

Broadcast access for fans during Covid-19

On Wednesday 19th August 2020 the Football Supporters' Association (FSA) had discussions with the Premier League which indicated that 160 of the season's 380 games would not be broadcast live to UK audiences during 2020/21.

This means regular match-goers will not always be able to watch their team as fans are not expected to be readmitted to stadiums until October at the earliest. Eleven games during September will therefore be played behind-closed-doors with no regular match-goers in the UK able to watch those games through legal means.

From October fans are expected to be readmitted to stadiums but crowds will be severely restricted due to public health measures. The Sports Ground Safety Authority's [Planning for social distancing at sports grounds](#) indicates that capacities will be restricted to between 17%-33% of current limits, dependent upon local implementation.

If you are a regular match-goer or season ticket holder you are more likely to miss out on a ticket than be successful in the ballot. If you miss out on the ballot there is a very good chance you will not be able to watch your team live as 42% of the season's games will not be broadcast through legitimate feeds in the UK. Fans will miss their team's games.

The FSA's Premier League Fans Network finds this totally unacceptable.

- The Premier League and broadcasters are preventing UK fans from watching their team during a global pandemic. Supporters across the globe will have access to ALL Premier League games – the only fans the FSA knows of who will not be able to watch all live games are those based in the UK, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea.
- The FSA has heard from season ticket holders who have not missed a game for 50 years, but have to shield to protect their health, and fear they will be even more isolated by the Premier League's decision to restrict TV access to their team.
- Fans understand that the Premier League has developed a hugely successful media model and that broadcasters have their own interests. But that very business model will be put in danger if the Premier League takes a decision which will drive many fans into the arms of illegal match streams.
- Fans do not expect something for nothing. Free-to-air broadcasts during Project Restart were well received but fans appreciate they might have to purchase a new service and do not expect free access to all games.
- The EFL's iFollow provides a revenue generating model which could be implemented by top-flight clubs. [Media reports](#) suggest the EFL has come to an arrangement with Sky Sports which allows clubs to stream their games to supporters, including Saturday 3pm kick offs, for a fee of £10 per game.
- The FSA supports a temporary suspension of the Saturday 3pm TV blackout and would be happy to review that periodically with other stakeholders such as the Premier League, EFL, National League, broadcasters, and DCMS.

As a matter of urgency top-flight supporters urge the Premier League to resolve this issue. Do not stop fans from watching their teams during a global pandemic. It would be a disastrous decision by the Premier League and they must listen to supporters.