

# FIFA, AFC Postpone 2022 World Cup Qualifiers



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Qualifying games for the 2022 World Cup have been postponed as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. World soccer's governing body has confirmed the move, which will see fixtures from both March and June pushed

back to later dates.

However, FIFA also added in their statement that some of the affected matches may still be played provided both member associations mutually agree, and on the condition that they receive prior approval from both FIFA and the AFC.

It is expected that the 2022 World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup Joint-Qualifiers that were to be played this month will now be held in October while the matches which were slated for June will be rescheduled for November 2020.

## Nizzolo Wins Tough Paris-Nice Stage as Big Guns Misfire

CHÂLETTE-SUR-LOING, France (AFP) - Italian sprinter Giacomo Nizzolo has pounced late to win a rainy stage two of the Paris-Nice, as pre-race favourite Nairo Quintana suffered a damaging day.

Sunday's stage 1 winner Germany's Maximilian Schachmann of the Bora team remains in the overall leader's yellow jersey, while double Giro d'Italia points winner Nizzolo is second, 15 seconds adrift.

Stage two culminated in a small bunch sprint after a blustery 166.5km struggle from Chevreus to Châlette-Sur-Loing with Slovak star Peter Sagan and 2014 Tour de France winner Vincenzo Nibali



Giacomo Nizzolo winning stage 2 of Paris-Nice on Tuesday

notably keeping pace with a lead group of 12.

Sagan and Nibali, who finished

three seconds behind Monday's winner, had both been slated to race in Italy, and only came to Par-

is-Nice when the Strade Bianchi and Tiro-Adriatico races were postponed due to the coronavirus.

In the final sprint Monday, Sagan's teammate Pascal Ackermann made a determined bid for the line from just inside the final kilometre, but was well beaten by a powerful surge from the 31-year-old Italian Nizzolo.

"I waited until as long as I could and then took his (Ackermann's) wheel as he came past. Then at the line, I managed to get past him."

Colombian Quintana, previously seen as a favourite, was caught in a fall 25km from home with the peloton rolling at full pace, he dropped 1min 25sec on the day.

## Australia Beat Brazil to Qualify for Davis Cup Finals



ADELAIDE, Australia (AP) — Australia has advanced to the Davis Cup Finals in November with a tight 3-1 win over Brazil on hard courts at the Memorial Drive tennis center on Saturday.

John Millman beat Brazil's Thiago Monteiro 6-7, (6), 7-6 (3) 7-6 (3) in the deciding match.

Millman took the court after Australia's doubles team of James Duckworth and John Peers lost to Brazil's Marcelo Demoliner and Felipe Meligeni Rodrigues Alves 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (6).

On Friday, Millman came from a

set and break down to beat Thiago Seyboth Wild 4-6, 7-6 (0), 6-2 to give Australia its 2-0 lead heading into Saturday's matches.

Australia was playing without its two top-ranked players. Nick Kyrgios has a left wrist injury that forced him out of a tournament in Mexico and Alex De Minaur aggravated an abdominal injury which sidelined him for last month's Australian Open.

Australia joins 11 other qualifiers and the 2019 semifinalists — Canada, Britain, Russia and Spain — as well as the 2020 wildcards, France and Serbia, in November in Madrid.

## Sporting Events in Italy to Be Halted Because of Virus

ROME (AP) — Sports ground to a halt throughout Italy late Monday night when Premier Giuseppe Conte announced that games and travel will be banned nationwide.

"There's no reason for the games to continue," Conte said. "The fans will have to deal with it. We won't even allow gyms to be used."

A new government decree that will come into effect Tuesday and last until April 3 will stop games in Italy's top soccer division and preparatory events for the Tokyo Olympics.

Events around the world have been affected by the spreading virus, including Champions League soccer matches and Japan's professional



A view of the empty stadium during the Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Genoa at the San Siro stadium, in Milan, Italy, Sunday, March 8, 2020. Serie A played on Sunday despite calls from Italy's sports minister and players' association president to suspend the games in Italy's top soccer division.

baseball season. Late Sunday, one of the biggest tennis tournaments in the world was postponed.

Italy's top soccer division had resumed on Sunday with five games played in empty stadiums. Twelve rounds remain, with eight-time defending champion Juventus holding a one-point lead over Lazio.

Serie A has not been canceled since World War II.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia

## Nuggets Beat Short-Handed Bucks 109-95



DENVER (AP) -- Jamal Murray led the Nuggets with 21 points but it was a basket of his that didn't count that really ignited Denver's 109-95 win over the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks.

Murray soared for a thunderous slam dunk over D.J. Wilson with 9.8 seconds left in the third quarter and Denver clinging to a 74-71 lead Monday night. Wilson jumped in an attempt to prevent the jam and was pulverized on the play, staggering out of bounds.

The biggest of baskets was waved off and a charge called on Murray instead of a foul on Wilson.

The crowd was incredulous, the Nuggets furious, but coach Michael Malone didn't challenge the call.

"It definitely wasn't a foul," Murray said. "But yeah, I wanted to just drive, and I felt like I had a step, so I just took off."

"The crowd was phenomenal. After that, the crowd was into it every single play, every single steal, rebound, block, bucket," Murray said. "Once we got them going, they got us going."

The third quarter ended with Mason Plumlee's fast-break layup for a 76-71 Denver lead after Monte Morris blocked Frank Mason III's pull-up 3 from behind.

Then, the Nuggets pulled away with a 33-24 fourth quarter as Nikola Jokic, who took just two shots in the first half, finally found his rhythm and scored eight of his 10 points, including a 3-pointer that snapped an 0-for-13 skid from beyond the arc.

Paul Millsap added 20 points and Grant scored 19 as the Nuggets sent the Bucks to their third straight loss and fourth in five games.

Kyle Korver had 23 points to lead a big effort by the Bucks' backups, but Milwaukee sorely missed all that firepower during a fourth consecutive road defeat.

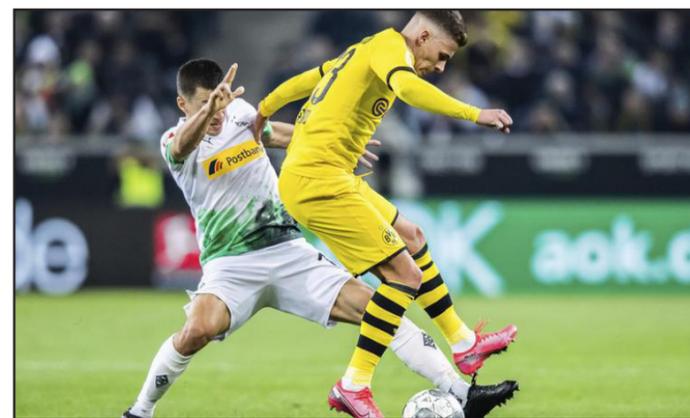
And the Nuggets thought Murray's waved-off basket was definitely the wrong call, albeit one that sparked them even more than any of his 21 points that did count.

"He definitely raised our energy," Grant said. "He was hitting a ton of big shots."

The Bucks were swept by Denver in the two-game season series. The Nuggets won 127-115 in Milwaukee on Jan. 31 for their signature win this season.

With Jokic having an off night, Grant and Millsap picked up the slack with 15 first-half points each as the Nuggets raced out to a 16-point lead before Milwaukee cut it to 62-54 at the break.

## German Football Reluctant to Play Games Behind Closed Doors



Mönchengladbach's Stefan Lainer, left, and Dortmund's Torgan Hazard battle for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Mönchengladbach and Borussia Dortmund, at Borussia Park, Mönchengladbach, Germany, March 7, 2020.

BERLIN (AP) - While Swiss, French, and Italian sports are shutting down doors due to the coronavirus outbreak, it gives Germany a very different picture.

The reason might be the federal political system with local health authorities deciding in states and smaller regions about to run large-scale events or not.

The German health minister's recommendation, to consider cancelling all events with more than 1000 people, isn't compulsory but rather a suggestion.

Despite that, German football fans might have to turn on their television sets to watch their favourite club play.

While Borussia Dortmund is facing a game behind closed doors in the last-16-round second leg in Paris, the authorities of the City Leipzig have decided to implement specific precautionary measures but run the game of RB Leipzig against Tottenham Hotspur with fans allowed on the

stands. The City of Stuttgart made a similar decision for the second division top game of VfB Stuttgart vs. Arminia Bielefeld this Monday evening. Visitors will have their temperature checked at the gate by security.

In Northern-Rhine Westphalia, the state with the highest rate of infection in Germany, things might end differently.

The famous derby of Dortmund against Schalke this Saturday afternoon might have to take place behind closed doors. The state's health minister Karl-Josef Laumann announced that a corresponding directive would be issued shortly. The Northern-Rhine Westphalian government intends to follow the German health minister's advice.

The intention might affect the postponed Bundesliga match between Mönchengladbach against Cologne, rescheduled for this Wednesday evening. City authorities said a decision would be announced by Tuesday.