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Russian Football League to Restart Despite Rising Infections

By AFP

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The Russian football association said in a statement that matches, suspended since March 17 because of the outbreak, would resume from June 21. **Igor Ivanko / Moskva News Agency**

The Russian Premier League will restart its season next month despite rising coronavirus infections, but behind closed doors, its governing body said Friday.

The Russian football association said in a statement that matches, suspended since March 17 because of the outbreak, would resume from June 21.

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The Russian Premier League, the country's top football division, has eight rounds of matches remaining in the season.

"Unfortunately the remaining matches will be held without spectators," league president

Sergei Pryadkin said.

He said resuming in late June would give players time to prepare to return to action.

"We will do everything to ensure the safety of all participants," Pryadkin added, noting that many players and coaches would have to return to Russia from abroad.

"We are sure that fans will support their teams from home."

Russia has registered 262,843 cases of the virus, the second-highest total in the world after the United States, and 2,418 deaths.

The country has been easing lockdown measures despite the number of new cases rising by about 10,000 per day, as President Vladimir Putin looks to reopen an economy battered by shuttered businesses.

On Saturday, Germany's Bundesliga will become the first of Europe's big five leagues to resume action, also without spectators.

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