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Quarantined Rostov Field Youngsters as Russian League Resumes

By AFP

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Rostov had tried to get the game postponed after six players tested positive for Covid-19. **Valery Matytsin / TASS**

The Russian Premier League emerges from its coronavirus lockdown Friday with Rostov forced to field a team of inexperienced youngsters at Sochi with their main side in quarantine.

Rostov had tried to get the game postponed after six players tested positive for Covid-19.

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But hosts Sochi pushed for the fixture to go ahead as they seek vital points to boost their battle against relegation.

Sochi issued a statement hours before the 5:00 p.m. GMT kick-off, declaring the match on.

"Rostov and Sochi have agreed to stage the game, the 23rd round of the first division. The match is going ahead!"

But a petition organized by Rostov's main sponsor urged Sochi to show "solidarity."

"Let's remind ourselves of the values this sport teaches us. A dignified fight, honest competition, respect for our adversary..." the petition signed by more than 1,000 people said.

According to the letter Rostov were planning to lodge an official request with Sochi for a postponement, to no avail.

The row clouded the league's restart after its three-month hiatus.

On Thursday the Russian football federation had suggested moving the game to July 19, but for that to happen both sides have to agree.

The game itself is a crucial one for Rostov, who despite financial difficulties are fourth in the table, just outside the Champions League qualifying berths with eight matches still to be played.

At Sochi their oldest player is 19 years old.

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