

Immobile matches scoring record as Lecce go down

Genoa secure safety on last day of longest Serie A season

ROME, Aug 3, (AP) — Genoa secured safety on the final day of the longest-ever Serie A season, while Lecce dropped down to the second division.

Genoa beat Hellas Verona 3-0 to finish four points ahead of Lecce and ensure a 14th consecutive season in the top Italian league. Lecce lost 4-3 to Parma.

Brescia and SPAL had already been mathematically relegated.

The coronavirus-delayed season ended almost 12 months after it started on Aug 24, 2019.

"The longest season in history ends today, in our country's most difficult year in recent memory," said Vincenzo Spadafora, Italy's Sports Minister.

At the start of the lockdown in March, Italy was the epicenter of the pandemic in Europe and has now registered more than 35,000 deaths from COVID-19.

SOCCER

"During those weeks we really thought that the season should be stopped," Spadafora said. "But thanks to the series of precautions we took and the seriousness of the protocols put in place by the Italian soccer federation, the season was not only able to restart but also be completed."

Due to the virus, the season was suspended for more than three months between March and June.

Juventus sealed a record-extending ninth straight title last weekend.

Antonio Sanabria scored twice for Genoa, which also got a goal from Cristian Romero.

Still, it was a nervous finish with Genoa losing two players to red cards and ending with nine men to Verona's 10.

Lecce, which needed to win and hope that Genoa didn't, fought back from two goals down to equalize by halftime. But then Andreas Cornelius and Roberto Inglese restored Parma's two-goal lead before Gianluca Lapadula pulled one back for Lecce.

Udinese beat eighth-place Sassuolo 1-0, Fiorentina defeated last-place SPAL 3-1 to finish 10th, and Bologna drew 1-1 with Torino.

Helped by a rule change that led to more penalty kicks, Ciro Immobile matched the record for goals in a Serie A season with 36.

In his last match of the season, Immo-



Juventus' Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci hold up the trophy as Juventus players celebrate winning an unprecedented ninth consecutive Italian Serie A soccer title, at the end of the Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Roma, at the Allianz stadium in Turin, Italy on Aug 1. (AP)

bile finished off an exchange with Adam Marušić with one touch midway through the first half of a 3-1 loss at Napoli.

Current Juventus striker Gonzalo Higuain also scored 36 in 2015-16 while with Napoli, improving by one goal on the previous mark set by Gunnar Nord-

hal 66 years earlier.

However, while Higuain scored only three of his goals in 2015-16 with penalties, Immobile had 14 penalties this season — around 40 percent of his total goals. Cristiano Ronaldo, who finished second on this season's scoring list with

31 to match Juventus' club record, had 12 penalties. The plethora of penalties was a product of a rule calling for involuntary handballs to be whistled as fouls.

The rule is expected to be revised for next season.

Immobile also sealed this season's

European Golden Shoe award.

Fabian Ruiz, Lorenzo Insigne and Matteo Politano scored for Napoli.

The loss saw Lazio finish in fourth place — having trailed leaders Juventus by just one point entering the break for the coronavirus pandemic.

Inter Milan sealed second place with a 2-0 win over high-scoring Atalanta, which hadn't been held to a clean sheet since November. Danilo D'Ambrosio scored with a header and Ashley Young found the target from outside the area in the opening 20 minutes.



Torino's Simone Zaza jumps for the ball against Bologna's Gary Medel during a Serie A soccer match between Bologna and Torino at the Renato Dall'Ara Stadium in Bologna, Italy on Aug 2. (AP)



Dallas Wings' Astou Ndour (45) sets a pick on Las Vegas Aces' Lindsay Allen (right), for teammate Moriah Jefferson during the first half of a WNBA basketball game on Aug 2 in Bradenton, Fla. (AP)

Mercury dominate Liberty

Mitchell and Dupree help Fever erase early deficit, beat Dream

BRADENTON, Fla., Aug 3, (AP) — Kelsey Mitchell was 4 of 5 from 3-point range and finished with 23 points, Candice Dupree added 21 and the Indiana Fever erased an early double-digit deficit to beat the Atlanta Dream 93-77 on Sunday.

Teaira McCowan had 12 points and rookie Julie Allemand added 10 points, nine assists and six rebounds for Indiana (2-2).

Courtney Williams scored a season-high 18 points for Atlanta (2-2), Elizabeth Williams and Chenedy Carter each added 15 — on combined 14-of-21 shooting — and Betnijah Laney had 13 points, six rebounds and matched her career high with four steals.

The Dream jumped to a 10-0 lead but Indiana answered with a 13-0 run and never again trailed. The Fever scored the last five first-quarter points and opened the second with an 11-2, making it 41-25 on Tiffany Mitchell's three-point play with 5:25 left.

Elizabeth Williams made an and-1 free throw to trim Atlanta's deficit to seven with 3:36 to play, but Indiana responded with a 10-2 spurt, capped by Kelsey Mitchell's 3-pointer with 45.8 seconds left.

Meanwhile, Bria Hartley scored a career-high 27 points and the Phoenix Mercury beat the New York Liberty 96-67.

Hartley, who signed with the Mercury as a free agent after spending the

last three seasons with the Liberty, was 10 of 18 shooting. Diana Taurasi had 18 points, nine assists, three steals and two blocks and Brittney Griner added 16 points for Phoenix (2-2).

New York point guard Sabrina Ionescu, the No. 1 pick in April's draft, did not play due to an ankle injury suffered in Friday's loss to the Atlanta Dream and is expected to miss a month.

Kia Nurse, who missed Friday's game due to an ankle injury of her own, led the Liberty with 16 points but made just 3 of 17 from the field.

BASKETBALL

Layshia Clarendon added 12 points and Amanda Zahui B scored 11.

Phoenix, which never trailed, led by as many as 16 in the first half and took a 41-27 lead into halftime. The Liberty used an 18-3 run to trim their deficit to 55-53 when Zahui B hit a 3-pointer with two minutes left in the third quarter, but the Mercury scored 17 of the next 19 points to pull away for good.

New York, which is 0-4 for the second consecutive season, shot just 24.7% (18 of 73) from the field, including 5 of 35 (14.3%) from 3-point range.

IPL 'set' to be staged in UAE

NEW DELHI, Aug 3, (AP) — The Indian Premier League is set to be staged in the United Arab Emirates from Sept. 19 to Nov. 10, subject to government approval.

The IPL's governing council confirmed the proposed dates and venues during a video conference on Sunday.

"Taking note of the prevailing COVID-19 situation in India, the IPL governing council decided to stage the tournament in the United Arab Emirates and the matches will be played in Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi subject

CRICKET

to necessary clearances from the government of India," Jay Shah, honorary secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said in a statement.

The lucrative annual Twenty20 tournament had originally been scheduled to start March 29 before it was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The spread of COVID-19 forced organizers to move the competition abroad. A window to hold the tournament opened when the International Cricket Council postponed the men's Twenty20 World Cup, which had been scheduled to be staged in Australia in October and November.

International cricket was suspended in March because of the pandemic and resumed last month with England hosting the West Indies in a three-test series contested under strict bio-security restrictions. The IPL council said it discussed procedures for delivering a "bio-secure environment for safe and successful conduct" and was still working on details.

Coyotes start fast, hold off Predators

Blue Jackets edge Maple Leafs in Game 1

EDMONTON, Alberta, Aug 3, (AP) — Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored the first of Arizona's three first-period goals, a healthy Phil Kessel had two assists and the Coyotes held on to beat the Nashville Predators 4-3 on Sunday to open their Stanley Cup qualifier series.

The Coyotes made the most of their first postseason appearance since 2012, scoring three goals in the opening period on their way to

ICE HOCKEY

building a 4-1 lead.

The Predators rallied behind two goals by Filip Forsberg, the second midway through the third period, to cut Arizona's lead to 4-3.

Darcy Kuemper, who stopped 40 shots, held off Nashville's late push and the Coyotes snatched momentum heading into Game 2 of the best-of-five series on Tuesday.

Christian Dvorak, Clayton Keller and Michael Grabner also scored for Arizona. Ryan Ellis also scored for Nashville, and Juuse Saros stopped 33 shots. Nashville was sixth in the Western Conference when the season was halted because of the coronavirus

'Infantino should remain president'

LONDON, Aug 3, (AP) — Gianni Infantino can remain FIFA president and should not be forced from power while under criminal investigation, world football's governing body told The Associated Press on Saturday.

A Swiss special prosecutor opened a criminal case into Infantino's conduct on Thursday over his meetings with the country's attorney general who has been leading a sprawling investigation into football corruption.

"There is nothing preventing the president from performing his duties," FIFA said in a statement to the AP. "He will contin-

ue to fully assume his functions within FIFA."

The FIFA ethics committee faced calls to suspend Infantino from his predecessor, Sepp Blatter, who was toppled in disgrace in 2015 and banned from world football until 2021.

"The FIFA president is subject to a criminal investigation by the Swiss judicial authorities," FIFA said, "but he has not been charged nor is he guilty of anything. ... FIFA and its President will continue to cooperate fully with the judicial authorities in Switzerland until these investigations are concluded."

pandemic. The Coyotes were beneficiaries of the new playoff format for the restart, earning a spot in the qualifier after ending the regular season 11th in the West.

Blue Jackets 2, Maple Leafs 0

Joonas Korpi stopped 28 shots in his first playoff start, Cam Atkinson scored early in the third period and Columbus beat Toronto in Game 1 of their best-of-five qualifying round series.

After Korpi stopped Toronto veteran goalie Frederik Andersen through the first two periods, Atkin-

son's snap shot from the top of the right circle went under Andersen's right arm 1:05 into the third.

Wild 3, Canucks 0

Jared Spurgeon scored twice and Alex Stalock stopped 28 shots to get his first career postseason win, leading Minnesota Wild past Vancouver in Game 1 of their qualifying series.

Kevin Fiala also scored — one of Minnesota's two power-play goals. Eric Staal had two assists and Spurgeon sealed the win with an empty-netter in the final minute.

Avalanche 2, Blues 1

Nazem Kadri scored a buzzer-beating power-play goal to lift Colorado past defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis in Western Conference round-robin play. Kadri's shot crossed the goal line with 0.1 seconds on the clock. The NHL reviewed the play for several minutes before calling it a good goal.

Colorado took an early lead in the seeding race among the top four teams in the West. The Avalanche, Blues, Vegas Golden Knights and Dallas Stars have byes into the traditional first round of the NHL playoffs and will each face the winner of a best-of-five qualifying round series.

Flyers 4, Bruins 1

Carter Hart stopped 34 shots, and Philadelphia opened the playoffs seeding round with a victory over Presidents' Trophy-winning Boston.

Hart is 11 days shy of his 22nd birthday in becoming the youngest goalie in Flyers history to win a playoff game. Michael Raffl had a goal and assist, and Nate Thompson, Philippe Myers and Scott Laughton also scored.

With 16 teams competing in best-of-five elimination series, the top four teams in each conference are playing a round-robin series to determine seeding entering the first round of the playoffs. Philadelphia finished fourth in the Eastern Conference standings, and the Bruins first.



Toronto Maple Leafs center Auston Matthews (34) gets tripped as Columbus Blue Jackets center Pierre-Luc Dubois (18) and center Liam Foudy (19) defend during the second period of an NHL hockey playoff game in Toronto on Aug 2. (AP)