines standing out more than the ones who just let the time pass them by.

He said: "The mental side of things is massive. Health has to be prioritised, and rightly so, but footballers are getting paid to be athletes whether they're playing or not.

"More important than the situation is how they deal with it.

"They can go in fearing it or seeing it as a challenge. Players need to see it as a challenge and they need to go and meet it.

Vital

"In every difficult situation there's opportunity. Some players will drop the ball through nutrition, the mental side or keeping themselves in shape. That's going to happen.

"What a player needs to do is see this as a chance to grow. If their opponent is dropping the ball, they won't be.

"If their opponent is down on what they're eating or their physical condition by ten percent, a player should see this period as an opportunity to build themselves up five per cent.

"There is going to be a massive opportunity for players to get themselves one-up.

"More important than what a player needs to do is who he needs to be.

"We can focus on nutrition, training or analysis work, but more vital is who they need to be to do that.

"What are the values, principles, the beliefs they need to ingrain in themselves to get through this period the best they can?

"If they nail who they need to be, then what they need to do takes care of itself.

"A lack of games isn't the problem but the way they could be thinking is. A player needs to nail the narrative. They'll have a story about this period running about in their head.

"As opposed to seeing it as a period to fear, see it as something they can rise to.

"If I had a client sitting there asking how they do that I'd ask them to get a pen and paper and write out what they're currently telling themselves about this period when they're not playing.

"What are they saying about the lack of training or maybe not seeing their football mates or going into isolation?

"You ask them if that's going to help them over the next four weeks or six months.

"If it's not then they need to work on changing that narrative. Is it

CHALLENGE OR CHORE? UP TO YOU

Mind guru's plan to use time wisely

IT'S ALL IN THE MIND... John Johnson is urging Scottish players to work on their game during crisis

filled with fear or challenge?" With training grounds in lockdown, Johnson feels it's the ideal time for players to positively explore and work on areas they can improve.

He added: "You can up your analysis and tactical work, for example. If you're self-isolated then your technical work might be more difficult.

"But we're going into a period that's challenging and which will have its obstacles, but mentally we can grow ourselves to deal with them, to ensure we come out the

other side stronger regardless. If they can't work physically because they aren't going out on to the training park, can they take time to understand themselves better, how their brain works and to understand more about pressure and performing under it?

"Can they take time out to understand how to deal with people's opinions better?"

"They might not be playing games as often but they can still grow. I'd

tell a player to plan for the period being out.

"They need to bring some more certainty to a massively uncertain situation. We need to look to ourselves for certainty.

"So if you've been meaning to look into something new, now's the time. "Perhaps yoga has been something you've thought about.

"Use this time to go onto YouTube and find out more. You need to nail your narrative."

For more from The Football Mindset go to footballmindset.co.uk or @footballmindset on Instagram.



McFADDEN... worry

Faddy in warning on fitness

By GARETH LAW

JAMES McFADDEN says it could take at least a MONTH for players to get ready for football whenever it resumes.

The Scottish game is on lockdown with the country in the grip of coronavirus.

Former Scotland star Faddy is sure players will keep themselves fit but knows the longer the break goes on the tougher it'll be to be match sharp.

He said: "As a player you can't keep your match fitness because there are no games.

"You can keep yourself fit and top yourself up. But if clubs aren't training it's very difficult.

"There also is no return date, no specific time of being off and not playing so that'll make it difficult.

Shame

"You train hard but there's nothing to aim for and the longer it goes on the more fitness the players will lose.

"If it's four, six weeks or more then you're going to need four weeks to get back to any level."

SunSport told yesterday how Boris Johnson is ready to end all seasons across the UK, which would allow the SPFL to hand out prizes and relegate teams based on current league positions.

Asked if he would prefer that or voiding the season, McFadden said: "If they are the two options then the positions they're in would be my preference.

"There's been so much good football played and we're nearly there so I'd rather it was finished and there are winners crowned.

"Unfortunately for the teams in other positions it's going to cost them but that's just the way it is.

"I wouldn't like to see it being void because it has been a fantastic season.

"It would be a shame for players and fans to say it doesn't count. I think that's unfair."

Pars' money plea

DUNFERMLINE fans have been urged to make a cash pledge to the club.

Supporters group, Century Club Lifeline, has already transferred over £1million to the Fife outfit since they exited administration in 2013.

Now, after the suspension of football because of Covid-19,

By DARREN JOHNSTONE

the group has made a plea for additional members, who would pay £20 per month.

A statement read: "It's early days in the crisis but the committee would be very grateful if fans consider signing up or increase their contribution."

Stenny helping out

STENHOUSEMUIR have kicked off a support project to help vulnerable people.

They are offering to walk-dogs and pick up medication. Directors, full-time staff and volunteers are lending a hand.

Chairman Iain McMenemy said: "I'm helping out, as are other board members and

By ALAN TEMPLE

community coaches. We have a dozen volunteers already."

The club tweeted: "Elderly and vulnerable individuals will receive support from Stenhousemuir FC whether it's dog-walking, shopping, picking up prescriptions."

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