



By George Stavroulakis

PHOENIX TO RETURN TO WELLINGTON FOLLOWING HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE POSTPONEMENT

FOLLOWING THE FFA'S DECISION TO POSTPONE THE FINAL ROUNDS OF THE HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE SEASON 2019/20 DUE TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC COVID-19, THE WELLINGTON PHOENIX WILL RETURN THE PLAYER AND COACHING SQUAD FROM AUSTRALIA TO NEW ZEALAND.



General Manager David Dome says that prior to the FFA's decision, the club had tried everything in its power to play out as much of the Hyundai A-League season as it could, but the spread of COVID-19 had made it untenable to remain in Australia. **"We didn't** want to subject the players and staff to the risk of being stranded in Australia for an indefinite period of time," Dome said. **"The players,** staff and management were 100% committed to doing the best it could

this season and playing out as much of the Hyundai A-League season as was possible – their positive attitude and dedication is a tribute to them, as was the support of the families, fans and the club's corporate partners.

"This was an incredible season for the Wellington Phoenix and even though it has been postponed, it was still our highest finish to date; while we're disappointed at the postponement, the right thing to do now is to get everyone home to their loved ones

during this unprecedented time of crisis."

The club has also received confirmation from Immigration New Zealand that its international players will be able to return to New Zealand with the rest of the Phoenix squad. Australian players Luke DeVere, Reno Piscopo, Jaushua Sotirio and Brandon Wilson have elected to remain in their home country with their families for the time being.

The rest of the squad will adhere to Government regulations and self-isolate for 14 days when they arrive back in New

Zealand, which will be before the New Zealand Government closes the international border at 11.59pm on Wednesday 25 March.

The FFA has scheduled a formal status announcement for 22 April in order to assess when the Hyundai A-League season could be completed. In the meantime, the Phoenix will remain ready to continue the season if and when required, with each player being given a personal training plan to maintain their fitness during this time.

STUART HODGE

Dear Team,

I hope you are all safe and well.

I write to you having last night watched the Prime Minister's Press Conference and read the latest Federal Government restrictions and measures to confront and minimise the spread of the virus. This included the prohibition of social sport being played. This is an escalation of the Government's position and is likely to impact our ability to have football recommence on 14 April.

As we all should, Football NSW supports these initiatives and we have, ourselves, begun the necessary measures to adapt the manner in which we conduct our business, safeguard our staff, and service and support our members as best we can.

For your information, I am in constant contact with the State Government and its relevant agencies to seek financial support, I sit on the sport's National COVID-19 Working group and we convene regularly on teleconferences with our Associations, Clubs and regularly liaise with anyone who reaches out for guidance and assistance.

We have been developing various scenarios and models on how we can best sustain our business during these difficult times. You will no doubt have heard of the challenges facing many organisations. We are not immune to these. We have halted any unnecessary spending and unfortunately have had to stop our casuals from being able to work. Unfortunately, further actions to ensure the long-term viability of Football NSW, while ensuring we remain able to provide services to our members, will be required. All staff will need to make sacrifices during this period. Some of these measures may include having staff use up some of their leave balances, standing some staff down temporarily and/or reducing working hours (e.g. three of four day work weeks). I will meet with the Board in the coming days to further discuss the situation, work through alternative scenarios and agree on a way forward.

In the meantime I thank you for your continued efforts and support.

Stay safe.
Stuart



MARINERS STAR UNCERTAIN OF FUTURE: 'It's been difficult'

ZIGGY GORDON IS UNSURE WHETHER HE WILL BE A CENTRAL COAST MARINERS PLAYER NEXT SEASON.

Gordon joined the Mariners on a one-year deal from Scottish club Hamilton Academical in June last year.

Off-contract at the end of the current season, the defender says he has made no decision on his future.

Gordon has played in 22 of Central Coast's 24 matches in 2019/2020, featuring at right back and centre back.

"I think that [my future] will be a conversation I'll have with the gaffer and the CEO come the end of the season," the Scotsman told FTBL.

"That's all I can say right now. I think they know where I stand. I'm very touched by all the messages I've had from the supporters, all the feedback I've had which has made me

indebted to them.

"But we'll just have to see where the club are and see where we lie at the end of the season."

The Mariners have struggled all year and are sat at the bottom of the A-League table, with the competition suspended because of the Coronavirus.

Gordon admits it has been a series of highs and lows over the past 10 months.

"It's been a bit of a rollercoaster to be honest," the 26-year-old said.

"It's been a challenge, it's been difficult in parts leaving your whole life behind and coming over to a country, which is so far away. It's not just myself but my partner as well who's made massive sacrifices."