

Reds board discuss implications of void season

Contributed by John Walsh
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Workington Reds board of directors have met to discuss the implications of the NPL ending the current season early.

Directors and coaching staff held an emergency zoom meeting following the earlier announcement from the NPL regarding the continuation of the 2020/21 league season.

The three Trident Leagues boards (Isthmian League, Southern League and Northern Premier League) have informed all the clubs at Steps 3 and 4 that in their view the season should cease immediately and be declared null and void.

But the FA, who will make the ultimate decision, have decided to seek the views of all clubs on whether the 20/21 season should be terminated and if not what alternatives may be considered.

The Reds discussion centred on a few ideas that could possibly enable a situation where promotion and relegation were possible.

One proposal of many discussed is to play a full round of games, (i.e. each team plays each other once) where the season recommences at the beginning of March and plays through until the end of May, in order that promotion and relegation can be decided.

The clubs are expected to have about ten days to a fortnight to express their views before the FA announce their decision.

After the meeting Reds new chairman Dave Bowden (pictured) said: "We feel it is incredibly important to update everyone associated with club on the issues and our thinking soon as things develop. The impact of this whole situation and serious likelihood of the season ending on the club is wide ranging. It affects our playing staff, fans and sponsors alike.

"But the latest situation surrounding the covid-19 pandemic for all of us is grave and at no point should safety be compromised. So we discussed a few ideas that could possibly enable a situation where promotion and relegation were possible.

"This of course would depend very much on a vast improvement in the covid situation, which is very uncertain.

"Aggregating last seasons points total with this year, or consolidating a points per game were also under consideration. The club will therefore await the survey and put forward some alternatives. But at all times we are extremely sensitive to the wider issues facing us all as we remain in lockdown.

"On behalf of all the board, if the season does end as now seems more than likely, I can't tell you how disappointed we would be for Danny, Stephen and all the players who have given their all over the last two years. None of us could have asked any more from them. It will be an even bigger challenge when the season resumes to maintain

this momentum.

“This disappointment extends to our fans, sponsors, staff and volunteers who have been remarkable in their efforts for the club. In the meantime we continue to work on our planning on and off the pitch to resume playing football whenever that may be.”

Reds were leading the table by ten points when last season was declared void and they are handily placed in third after nine games of the current campaign, unbeaten in the League.

Probably just as important, the club is in an excellent position, without owing a penny and having money in the bank. The club’s contracted players and staff are currently on furlough.

It will be a blow if Reds miss-out on promotion for a second year through no fault of their own, condemning them to another year in NPL North West.

The words of Nantwich manager Dave Cooke come back strongly following his side’s 3-2 FA Trophy win over Reds. He said: “This is the best team that’s played here in my three years in charge. They just need to get out of this League and they will be fine!”

But getting out of this League is proving harder than anyone can have imagined – with little of it down to the football.