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**International Sports Event Guideline in Dubai
During a Global Health Crisis (Covid19 Pandemic)**

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MASTER Dissertation submitted to the professorial body for the partial fulfillment of obligations for the awarding of a post-graduate title in the Post-graduate Programme, "Organization and Management of Olympic Events" of the University of the Peloponnese, in the branch of "Olympic Education"
Sparta 2021

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SUMMARY

Rashed Mohammad Abdulla: International Sports Event Guideline in Dubai During a Global Health Crisis (Covid19 Pandemic)

(Under the supervision of Jean-Loup Chappelet, Professor)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country with seven emirates, locked its borders to the whole world on March 19th, 2020 when it was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) that Covid-19 was a global pandemic.

Media coverage of the worldwide health crisis was paramount in all press releases, large or small media networks. Cancellations and postponements of mega-scale events ensued, national and international, including some of the world's biggest sporting events and competitions. But there was very few, however, focus on the impact on how the pandemic totally changed sports participation. In those critical days in the first quarter of 2020 when other sports were ceasing to function in any meaningful way all around the world, Dubai, an emirate of UAE, with world class tourism and stunning tailored destinations - continued hosting international mega sporting events, even in the midst of a pandemic.

The motivation of this paper is to traverse the reasons as to why Dubai sports remained open much earlier than many of their city counterparts and indeed, longer than many other sports in the Middle East. This research consider the challenges faced with the impact of the pandemic to Dubai's sports industry and how the Dubai governments' actions towards maintaining the continuity and support on sports.

No academic research has been conducted into the sports organization of Dubai on how they have successfully managed mega-sporting events during the onslaught of Covid19, however, there are some parallels between the challenges facing them and other sports governing bodies faced during a pandemic.

The Dubai governing bodies were fast to take decisive action in relation to sport in their mega city, with long-term impact on managing and hosting international mega-sports with the created guidelines imposed throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 crisis has been seen as an opportunity to innovate and rethink policies, processes, and priorities and make significant changes which will strengthen the sports organizations and their sports management in the longer term should another health crisis arise.

Keywords: mega event planning, guideline approach, Dubai sports

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International Sports Event Guideline in Dubai During a Global Health Crisis (Covid19 Pandemic)

ABSTRACT

The Covid19 pandemic brought massive challenges to the Dubai sports sector where hosting international mega-sport events has been cut short.

In historical context throughout a pandemic, no country's health system is fully in their control. This research paper takes a closer examination as to how the Dubai's sports industry has collided with the global Covid-19 pandemic as sports events have been cancelled worldwide, as star athletes have been infected with the virus, and as sports viewers have been moved online. This study will answer as to how the Dubai's sport industry progressed into hold sporting events during the on-going pandemic.

With contributors from different governing bodies in Dubai, this academic essay offers commentaries from government leaders, five mega-sports event cases conducted during the pandemic, and an informed analysis across the making of Dubai's guideline for international mega-sports management during a pandemic.

While Covid19 will automatically lodge a long threat over sporting events for years to follow, and although the set of circumstances is progressing fast, the future is still undetermined with the Covid19 virus not yet contained. This essay offers some important perspectives on how hosting international sports events influence policies and practices during a global health crisis.

Cities like Dubai are expected to think of solutions with great importance for other countries to duplicate significantly. Dubai knows that infectious diseases like the Covid-19 virus are always aggregated concern for a nation *because these pathogens are infectious*. A single person's choices can undulate outward to affect another human being, whole cities, entire countries, and neighboring continents; one individual infected by the virus can seed a meridian

worth of indisposed Covid-19 cases. Each person's odds of getting infected is dependent on the choices of everyone around them.

Components in being able to host international mega-sport event during an on-going pandemic is built on relationships of trust between nations, commitment to sports and the brand personality of the host city Dubai. However this research has not encompassed the full guideline on those relationships on international sports event. There are no existing models that fit into this research. This research aimed to identify the relationships between engagements in different international sports federations with Dubai. Results showed significant positive correlations between several variables illustrating that Dubai does have an impact into the way they handled the pandemic, how they trust and remain committed to fight against it. Different health protocols from different government agencies were gathered in this essay, giving out questionnaires to governing heads and in-depth interviews were used as a means of gathering data.

This paper also examines how perceptions of competence do influence leadership behavior in Dubai's sports management. Fueling fact-finding research was conducted involving the gathering qualitative data to support decisions to hold events during the pandemic. The sample considered in the study consisted of five government industries (airline, hospitality, transport, F&B, health authorities) working collectively in creating the guideline for the Dubai Sport Council. The arguments concerning self-efficacy and leadership behavior will be highlighted. Content analysis will help decode the sports comeback of Dubai earlier as it should have been as obtained from the use of cluster methods, hence allowing to directly answer the major concerns that rouse from the contradictory responses it revealed.

The unprecedented leadership qualities from Dubai's government figureheads and its policies during the pandemic helps in the development of creating a safe environment for all, which in turn contributed to the successful performance of the sports council seeing that their leaders are motivated to fight the pandemic against the odds.

Self-efficacy exposed leadership qualities with principal authorities performing with unparalleled positive results. Self-efficacy made the governing leaders of Dubai undertake the challenges of the pandemic head on, that tasks to combat the health crisis can be fulfilled

successfully, and hence continue executing solutions even if success is not achieved immediately.

The academic paper will provide practical findings from actual mega-events that involved in helping attain more leadership development interventions and focus towards improving the guidelines for hosting international events in its performances.

Successive training initiatives aimed at problem-solving skill improvement and the implementation of strategies for self-leadership was now the engine of the core agenda. The outcome of these leadership trainings can help the governing body of Dubai from different industries, as a whole, develop their talents to a full and organize themselves to be efficient, effective and motivated to perform better as ever.

The limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this work to my wife (Dorra Alij) and my son (Mohammad), and to my country the United Arab Emirates, and to all the individuals I have met in making this academic paper of which have inspired and motivated me during this educational journey.

I thank Allah for the strength He has given me to discover more of my inner strength and resilience throughout this experience. I would also like to dedicate this work to cities recovering from the Covid19 pandemic throughout the world. May they find the strength to meet each and every day with a new determination and rise above the challenges in this era of global health crisis.

CHAPTER I

The importance of a creating a Guideline for International Sports Mega Events in Dubai During a Pandemic

Thesis Statement

An analysis of international mega-sporting events that was hosted in Dubai in the onset of Covid19 health crisis, and the conclusion that sporting events are plausible in creating a solid guideline that must be published through this paper for future mega events that will happen during a pandemic in Dubai.

Introduction

The purpose of this academic thesis is to establish an *International Sports Event Guideline During a Global Health Crisis (2020 Covid19 Pandemic)* for both annual events and one-time hosting of events in Dubai, in team sports and individual sports categories - and argue that the viability of hosting international mega-sports events in Dubai during a global health crisis is not impossible, that it is doable.

Dubai, geographically positioned to be the hub of sporting events because of the 2 billion spectators within a four-hour flight radius, banks on the idea that this is a possibility, with transparent health and safety protocols. Because of Dubai's successful handling of the coronavirus pandemic with its health and safety guidelines issued by different governing bodies, airlines opened and the city pursued to host international mega-sporting events. Challenges were faced and overcoming them became a clear step-by-step guideline on planning a mass gathering of this scale must be properly installed and published.

Dubai had already hosted several successful international events in 2020 and 2021 such as *(one)* the Indian Premier Cricket League 2020 that was transferred from India to Dubai in September to November 2020 due to the pandemic lockdown of the supposed host country India; *(two)* the success of the annual UAE Cycling Tour that Dubai hosted as an individual event on February 2020 and March 2021; *(three)* the Dubai Ports (DP) World Golf Tour Championship in December 2020 (an individual event) and to be hosted again in November 2021; *(four)* the annual World Para-Athletics Grand Prix, an international sportsmanship for people of

determination; and (*five*,) the special hosting of the Asian Boxing Championship – an event moved from India to Dubai, also due to pandemic lockdown of said country. Worldwide respect and recognition from all countries globally came in due process with Dubai’s successful approach to the 2020 health crisis pandemic.

This dissertation will take a look at the five successful events that transpired when Dubai opened its airports for sports tourism in the middle of a worldwide crisis, the 2020 Covid19 pandemic that placed the entire world on a standstill, and to outline a clear and concrete health and safety policy that can be used during a global health crisis. This paper will show how the success of these major events were done despite the tests of a global health crisis.

Worldwide commercial and entertainment activities are now enveloped into a narrow marginal range as entire cities around the globe faced the pressure of the Covid-19 pandemic. Movement of people and maneuvering merchandises of goods that is needed in every country are immediately constricted due to the universal connectivity the world have that might accelerate the spread of the virus.

This paper will answer:

- What has caused other major cities deny sports events under the onslaught of the virus? And why has Dubai succeeded?
- What are the challenges that Covid-19 has exposed in sports tourism?
- How important can a sports guideline for planning mega-event systematically equip the organizing council of the city be ready for unforeseen pandemic management in the future?

Mega sporting events are not new in Dubai. Since 1989, it has hosted spectacular events that put Dubai on the map as an international sport destination. The Dubai Desert Classic, part of the destination line-up stop of the European Golf Tour, started its tee and putt in Dubai in 1989. The Dubai Tennis Championships made its first appearance in the city in 1993 and attracted top players of the world since, and top media that tows with it, giving full coverage to the world.

The pandemic has not stopped Dubai from exiting the emirate from the sports and leisure landing arena it is known for. This is no different from any government’s diversification efforts to keep economics afloat with a clear message that Dubai is exempted from the normal rules of capitalism, because it just does not apply in Dubai.

The health and safety guideline formulated by this academic paper will help athletes, officials, employers, workers, and resident attendees protect themselves and others from Covid19

when planning and attending a mass gatherings or mega events hosted by Dubai of this scale. This guideline will help the city to ably host international federations sports events and invite more events in the near future.

Such expansive, extensive and expensive plans would be unthinkable in most cases for cities in other parts of the world. But remember that this is Dubai, the go-go-go business center of the United Arab Emirates. The unofficial motto of this city is that ‘the bigger and bolder, the better.’ The pandemic did not alter this motto since. Massive buildings line the city skyline with skyscrapers rising into the brilliant sunny skies. Its new addition, the Burj Dubai is now on its final phase, promises to be the world's tallest, even taller than their own Burj Khalifa, at more than 2,300 feet. International mega-events are being homed in this city including the Expo 2020, a year delayed because of the pandemic.

Luxury hotels abound in this city that are now operational on its 100 per cent undertakings - like the Burj al Arab, the only seven-star hotel in the world where guests are pampered like royalties. The most expensive oil in the world awaits every guest with offerings of exotic fruits and top rate champagne when they enter the ultra luxurious lobby. The huge shopping malls that abounds, like the Dubai Mall and The Mall of Emirates to name a few, offers plenty of incongruous sights. You witness families enjoying the world’s biggest indoor aquarium, expats sipping Starbucks frappuccinos while watching locals and tourists alike ski down a synthetic slope of snow and ice. This is by far the only destination that can host any future mega events while other countries are still grappling with the surge of the global health crisis.

The negative health problems arising from the Covid-19 pandemic is crystal clear - and this has been scientifically documented. The impact of the virus on hosting international sports events however is poorly understood.

The objective of this study is to present the safety protocols and strict guidelines when hosting an international events, and make necessary amendments to existing guidelines, its improvement for continuous development of a Guide Book during a pandemic that can be shared and used with other emirates in UAE. This will be the guidebook of Dubai in sporting events during a worldwide health crisis.

The scope of the study is limited to:

Different government entities guidelines from governing bodies in UAE:

- Dubai Government Protocol
- Coronavirus (Covid 19) Advisory - Travel to Dubai (Alert | Dubai Airports)
 - Hospitality Sector
 - Emirates Airline Health Protocol
- UAE Visa Information | Visa and Passport | Emirates United Arab Emirates
 - F & B Protocol from Dubai Health Authorities
- Dubai Municipality IT Department (dm.gov.ae)
 - Road & Transport Authority (RTA)
 - <https://www.rta.ae/wps/portal/rta/ae/home/promotion/covid-19>

(Five) Mega-events that transpired in Dubai in the onset of the pandemic for 2020 and 2021. The data and results will be analyzed.

Major events analyzed in this paper:

1. UAE Cycling Tour 2020 & 2021
2. Indian Premier Cricket League 2020
3. Dubai Ports (DP) World Golf Tour Championship 2020
4. World Para-Athletics Grand Prix 2020 (Fazza Championship)
5. Asian Boxing Championship 2021

Covid-19's scar on the sports event will still be glaring. Gone will be the shoulder-to-shoulder celebratory cheers that accompanies the start of any sporting competition. Instead of thousands in the audience, few will be allowed, or restricted to online views. Opening to live audiences will be in phases. There will be empty stands, at first, and performers in mandatory masks.

In the many months leading to Dubai in a pandemic state, there were some questions of whether the Dubai Sports Council will hold mega events, or would it ever actually start hosting events again. They did, even in the onset or in the middle of the pandemic, issuing special visas and communicating strict requirements for all visiting athletes and its federations, implementing special attention for red zone countries to enter the city such as (India, Pakistan, South Africa) .

This paper will prove the successes of Dubai Sports Council's handling of some of the international mega-sports events it hosted and show the rising data of its favorable results.

Scheduled events that got cancelled like the Dubai Expo 2020 & Tokyo Olympics games, delayed for another year because of the Covid-19 pandemic, are now ready as ever. Upcoming international mega-sports events are now being aligned with the Expo 2020, but still, many local health officials and residents want these future events to go as planned because of the surging infection rates and new mutated variants of the virus makes it more complex from other countries. But Dubai being Dubai, is very confident that it can meet the health and safety challenges that came with the pandemic.

Covid19 has been only the latest, albeit biggest, challenge for any sporting event that has always been mired in drama, from an economic argument and questionable Covid-related safety measures. The international media is also relentless in its wave of cynicism that extends considerably beyond the customary debate about a clear safety protocol that is part of every sporting event. This paper will prove that technology and proper planning, the success in hosting some of the biggest international sporting events, happened because of Dubai's strict health and safety measures in handling events of this scale.

Amid relentless stream of bad news that is still happening because of the pandemic, in part, the gloom is a product of global circumstances: that this year or even next, or even the next following few years perhaps, have not yet escaped the shadows of the coronavirus pandemic, not even making Dubai exempt. With the circulation of the highly contagious Delta variant recently ushering in a fourth state of emergency, challenges are faced, and fear remains that any sporting event will spiral into a super-spreader event instead.

Every sporting event showcases athletes performing at the top of their game, their movement is fluid and finessed, and executed with incomprehensible sportsmanship. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, UAE Minister of Defense, and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai and The Crown Prince of Dubai himself, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, dire advocates on good health, set an example for all the residents to see that sports can be integrated in all of us even if there is a pandemic.

Support from different Dubai government bodies — long known globally as a sporting venue with enthusiastic residents as avid fans — has to come up with specific guidelines to answer direct concerns about hosting mega events into becoming a super-spreader event. This paper will

gather all published guidelines from different government entities and make a solid event guideline - for all guidelines.

This is to protect the guest athletes and its entire teams, the residents of Dubai, and the country UAE on which is of the utmost importance.

Even though there were many conflicting challenges for major international sporting events in getting them to kick off in 2020, it had Dubai to keep it going. When many countries were on red alert forcing air travel to close, the Dubai Sports Council ensured safe travel of athletes and their team federations. Every government body of Dubai issued step-by-step protocols on the safety measures for visiting delegates. Ultimately, it was the united efforts of different governing bodies that such events happened, and ensured its success. A lot of people, craving for certain normalcy needed an activity that inspires, and a game of sportsmanship brings new subcultures to the Dubai sports culture in itself. The obvious sports camaraderie shines brightly — and hope is not lost, even when a pandemic strikes.

The charm of a mega-sporting event can cut through the dejection and isolation, a worldwide symptom from a pandemic. The world's top athletes have revealed to every sport enthusiasts that their years of self-discipline, sacrifices and adversity will be tested to the full as they enter once again into the sporting spotlight. They never stopped to light up the world's hope with their inspirational stories of sportsmanship, grace and perseverance. Dubai welcomed this dedication from every athlete. Sportsmanship shines the brightest in the direst adversity like a global pandemic.

Life seems very divisive, just now. Every government entity is in a polarized position on what to implement, or what book to use cohesively as a health and safety measure. There is so much guideline written in parallel industries with sports, like the Hospitality industry, the Food and Beverage entity, the ease of commuting from the Roads and Transport Authority body from coming into the country and movement within Dubai and its exit, and the communication (media) sector. It is just inspiring to witness that the power of sport has brought everyone to work together, to reminded us that sports have a wonderful role that unites and is important for everyone.

Dubai had the general support of the world before Covid19 erupted. The Dubai Sports Council is still one of the crown jewels in the government's strategy of turning sports tourism into an economic growth engine. A successful hosting of sport events during an ongoing

pandemic will set the expectations even higher for the global sporting event drivers in any country.

This paper will prove that despite all the criticism, Dubai held successful international mega-sporting event in the heart of a global Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the strict rules imposed for spectators, done in five phases, had created a clear precautionary measure that will ensure health safety foremost, and that the event will open into a 100 per cent viewing capacity on its fifth phase are already in recommendation. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests and the ‘bubble community’ is enforced, including forcing everyone to wear masks at all times that may seem suffocating. But the thick web of restrictions with a focused set of strict guidelines will prove effectual by allowing any international sporting competition to go ahead.

Public opinion worldwide that has long been skeptical or in some cases absolute antagonistic towards Dubai’s opening as the sport tourism spot during a global crisis, will turn around, at least in part, with a rulebook on health and safety agreement for everyone involved and can be used through this academic study.

The health security of hosting an international mega-sports event can be achieved because Dubai is not slowing down in hosting future events. Dubai will keep on going. The whole world came to a standstill since the announcement by WHO of the global pandemic but sports events have returned center stage in Dubai, and people all around witnessed and experienced how the magic of an international sporting event can unite everyone - by shared emotions on moments of triumphs and inspiration in the grace of defeats.

The time for second thoughts if hosting mega-events in Dubai has passed. All alternatives are off the table. Let the normalcy of a sporting event begin in this part of the world.

The entrepreneurial spirit that built Dubai, with sports as a multi trillion-dollar business, Dubai has become the blueprint of financial interest in the global circle because any Dubai sports event, or any Dubai event at that, is already happening with health safety as its primary consideration.

Dubai sports borough contributed 4 Billion AED (\$1.08bn) in 2020 to the economy, which hosted the biggest national and international mega-sporting events that attracted visitors from all corners of the world. The sport district's benefaction to its national and local economy continued to increase as it allowed Dubai to attract investment and create more jobs. The advanced sports infrastructure of Dubai included dedicated running tracks, cycling tracks, and the upsurge of

academies in sports and fitness centers have played a significant role in the growth of the sport sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dubai is the training hub of sports in the Middle East and has hosted more than 70 training camps and friendly matches for international teams in multiple disciplines, such as cricket, modern pentathlon, tennis, golf, swimming, cycling, football, badminton, and rugby since the first quarter of 2021. The biggest Asian and European football clubs have training camps in Dubai. International tennis and paddle players have regularly trained in the emirate to prepare for upcoming events. Participants in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games have their rigorous training in Dubai. Denmark's *Viktor Axelsen*, an Olympic men's badminton champion, have used Dubai's training facilities to prepare for international championships.

Dubai's world-class facilities and favorable legislations for international athletes, tourists and all other visitors have highlighted the emirate's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It enabled Dubai to lock its place as a preferred destination for international sports investors. Dubai city has registered an astounding recovery in its economic sectors such as tourism and real estate over the past few months after the Covid-19 health crisis disrupted the growth of other countries around the world. ⁽¹⁾

Dubai's impact of the successes of hosting major international events prompts this author to create and publish a solid **International Sports Event Guideline During a Global Health Crisis (Covid19 Pandemic)** for Dubai that can be used as a template for other emirates or for other countries to use. The guidelines can allow sporting events in the world without hesitation during a major worldwide health crisis.

Dubai Prepared

The massive operational logistics when hosting what would be the world's most popular and lucrative tournaments in Dubai entails careful and detailed planning that involves many governing bodies with no room for error. This is movement of people and tons of equipment entering the city, and Dubai brings in the experts. All aspects of hosting the international mega-events must be thoroughly discussed, especially the IPL. This includes combined cooperation between three strategic emirates: the Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah Sports Councils, the Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah tourism bodies and their respective government entities - such as the UAE police forces and the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention.

The UAE is not a neophyte in hosting the IPL having staged more than 20 IPL matches in 2014 before the pandemic in 2020. A clear understanding of what is needed to be done to fully host such mega-event during a pandemic is necessary, and who they need to hire as consultants and engage from the first phases of the event throughout the end of the tournament.

UAE boasts some of the best training and practice facilities with mega stadiums across three Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah). All international sport franchises are always looking to have a three-four week training camp in the UAE before any competition begins. All three emirates are confident that it is more than adequate facilities to support any international team franchises pre-game and game facilities.

Application of the theory of self-definition

Dubai, seen as a catalyst in accelerating positive change during the onslaught of pandemic, has provided opportunities for UAE's industry players to collaborate and link their strengths cohesively in full force efforts to come together and fight Covid-19 - through sports.

The DP World, Dubai's leading entity in the global supply and logistics arena through the Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza) and Jebel Ali Port, played a very crucial role in mitigating the effects of Covid-19. They have leveraged their logistical expertise to reach much needed vaccines and PCR test kits, and merged their services with other governing bodies where it mattered most during the lockdown phase and even after. As a value partner in Dubai Government's overarching plan for the 2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy, the DP World pharmaceutical division is one government pillar that helped in the fight of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dubai Vaccines Logistics Alliance

By working together through an Alliance across seven emirates on UAE, Covid-19 vaccines and essential supplies was distributed in record time across Dubai- as well as to the world. Dubai's genuine humanitarian support to help heal the world shone the brightest during the pandemic by activating logistics for vaccines and sending top medical and humanitarian aid. While this alliance partners work with governments of other countries, with other suppliers and manufacturers, and with worldwide logistics partners, DP World strengthened its core storage and distribution capacities for Covid-19 vaccines and medical essentials.

The Dubai Sports Council worked closely to provide free PCR and vaccinations to incoming sports athletes and delegates for the international sports they are hosting.

Dubai

Dubai could not progress if it is solely dependent on a reduced production of oil reserve. They are set to variegate the economy at all cost to become the financial capital of the United Arab Emirates, a nation of seven emirates that won independence 1971 from Britain.

Coronavirus (Covid19) in Dubai

The Covid-19 outbreak began in December 2019 and immediately presented a remarkable challenge for the entire world.

The source of the virus outbreak has been linked to a wet market in Wuhan (Hubei province, China) with Covid-19 first reported cases on December 31. Many of the associated deaths have been due to severe pneumonia caused by the virus. There were many human-to-human and patient-to-medical staff transmission by the virus that had been confirmed.

Soon after, cases of the virus spreading have been confirmed in numerous countries and territories around the world, and Dubai was not exempt.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the global outbreak a pandemic.

Tight screening of the virus and quarantining measures are being implemented at airports worldwide, as well as large scale travel restrictions imposed by all countries on March of the same year,

Dry cough, chest pain, fever, and trouble breathing, all pneumonia symptoms, was deemed to be very contagious and can be transmitted easily from human to human. The influenza like virus, or the flu was the common cause of viral pneumonia.

The Global Covid19 Pandemic's Impact on Dubai Sport Industry

Reports of the first Covid-19 cases that came from Wuhan, China shed light on the unusual health conditions that caused deaths. It was quickly identified as a novel coronavirus, named 2019-nCoV or Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The virus rapidly crossed borders and spread throughout the world like wildfire. With delayed symptoms reaction or even asymptomatic transfer, the virus has taken a toll on every aspects of life, no matter how big or small.

All aspects of personal and professional life, regardless of who you are, are now under scrutiny in order to battle the pandemic. From connectivity because of international travel and global relationships, each country now was in isolation, on its own. People were advised to self-

quarantine for its health safety, and, the way in which the world communicated with others have moved online.

Immediately, sports abruptly ceased and removed from society. What once was a part of daily life for many, sports athletes and fans, was subjected for an indefinite amount of time of what to do next. With a death count continually rising worldwide nearing 5 Million and losses of Billions of dollars because of cancellations of sporting events, postponements, etc., Covid-19 has become root that impacted everyone. All sports, international or local, amateur or professional, leagues and stakeholders have been grappling through the pandemic's uncertainty.

The sporting world has been significantly affected without a doubt – and in some cases permanently altered the decadence of most sports businesses, organizations, events, and leagues because of Covid-19.

This essay will explore how the global pandemic has changed the Dubai sport industry, on how they operate to affiliated stakeholders, the marketing side, handling fans, assurance of sponsors, taking care of athletes, dealing with media members, viewers, administrators, and policymakers. Covering some of the tough challenges faced was not the only area of main concern. Dubai adopted carefully planned strategies in response to the public health crisis in organizing the mega-events. Contributions in this essay included some of the trends and expectations in the aftermath of the pandemic of sports in Dubai.

In addition to the pandemic's impact on sports, participants and practitioners, even spectators, Covid-19 has totally changed the game at the moment. It has introduced academics in a number of ways like the introduction of online classes and cloud-based conferences virtually because of vacated campuses and social distancing, online meetings of sport committees took place.

The Dubai sport management have successfully held international mega-sporting event during the pandemic and are continuing to conduct mega-events by assessing how Covid-19 is affecting the various segments of the sport industry. They have commenced the dissemination of factual information in their findings via a guideline that the city can publish as a resource.

Perspectives on sport marketing and sport communication in relation to Covid19, are covered by reviewing safety guidelines and protocols from different government industries of Dubai.

Aspects of the governance of Dubai's sport events are carefully assessed, with an in-depth analysis of how the Dubai government and the UAE faced Covid-19 challenges to lead in the event production of its mega-sports industry into new heights. The Dubai government's decisions and response to Covid19, based on internal (within Dubai) and external pressures (from other countries) to protect its residents shows how information can impacts its decision-making process in sports during the Covid-19 crisis. This is a critical analysis for the future of Dubai sport governance in a Covid-19 environment.

General Guidelines on Covid-19 in Dubai

To reduce the COVID-19 transmission risks, residents of UAE are strictly advised to abide by the following rules and measures:

- Frequently clean hands by applying an alcohol-based hand rub or washing with soap and water.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue; if used, throw the tissue away immediately and wash hands.
- If experiencing a fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or any other symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness, including pneumonia, call emergency services before going to the doctor or hospital to prevent the potential spread of the disease.
- Maintain Social Distance at all times
- Ensure all participants are always wearing their masks, unless engaged in a sport activity.

Consciously be aware of the mandated guidelines:

- Related to face mask
- To avoid enclosed spaces and crowds where possible.
- Provide sanitizers and masks all around the venue.
- Assign a Health & Safety Officer to ensure the application of all preventive and precautionary measures.
- Utilize Smart Payment channels.
- Avoid using shared items where possible or disinfect them after every use.
- Follow good hygiene practice – including wearing a face mask, washing your hands regularly or using hand sanitizer.
- Increase the number of security and marshals in the event to confirm the implementation of precautionary measures and disperse gatherings.

- Provide and allocate isolation rooms in the event of any positive case.
- Everyone is supported by the application of precautionary and preventive measures and monitoring by volunteers or security.

From lockdown to return to sports

The UAE Government announced a phase by phase return to sports by April of 2020 and eased the lock down restrictions for international travellers. However, Dubai only permitted games without an audience and a maximum capacity of 30% in the playing field. There was a limited workforce to attend the game premises in order to restrict the spread of Covid-19 as Dubai was adjusting to the "new normal". By May 2020, the UAE entered into the second phase in which the allowed fans to attend the games physically with safety measures and quota capacities at bay.

Some UAE establishments soon re-opened and maximized the leniency of the Dubai government's permitted quota. Majority of business establishments took a more conservative approach to return-to-work with employees and made the necessary preparations to ensure that their offices are Covid-19 secure and safe. Major reconfigurations must be done of workplaces and adopted to daily activity arrangements of social distancing, regular health checks and must-follow hygiene measures. All these operational responsibilities are given to everyone without exempt making the pandemic challenges substantial for businesses.

The Dubai Government has announced that all government sector in their umbrella will lead the way with respect to returning-to-work, ensuing 100% capacity expected by mid-June 2020. This was followed by the private sector soon after.

Despite the relaxation of the rules around lockdown measures, employees must continually follow to the health and safety guidelines as announced by the government, for example, the mandatory wearing of face masks at all times in all places. The key message was from the UAE Government is that despite the pandemic, we continue to live a life as 'normal' as it was, with full cooperation from everyone.

The non-stop assessments of health risks induced by the Covid-19 virus was key in formulating in accordance with health and safety legislation as well, as recent Government guidance for all. All contracts, policies and procedures have changed and reviewed in light of the current Covid-19 climate, tackling issues like work-from-home that altered working patterns.

The IT and data security for disciplinary penalties for Covid-19 related misconduct was published as a warning and its dire consequences.

The first full lockdown enforced by Dubai authorities was on a district housing the emirate's famous gold and spice markets on March 31, 2020. They emptied the whole district streets with strict stay-at-home mandate to disinfect the normally bustling area that once was filled with tourist and trade - as part of the government's efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Dubai opened multiple drive-thru testing centers across the city as the government did not hesitate to take any safety measures lightly against any possible risk to people's life - but not allowing its development grind to a halt.

The Five (5) mega-events on this study

1. UAE Cycling Tour 2020 & 2021

This was the first international mega sports event Dubai hosted (early stages of global pandemic).

The **2020 UAE Tour** event is a road cycling race that took place between 23 and 27 of February 2020 in the United Arab Emirates during the pandemic. It was the second edition of the UAE and the third race of the 2020 UCI (Union Cycliste International) World Tour. UCI World Tour maintains the overall UCI Road World Rankings and the UCI Road World Cup.

The race was held just as the pandemic rouse to notoriety, and following the fifth stage of the race, two staff members of one of the teams tested positive for Covid-19. Local organizers responded immediately and quarantined and tested all participants, including riders, organizers and team members. Authorities cancelled the race with two stages left of the race. By March 3, 2020, most of the international cycling delegates had left the country and returned to their normal early season schedules. Some teams that had tested positive with the coronavirus were still being held within the UAE with very little explanation as to what will happen next. This was due to the absence of a UAE health and safety protocol guideline for a pandemic. Delegates were eventually told they would be allowed to leave their hotel on March 14. ⁽²⁾

The **2021 UAE Tour** took place between 21 and 27 February 2021 with the United Arab Emirates having established a system in handling the event on a pandemic. This was the third edition of the UAE Tour and the first race of the 2021 UCI World Tour. ⁽³⁾

All nineteen UCI World Teams were joined by one UCI Pro Teams to make up the twenty teams that participated in the race. Each team entered seven riders, except for EF Education-Nippo with six, for a total of 139 riders, of which 125 finished. Every participating athlete and its delegates for the 2021 UAE Tour went through rigorous screening and PCR tests before coming into the UAE.

Even at Stage 2 of the race, after a round of another Covid19 testing on its first day on 21 February returned a positive result for an Alpecin-Fenix staff member. The entire team, including overnight race leader Mathieu Van Der Poel, withdrew from the race and the event continued and was a success. Stage 3-7 went ahead with anymore disruptions. ⁽⁴⁾

2. Indian Premier Cricket League 2020

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is the most famous cricket tournament in the world. The league was suspended in March 2020 by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), and was rescheduled in the last week of the month of September to first week of November 2020 without any spectators in the stadium.

Also, the ICC World T20, which is listed its tournament in October 2020, was also reschedule to the coming year 2021 by the ICC board which is known as the International Cricket Council. The postponement and rearrangement of sporting event schedule have left millions of fans dissatisfied. Many of these cricket games are played in front of a filled stadium, but due to the pandemic situation, social distancing was very much needed to prevent the spread of Covid-19. So, the athletes did not receive the gratification of their fascinating fans and supporters-full stadium cheers as the games were performed without spectators or was played in front of unfilled standiums.

Branded as Dream 11 and IPL 13, the **Indian Premier League 2020** was the thirteenth season of the IPL, a professional Twenty20 cricket (T20) well established international league by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in 2008.

The international tournament was originally scheduled on 29 March 2020 but was suspended until 15 April due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddav Thackeray released a statement on 12 March that IPL matches can only be held in the state only if they are played without spectators and in empty arenas. Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi Manish Sisodia announced soon after that no IPL matches would be held in Delhi due to the severe pandemic crisis experienced in India.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi later announced on 14 April that the lockdown in India would last until at least 3 May 2020, and the BCCI then suspended the international tournament indefinitely.

With the Covid-19 increasing high cases in India, BCCI declared its intentions to move the event overseas, following discussions in its Apex Council meeting on July 17, 2020. The UAE became destination of choice at that point. Around this time, there was an admission from all parties that the health situation of India was severe and it could not stage a mega-sporting event involving international players. They were not equipped.

With UAE headlining all around the world as the safest place to be in in the current global pandemic, the IPL was waiting for understanding of arrangements on international travel with UAE. To guarantee commercial flights are available, or even the use of chartered flights for international players and delegates to come in Dubai. It was not just a case of transporting all Indian players to Dubai but all international players and all other participants from other parts of the world would need to travel to Dubai.

The Emirates Cricket Board acknowledged receiving a letter of intent from the Board of Control for Cricket in India to host the 13th edition of the IPL in the UAE and Emirates Cricket Board asked Dubai Sports Council support to organize the event with assisting support from different government entities.

On 2 August 2020, it was announced that the tournament would be played between 19 September and 10 November 2020 in the United Arab Emirates, during an ongoing pandemic, because the country was leading in its fight against the Covid-19 virus.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians successfully retained their title with a five-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in the final on 10 November 2020. ⁽⁵⁾

Rules and regulations imposed on IPL:

Some of the rules were changed for the 2020 edition of the IPL.

- Players will not be allowed to use saliva to shine the ball.
- All the matches will be played without an audience. ⁽⁶⁾
- Captains will not shake hands after the toss.
- Front foot no-balls will be adjudicated by the third umpire rather than the on-field umpire.
- Teams will be allowed replacements if a player tests positive for COVID-19.

- If a Super Over is a tie, subsequent Super Overs shall be played until there is a winner.

As far as the cricket franchises are concerned, they discussed playing in the UAE during an owners call. With most of the global pool of players homebound due to the pandemic, the franchises are primarily concerned about the players getting enough training ahead of the tournament, which could go on for at least six weeks. Once moved to the UAE, it is understood that these franchises are likely to set up bases a month in advance in Dubai for training and must cater to any quarantine measures imposed by the Dubai government.

The decision on whether spectators will be allowed in the stadium through limited tickets or by invitation only will be based upon the advice of the UAE government.

IPL 2021 held (again) in the United Arab Emirates, two years in a row!

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the schedule for the remainder of the VIVO IPL 2021 which will be held in the United Arab Emirates for 2021. In the duration of almost a month long competition of the tournament, a total number of 31 matches will be played.

The spectator capacity was 60% from 25,000 overall seats with no PCR & vaccination required.

3. Dubai Ports (DP) World Golf Tour Championship 2020

The **DP World Tour Championship, Dubai** is the climax of the European Tour Race in Dubai and part of the golf tournament on the European Tour with an astounding prize fund of \$10,000,000.

First tournament was held in 2009 when the Order of Merit was replaced by the Race to Dubai. 60 leading world players joined in the Race to Dubai at the start of the tournament. A replacement for the Volvo Masters, the leading 60 money winners compete for the largest fund prize on the Order of Merit.

Like all other high profile sports, golf has been greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2020.

The final season, which was the 'Race to Dubai' mega-tournament, had been shortened. The European Tour teamed up with DP World to create a day to remember for one Covid-19 doctor in UAE and did some humanitarian actions to help raise awareness of the virus.

- first event with spectator with 3,500 people allowed

- players, officials & media was in bubble system
- all internal staff was regularly doing PCR test
- players they do ever 2 days PCR test
- face mask require for all spectator
- social distance of 2 meter
- no hand shakes between players, officials and spectator
- thermal temperature check point for all spectators and officials

4. World Para-Athletics Grand Prix 2021 (Fazza Championship): Paralympic Qualification Tokyo Games 2020

Dubai was home to the first official World Para Athletics competition since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Dubai 2021 Grand Prix started on 10 February 2021 with more than 450 athletes from 52 countries.

The Fazza International Championships, on its 12th edition in UAE, which has been part of the World Para Athletics Grand Prix since the series was launched in 2013.

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) has put in place a series of health and safety measures due to COVID-19, including sanitization of the stadium and seating areas, PCR tests, hoardings and boards of safety instructions inside the venue. Teams have been appointed to keep a check on the measures – like social distancing and usage of masks and sanitizer— to be strictly followed before and during the competition.

After a very challenging year in the 2020, Dubai was open to host the World Para Athletics 2021 edition of the championships. A detailed and strict precautionary measure that has to be followed against Covid19 was instilled with the health and safety of the visiting teams at top priority.

Dubai has always taken the lead and took the responsibility to host the first Para-Sport event after almost a year following cancellation or postponement of the major events due to Covid-19 pandemic.

On February 10-13, 2021, the 12th Fazza Athletics Championships – Dubai 2021 World Para Athletics Grand Prix went ahead at play.

Hosted under the patronage of Sheikh Mansoor Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairman of the Dubai Sports Council, the Dubai World Para Athletics Grand Prix

served as one of the seven qualifying Para Athletics events for Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games with an expected of more than 600 Para-athletes to join the championship from 63 countries.

Dubai has always been a favorite training ground for top athletes. Top names in the world Para-Athletic champions considers the training ground at the Dubai Club for People of Determination grounds as the best in the world.

The Dubai World Para Athletics Grand Prix was also the biggest Para Athletics Championships to be hosted - after the Dubai 2019 World Championships.

All mandatory precautionary measures have been constantly reminded, seen and distributed to all athletes and the organizing committees. Dubai sports management ordered sanitization of the stadium and seating areas, rigid PCR tests, hoardings and boards of safety measures inside the area and all others needed.

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) was well aware of the pandemic challenges when hosting mega-events but Dubai were ready to host another successful Championships after the Dubai 2019 Worlds.

The 2021 championships was demanding and different as this was the year it came with some Covid-19 challenges. The event entered in the historical record of UAE as it opened the Para-sport season following a year of no competition due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Asian Boxing Championship 2021

The Asian Boxing Championship moved from India to UAE as the international event was thrown into confusion due by the pandemic.

The Asian Boxing Championship that was supposedly scheduled in India but was moved to Dubai because of the intensified Covid-19 crisis in India. Its national federation remained as the co-host along with its UAE counterpart.

The international event was scheduled at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium from May 21 to 31, 2020 in the Indian national capital, but that month India was reporting over more than 20,000 daily cases.

In the onset of international travel restrictions and the daily addition of over thousands new cases in India everyday has led to several countries imposing bans on flights to and from India.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI), in consultation with Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC), then deemed it necessary to conduct the upcoming 2021 edition of the ASBC Asian Elite Men and Women Boxing Championships in Dubai.

The event was organized by BFI in association with UAE Boxing Federation with support of Dubai Sports Council.

Because of the compelled international travel restrictions from many countries due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation, the BFI and ASBC jointly took a decision to relocate the tournament to Dubai that has already been established as the safest ground to host the event with the pandemic still ongoing worldwide.

The shifting the venue out of India was a difficult decision that the India governing body had to take since there was no option but to continue the games in a safe environment. Boxers' safety was the most important concern. Dubai Sports Council closely monitored the safety situation for all.

With full support from the Dubai Government, the UAE Boxing Federation, in coordination with the Indian Boxing Federation and the International Boxing Association (AIBA), again hosted the Asian Boxing Championship on 21st May, 2021, in Dubai.

The UAE Boxing Federation offered to host the event in solidarity with India as the pandemic crisis arose, and both the Dubai Sports Council and the Asian Boxing Federation welcomed the move.

The Asian and Emirati Federations welcomed hosting the championship in the UAE, which will give Asian boxers who were certified to compete for the Tokyo Olympics the opportunity to train extensively, allowing athletes them to prepare for the Olympics in July. The UAE supports friendly countries and allocates all possible resources to serve sports and lead the region and continent in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the UAE provided all necessary assistance to make the event a success, it affirmed that the National Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) and all other pertinent authorities were approached to support the event. The necessary logistical support, including assisting relevant authorities in issuing entry visas to participating teams who will stay at the Royal Meridien Hotel in Dubai close to the airport.

This made the Emirati sporting programs succeed, which will advance the national sports sector and reinforce the UAE's regional sporting stature by cooperating with all partners in

hosting the Asian Boxing Championship and ensuring its success. The event was renamed the ‘Asian Boxing Championship, New Delhi-Dubai, in light of UAE’s keenness to support India.

Only one covid case was reported during the event and the person was immediately isolated from other participants, and the event went on and well.

Table of the Five (5) Mega-event case study: 2020 vs 2021

Event	Date 2020	Date 2021	# of participating nations / teams	# of athletes
UAE Cycling Tour	23 and 27 February 2020 <i>* 2nd edition of the <u>UAE Tour</u> and the third race of the <u>2020 UCI World Tour</u></i>	21 and 27 February 2021 <i>* 3rd edition of the <u>UAE Tour</u> and the first race of the <u>2021 UCI World Tour</u></i>	20 Teams	2021-139 riders, of which 125 finished
Indian Premier Cricket League	19 September and 10 November 2020 <i>*13th season</i>	19 September and 15 October 2021 <i>*14th season</i>	8 Teams	162 Players.
DP world Golf Tour	Dec. 10 - 13	Nov. 18-21 <i>*13th edition</i>	More than 30 Nations	60 Player
Fazza Championship for people of determination	Cancelled due to pandemic	Feb.10-13, 2021 <i>*12th Fazza Athletics Championships – Dubai 2021 World Para Athletics Grand Prix</i>	63 countries	600 participant

Asian Boxing Championship	Postponed due to pandemic	May 21 to June 1, 2021	More than 24 nation	156
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Bubble System

In response to Covid-19, ‘*bubble*’ has become the new vocabulary in the territory of sports, referring to an isolated set of accommodations and venues in which international teams and athletes can reside within and compete away from others and the general public.

Bubble was the term in reference to an area within which competing sports teams stay isolated among themselves during a series of games that included housing accommodations, all amenities, and the location at which the games are held without the presence of spectators. This "*bubble*" was created as a way to safely continue playing the tournament in the team sports events during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During their time off from games, practices, training, and meetings, those inside the *bubble* were allowed to enjoy exclusive amenities, while following prescribed safety regulations and practicing social distancing, on the premises provisions of their temporary residence. The hotel or similar accommodations like a housing unit or villa, the team athletes, coaches, and delegates, as well as league personnel, are provided with their own rooms. They might also be permitted to go to designated places for recreation or relaxation off the premises, but only within the "*bubble*." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Dubai Sports Council (DSC) adopted the "*bubble system*" for all sports delegations coming into the city, and kept the visiting international athletes, coaches and officials safe following the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

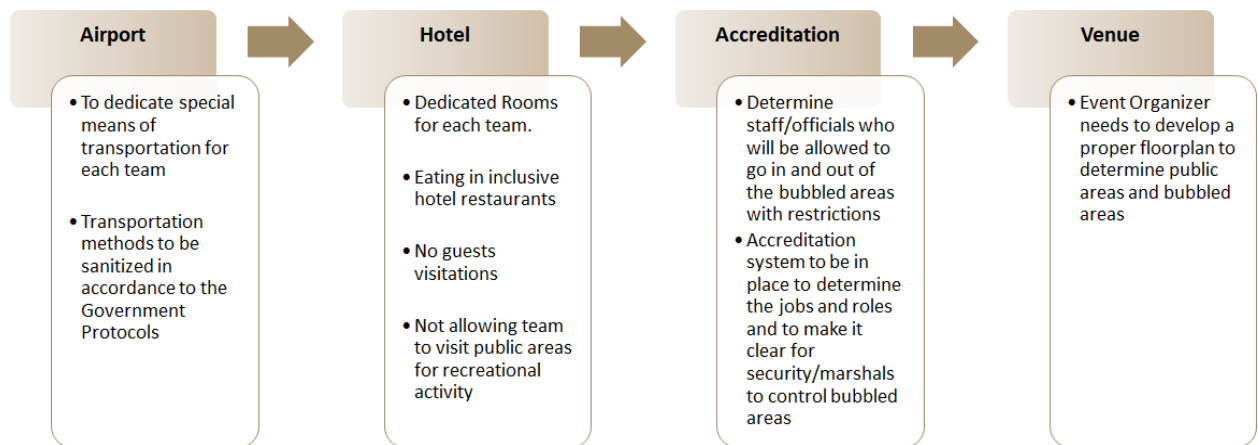
DSC assisted all teams and its entire delegation into securing exclusive designated venues from hotels, vehicles, meals, airlines and play-offs into the bubble to avoid anyone “outside” to join so that they could immediately secure the whole bubble to safety if things got out of hand.

Inside the *bubble system*, everyone inside it must be tested regularly with players, coaches, referees and officials all placed in their respective accommodations and will only be allowed to leave the premise for training sessions and matches. Meaning they will have no contact with the outside community during the entire duration of tournament.

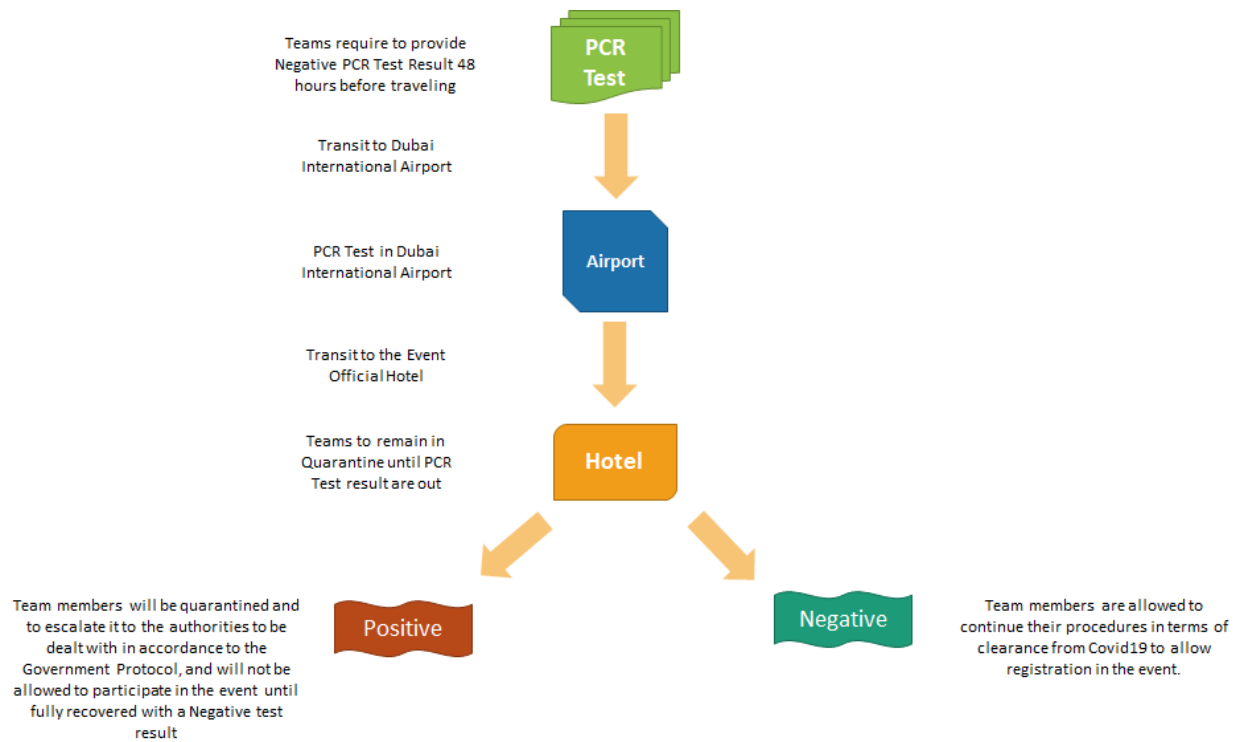
Through this disciplined system, the DSC effectively monitored and implemented Covid-19 protocols on the international teams and athletes.

The restrictive environment, however, is bound to affect players as boredom and listlessness set in as they are prohibited to go out of the “bubble”.

Bubble Group System (Chart)



PCR System



Transportation

The Covid-19 crisis had confronted Dubai that a competent public and private transport is vital in safekeeping the city (and its mega events) running. By serving athletes, delegates, event committees, all the key workers in emergency services, health care, food and beverage services, and all other identified sectors, a streamlined transportation has become a crucial service that connects every event as a whole, not just for these select people in sports but for all Dubai residents as well.

Hosting mega-sports events can attract a particularly high interest and attendance of domestic and international spectators who come together at arenas, commercial pitches and fan zones before and after the events themselves.

To better protect fans, athletes, delegates and hosting communities from spreading transmission of the Covid-19 virus, and to assist national health systems of the host countries, the WHO strongly endorsed the following:

- Coordinate the decision-making process around an event with all stakeholders, and in particular with the event organizers in an inclusive, transparent and open way.
- Exercise caution and rethink the need for international travel and organizing mass gathering events where spectators attend in person if community transmission is ongoing.
- Use a risk-based approach to decide whether to hold, modify, postpone or cancel mass gatherings, and
- Tailor decision-making on a factual assessment of the overall risk associated with the event.

Enhance public health and social measures if events do take place, not just in competition venues, but also outside in places and on transport used by fans and the host community. ⁽⁷⁾

Food and Beverage

Meals and Restaurants:

- Meals, if served, should be done while maintaining a 2 meters distance between dining tables and no more than 4 people on the same table with a minimum of 1 meter between them as per the rules further highlighted below under “Food Outlets”.
- Take away food (food delivered), groceries and other shopping items are allowed at the semi- quarantine bubble hotels provided they are delivered according to the safe measures of shopping and food delivery protocol set by the local authorities.
- No food to be consumed in spectator seated areas.

- When applicable, take-away food and drink only allowed in outdoor non-seating areas.
- Food outlets at stadiums are restricted to readymade take-away food in disposable packaging. Pre-prepared, grab and go food meals and drinks to shorten waiting time for customers are a must.
- Queues are to comply with the minimum of 1.5 m physical distancing precautions.
- All outlets must mark doors to ensure compliance, and provide staff or volunteers to ensure public compliance.
- No shared platters or utensils is allowed.
- Water is only served in bottles or single use disposable cups.

Spectators' Food Outlet:

- Shops at venue precincts outside the event building in the fan zones are allowed.
- No food concessions inside the event buildings including conference halls, exhibition halls and stadia seating areas is allowed.
- No food to be consumed inside the public seating areas, take-away food only allowed outside seating areas outdoors.
- Food concessions in the stadium bowl concessions could be considered for approval on case- by-case arrangements based on individual review of each participating stadium. The LOC Chief medical officer is the responsible person for authorizing these concessions to operate.
- Food outlets are restricted to take away, grab and go disposable packaging.
- Queues to comply with the minimum of 1.5-meter physical distancing precautions – mark or to ensure compliance and provide staff or volunteers to ensure public compliance.
- Pre-prepared, grab and go food preferred to shorten waiting time for customers.
- No buffet food served in the event venues.
- Water is served bottled or in single use disposable cups. Water bottles can be placed on or under Spectators seats if needed.

Health Club and Gyms

Health clubs and gyms opened for visiting athletes and its delegations only, and not for the general public. The brunt of the pandemic on physical activities and mental well-being of everyone also conformed to the rules mandated by the Dubai government.

The global epidemic of Covid-19 has resulted in stadium and gym closure, prohibitions on the use of swimming pools, padlocked dance and fitness studios, closed physiotherapy centers, and ‘no entry’ signboards of parks and playgrounds. People are therefore not able to actively engage in their physical care routines outside of their homes. In result, many people tend to be less active physically resulting to irregular sleep patterns and the worse diets, making people gain weight at the loss of all physical activities.

The WHO cited that at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity of physical activity per week must be done to maintain healthcare balance. These periodic exercises are proven very helpful to those individuals experiencing stress, anxiety and fear. In the background of a pandemic, the lack of access to regular exercise may result in health challenges to the physical wellbeing of a person, decline of the immune system, including the acceleration of existing diseases that have their roots because of a sedentary life.

It can also bounce the mental health issues in which can aggregate stress and anxiety that many will experience in the face of isolation as it departs from any normal social life status. Death of family or friends from Covid-19 can seriously impact the state of mind and on one’s financial wellbeing with narrow access to nutrition that expedite these effects.

Exercising at home without any proper exercise equipment and limited spaces can be a challenge. With life in quarantine and isolation involves long period of a sedentary lifestyle, just sitting and lack of continuous movements, there may be other ways to be more active during the day. For example: stretching, yoga, doing housework, climbing stairs (if they have stairs) or dancing. For those who have internet access, there are many free programs in the web as to how to stay active during the pandemic. The important criteria of maintaining physical fitness is strength training which does not require large spaces but helps maintain muscle strength, which is important for everyone, especially for older people or persons with physical challenges.

The whole world has adapted increasingly to the pandemic, creating online content specified to different types of consumers; from free tutorials on home exercises like stretching, meditation, yoga and dance classes - in which everyone can participate.

Even academic institutions are rapidly moving online studies through this medium for students to enroll at the safety of their homes.

A lot of fitness studios apps sprouted and online/audio video classes changed consistently at varying lengths. Live fitness exercises are now available on social media platforms. Most of these demonstrations did not require special equipment and even showed common everyday household items as exercise equipment instead of weights.

Use of these resources is far from the answer to a total health wellbeing for a nation, as not everyone has access to smart digital techs. In poorer countries and in many developing nations, access to the Internet is non-existent, or with unstable connections.

The digital divide has widened the gap on learning or communication, but this also benefitted in accessing virtual sport opportunities to those who live in advance and modern societies.

The distribution of Covid-19 related content that encourages physical activity are crucial in bridging the digital and non-digital divide for many households living in risky conditions.

People in the younger generation are particularly affected by the social and physical distancing imposed considering that sport is commonly encouraged and practiced as a tool to socialize and engage. Sportsmanship undoubtedly promotes respectful competition and teaches how to manage conflict. At the absence of sport, the young generation lost the support system that such participation provides. Currently, some schools and establishments have begun using virtual training as a method for leagues, coaches and young people to remain interested in sport activities, actively engage with it while staying in their homes. ⁽⁸⁾

Customers and guests may use the recreational facilities at the provided accommodation and hotels in line with full public precautionary measures maintaining full sanitizations and continuous hygienic practices for health gyms and spas.

- Those not staying at the event's accommodation or hotels were never allowed to use the same gyms, clubs of spas where the delegates and participants in the bubble are staying.

- Availability of gloves to team staff and volunteers were mandatory in handling laundry, towels, and other equipment necessary.
- Use of common showers, saunas and steam rooms must be avoided at all gyms and swimming pools.

Precautions During The Event and Trainings

The pandemic outbreak and rapid transmission of Covid-19 disease have affected every country worldwide. Dubai sports and entertainment industries are one of the most agitated as they have gone through a expected volume of revenues as all their events are on hold in the entirety of the pandemic. Sporting events in Dubai, however, remained to be below some pressure in the upcoming mega-events they were scheduled. The world is adjusting to go back to active mode and trying to normalize the daily life cycle, sports is completely unlocked. Athletes using facemasks, talking about sanitizers and social distancing would be witnessed by the world now as the new normal. Though, still, some would questions as to how the sports and gaming can maintain the new trend , on how they are to manage with their procedures as protocols are in place. Like:

- Mandatory wearing of face masks by ALL participants all the time while at the activity venue (except when training and competing).
- It is strongly recommended that all meeting by the organizations and participating teams shall be conducted online. Should a physical meetings are deemed necessary of importance, this should be done preferably in outdoor scenario maintaining the safe distance of 1.5 meter with face masks for all during the entirety of the meeting. Social parties and gatherings are strictly discouraged during the event except if prearranged by the LOC within a strict bubble arrangement, and must be exclusive.
- Volunteer leads and healthcare/medical staff should see to it that their teams and other volunteers are aware on the protocols for suspected and confirmed patients with Covid-19, on how to handle infection prevention and control measures and on where to end or seek more information in containing the virus immediately.
- Anyone that is expected to attend the event who is not feeling well should not come to any venues.

- Once participants reach the tournament location, intermingling with other people should be strictly avoided.
- The 1.5 meters physical distance in the players changing room needs to be strictly followed.
- All participants are advised, when talking to the other players, staff, or event organizers to adhere to social distancing of 1.5 meter.
- Hand sanitizers should be made available throughout the competition and training venues - and should be used frequently.
- A non-contact thermometer (e.g. infrared) to screen staff, participants and delegates temperatures is required on arrival to venues.
- All athletes with their participating delegates should use their own drinking bottles and never share with others.
- Spitting shall not be allowed on the field of play, and at the training venues and accommodation.
- The use of common showers at the event venues and training camps is strongly prohibited.
- Everyone involved must wash and sanitize their hands thoroughly and as frequent as they should, and wear facemasks before entering any room or area.
- All participants must be aware of the physical distance of 1.5 meters preventing face-to-face positioning, avoid handshakes, hugs, kissing, and the general person-to-person contact at all times.
- People must not be seated next to each other without the required social and safe distancing at any time, anywhere, during the whole event.
- Sneezing and coughing etiquette must be adhered and the recommendations for hand sanitizing when in contact with elevator buttons, doorknobs, handrails, meeting room's chairs, tables and other common surfaces.
- Delegates should never share any items such as pens, documents, or be allowed to borrow items.
- The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) medical staff at various venues should check competitors' temperatures each day - and any temperatures above 37.8 should be reported to the health authority.

- It is the responsibility of the o Local Organizing Committee to designate staff or volunteers to monitor the compliance that all participants follow all the preventive measures imposed. If such staff is expected to interact with bubble participants, then the assigned staff will also have to enter the bubble and follow all the bubble rules and regulations.
- The volume of background music should be kept to a minimum in order to allow conversations between vendors and attendees because loud music may increase the need to lean in closer to each other to communicate and/or raise their voices.

Support Package For Athletes

The Dubai Sports Council provided individuals Covid-19 Prevention Packs to all organizing teams, players, delegates; containing:

- Small personal packages of disposable tissues and plastic bags for tissue disposal.
- Small laminated prevention card or electronic prevention information with key reporting information.
- Medical/cloth mask to wear.
- Small packages of alcohol-based hand wipes or hand sanitizer.

Spectator Capacity and Arrangement of Spectators Seating

Phase 1: September to October 2020

The international mega sports will take place without spectators in host city Dubai as the resurgent coronavirus forced organizers to declare a state of health emergency in the host city. The move marked a sharp turnabout when Dubai officials insisted they could organize the event safely without some fans vestiges of pomp and public spectacle.

All professional sports teams for IPL ran daily practices as early of May 2020. The most popular professional sports league with massive fans in the world re-opened the season without fans in the stands. This elucidates the impact of Covid-19 on the beloved international professional sports industry, on what crisis response strategies have been done by the different governing bodies of Dubai and prioritize the potential crises they should anticipate.

- No spectators.

Phase 2: November 2020 to March 2021

- 30 % capacity
- Negative PCR certificates required valid for 48 hours
- Participation age in sports event above 18 years old to 60 years only

Phase 3: March to June 2021

- 60 % capacity
- Negative PCR and Vaccination certificates only
- Participation age in sports events from 12 and above

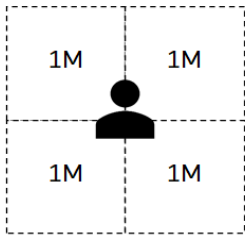
Phase 4: July to September 2021

- 80 % capacity
- NO PCR and Vaccination certificates requirement due to high number of vaccination number in Dubai with an 80% vaccinated of the population
- ALL ages can participate in sports events
- Maintain social distancing of 2 meters

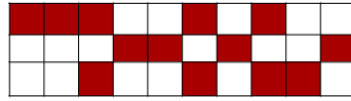
How to Determine Maximum Spectator

- The Local Organizing Committee should determine the total number of people allowed on the event at a given time, and the number of people only allowed within each discrete area of the venue as per the physical distancing requirements.
- The total number of people allowed on site shall include event staff, delegates and all other allowed people on site. How to estimate as to how many people can gather at the event at any time, there is a four-square meter per person requirement.
- Concert venues, theatres and auditoriums can have up to 50% capacity or one person per 4 square meters (whichever is greater)

4sqm Measure



Seating Arrangements



How to Calculate Site Capacity:

Determining the total capacity of the event.

- Determine the entire site size in metres square.
- Determine the size of the non-useable spaces in metres square (such as space taken up by plant equipment, storage containers and other impenetrable structures).
- Minus the non-useable area size from the entire site size.
- Divide the useable area of the site by 4

Phase 5: Oct 2021 up to present

- 80% capacity
- 1 meter social distance
- No PCR and vaccination certificates require
- open to all ages to patriciate and attend sports events

Spectator Education and Awareness in Media

The active collaboration with different media entities have put in motion an awareness of safety campaigns for people attending the sports events at arenas under Covid-19 precautions.

The intensive safety campaign has allowed “a positive response” from all sports and media entities that led to a remarkable decline in negative assumptions of health risk as a ‘super spreader’ in stadiums in a mega-sporting event in Dubai.

All around the venue for athletes, officials & spectators:

- Highly visible posters and signage on locations (like on entrances and restrooms) that advertise everyday protective measures against Covid-19 and education how to stop the spread of germs and viruses (such as proper hand washing and properly wearing a face covering at all times and keeping safe social distance). Signs included visual aids such as easy-to-understand pictures that is clear and precise to demonstrate the healthy behaviors at an appropriate literacy level.
- That there is a continuous announcement during the ongoing and event breaks about safety measures and protocols about Covid-19.
- Create available risk communication on:
 - On what is the importance of Covid-19 preventive measures for all.

- Develop and design good hygiene signage across all venues, changing rooms, training facilities, parking areas and more.
- Consistent information as to how to keep themselves and others safe from Covid-19 transmission.
- An awareness campaign of clinical features of Covid-19 and its preventive measures, especially respiratory etiquette and hand-hygiene practices.
- Asking individuals with suspected symptoms to leave the venue or retreat to a designated area.
- Bold information to adhere to physical distancing and the use of face coverings and medical masks.
- The practical implications of quarantine, self-isolation and self-monitoring in the context of the event, like not allowing to attend the event.

Close Contact Instructions

Individuals that are a close contact of a Covid-19 confirmed case of during an elite event must be managed in a proposed pathway to ensure the containment of the virus.

At present, individuals who are deemed a close contact of 15 minutes or direct contact of someone testing positive for Covid-19 in Dubai are legally required to quarantine for a minimum of seven days.

This is not the case in North America, or Europe where golf, tennis, cricket and rugby athletes have been, where, when identified as a contact they follow an elite sporting protocol, enabling them to play, without significant risk to wider public health, in protocols supported by World Health Organization, and the respective Chief Medical Officers from FIFA (football), World Rugby, ATP tennis, Golf, and Formula1.

If Dubai events enforce much stricter protocols, it is very likely that:

- The highest caliber athletes will not attend, as they recognize they are more likely to be contact traced than in other countries,
- If they do attend they will be reluctant to facilitate interactions at the event that create contacts

- Major events may well be cancelled (for example the rugby players and cricket players typically all shake hands, and thus one case would rule out both entire teams in theory).

This may severely impact Dubai Elite Sport, - this can be avoided by an evidence based corporate isolation instead of standard isolation for close contacts, and this approach may also assist VVIP persons who otherwise may be considered close contacts (some governments have adopted these protocols for their ministers/ senior officials for example).

Below is an outline of the proposed management process of any individual that has a close contact of a positive case of Covid-19.

Step 1 – Risk assessment of all close contacts

A risk assessment system has been developed (see below) this takes into account high or low risk exposure and mitigating factors.

Risk Assessment Considerations include:

- Use and type of PPE
- Proximity and duration of exposure
- Intensity and direction of respiration (e.g. F2F).
- Nature of Indoors / outdoors environment and ventilation rates
- Fleeting nature of direct contact (single handshake for example)
- Sports Specific Guidelines / evidence for risk of transmission
- Risk of new VoC or VoI
- Number of cases
- Household contacts
- Immune status: Vaccination history (completion of and type recent confirmed infection)

Mitigating factors moving those individuals deemed at high risk into the low-risk category:

- Contact is fully vaccinated with World Health Organisation recognised vaccine + 14 days OR evidence of positive case of COVID-19 in the previous 180 days OR recent quantitative antibody evidence of immunity may be treated as a low-risk case, if they use outdoor space only, and are tested regularly
- Use of minimum FFP2 face mask

- Ability to provide “corporate isolation”- individual is either isolated in room, or is playing sport outside in a socially distanced fashion (or in transit in non-shared transport)
- Regular testing (twice weekly PCR, and daily antigen test)
- Direct medical supervision

Risk of exposure	Description
High risk exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Accommodation</u> – Shared accommodation (same hotel room/household) • <u>Transport</u> - shared transport e.g. same car or within 1 row on an aircraft or no seat separation to the side or <1 metres >15 minutes of a confirmed case in other shared transport (e.g. coach) and/or also shared other indoor space with a confirmed case • <u>Proximity</u> - face-to-face contact or shared indoor space with a confirmed case <1m >15minutes (subject to case-by-case assessment), Direct, non-fleeting physical contact with a confirmed case
Low risk exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Proximity</u> - <1 meters >15mins (excluding face-to-face) • <u>Transport</u> - in the same compartment of the aircraft but more >1 row separation in front/behind and >1 seat separation to the side or >1 metres >15 minutes of a confirmed case in other shared transport (e.g. coach) subject to case-by-case assessment according to NHS contact tracing protocols

Step 2 - Occupational factors to consider

- Is the individual's role essential to the successful running of the tournament?
- Do the individual's duties permit use of low-risk environments (corporate isolation) such as outdoors areas which reduce the risk transmission? If not, can they be adapted (i.e. working alone indoors) to mitigate risk to others.

Step 3 - Management

Those identified as high risk, without an ability to enter corporate isolation.

- PCR test on day 0,
- Follow standard 7-day isolation as per Dubai MoH protocol

Those identified as low risk, or those whose risk can be alleviated to low risk status:

- PCR test day 0 and Day 4 or daily rapid antigen test
- Daily medical review by tournament doctor
- If sharing accommodation move to single occupancy accommodation
- Permitted to move between the accommodation and golf course to perform essential outdoor duties only.
- Should wear FFP 3 mask at all times, except when socially distanced on the golf course.
- Individual should self-drive between course and accommodation, or have a fully vaccinated courtesy car driver, with FFP 3 mask worn by both
- Individuals permitted to use outdoor spaces only at the golf course and should avoid creating any discretionary contacts.
- When all essential duties are complete the individual should return directly to their accommodation and isolate until returning to the golf course. In room dining etc are permitted.
- Individual to continue above mitigation for 7 days.

Should the individual wish to leave Dubai before seven days of known exposure, they must return a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test within 24hrs of proposed travel AND they must not breach the country of destination COVID-19 quarantine/travel policies around close contact exposure.

Isolation

This is the separation of suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 from other people, to self-isolate or to quarantine so as to prevent the spread of infection to others

Hygiene Requirements

- Disinfection [Prior to Re Opening of Venue]

Thorough sterilization of all assets, equipment and public areas as prescribed by Dubai Authorities prior to reopening of Venue.

- Non-Event Days [No Event, Pre-Arrival/Planning and Training]
- Frequent sanitization of venues, meeting rooms, organizer offices, green rooms, Conference Space, Kitchen Facilities and Other Applicable Areas [After every use].
- Frequent sanitization of all times when unavoidably touch public areas [ATMs, credit card machines, handrails, elevators, garbage bins, toilets, counter tops, parking machines/counters etc..] in line with DMHS guidelines [After every use].
- Fumigation of Toilets [Every Night for 2 Hours].
- Assigned disposal garbage bins to be made available at all key entrances and in washrooms for medical waste [facemasks, gloves etc.] and these should be frequently cleared in a minimum of once in every two hours.
- Compulsory provision of hand sanitizer dispensers across all areas of the facility.
- All “BOH” and “FOH” deliveries must go through thorough sanitization and full checks and must be certified as being checked by receiver.
- Sterilization of full Venue must be conducted once every week.
- Prior to Opening of Event
- Sterilization of all assets, equipment and public areas at Venue.
- Sterilization of Furniture, Display/Refrigerator Units, Stages, equipment [sports equipment, electronic etc.], F & B Areas/ equipment Comprehensive List of All Applicable Assets to be provided by Venue Operator.

Event Days

- Same as “Non-Event Days”

- Additional Sanitization Requirements.
 - Frequent Sanitization of equipment [sports, electronic etc.], F & B Areas/equipment [After Every Use] Comprehensive List of All Applicable Assets to be provided by Venue Operator
 - For Events with multiple Sports on a daily basis sanitization to be undertaken after every match.
- Post Close of Day for Show/Event [Daily]
 - Sanitization of Full venue
- Post Show “Event Tear Down” Period [where tear down is required]
 - Same as “Non Event Days”
 - Post “Event Tear Down” full sterilization of Venue is required
- Dedicated Hygiene Champion and SOPs :
- Dedicated and Trained Hygiene Champions to be assigned across multiple areas within Venue to ensure compliance with all DMHS rules
- SOPs to be devised and approved for implementation from staff, tenants, contractors and organizers.

Media Access and Framing

Understanding how the Dubai media portrayed the UAE Cycling Tour’s decision to start and cancel its season is important to interpreting how the coronavirus pandemic was presented to Dubai or the UAE media consumers, because the influence of media has the key to the understanding and consumption of stories of the public.

Media framing during a period when there was little actual sport to report about provides insights into how the media created stories to foster, build, and maintain interest in sports events with no events.

Covid-19 halted many sports events worldwide. Some events stopped midway through and others postponed or canceled entirely.

^The framing on guidelines was based on the analysis as to how the media writes on storylines about Covid-19 for consumers (Goffman, 1986).⁽⁹⁾

Framing contributes to the understanding of the “process by which a communication source is constructed and define a social or political release for its audience” (Nelson & Oxley, 1997, p. 221).⁽¹⁰⁾

Encouraging a clear understanding of the framing processes used by the media in their content of social and political issues provides insight into its influence on attitudes, values, and beliefs of the consumers. In other words, framing is the process as to how the publication in all media mediums use to carefully encode their messages into a storyline (Weedon & Wilson, 2019).⁽¹¹⁾

Entman (1993) noted that when editors and journalists synthesize information to construct news, certain issues are magnified or given greater convexity - and this is often at the expense, or even exclusion of, other aspects of the same topic. So when editors and journalist favor, emphasize, downplay, or exclude certain aspects or issues of a story, they define how the audience think and perceive and shape it for their understanding.⁽¹²⁾

The concept of framing suggests that it provides a core idea or an organized storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding series of event in which the media wants to convey. Media framing is a complex process that is more complex than media bias, because it is a dichotomy between the positive and the negative, and it also aids to clearly define both the situation and the media discourse.

As the Covid-19 threat increased, Dubai media reports concluded that it comprised a frame where events may have to be conducted in empty stadiums without spectators. Another frame focused attention on the financial situation with reports that players may have to take pay cuts; team staff would be stood down (i.e., laid off work); and fear the events and even athletes would lose considerable revenue.

The Dubai Sports Council started to publicly report on how it sought to restart its mega-events amidst the coronavirus pandemic and the various travel and quarantine restrictions that existed. It was a complicated matter and was the focus. The main complication was that different states had different medical restrictions.

International Events Participants Guidelines are given:

- On arrival
- Pre-Event
- On Event Day

- After Event
- Leaving Dubai

CHAPTER II

REVIEW: Basic principle of the theory of hosting international mega-sports event in Dubai

Sports mega events can be characterized as events that are so massive in scale that they have the ability to alter the host city branding or the nations whole economic standing, and ripples this positive position throughout the global media. The global pandemic, one of the most catastrophic health events of our lifetime, posed a threat of pursuing global sporting events all around the world but Dubai faced the challenge head on and successfully hosted international sports mega events during the Covid19 health crisis.

The core idea of mega-events is to draws upon a worldwide audience due to the participating nations that come to participate in the tournaments. This attracts a global attention to the host city or country as it is put under the media spotlight, indulging the host to transform

and evolve its safety protocol infrastructure of athletes and delegations from different nations coming into the host city. This does not only allow Dubai to examine the massive influx of visiting delegates and audience, but also to establish a legacy as a safe destination to produce and attend the sports events that will provide a historical legacy for the city.

The potential achievements from hosting such mega-international sports events can transform Dubai once again to be at the forefront as a bustling sport hot spot even during a pandemic - and the impact the local community have with these events will ripple through many businesses or industries. Airlines, hospitality, F&B, transport, retail and many more. The international sports event ripples its positive effect to the grassroots of the local economy, but increases international interest for the host nation, allowing for numerous direct and indirect kick on commercialism for the better.

This legacy is seen in Dubai as the result from hosting sports mega events on a pandemic – and more generally viewed by the host city confidence and its population. Common legacies from hosting mega-sports events are usually detectable benefits for businesses that aid in both local and national economies.

When Dubai has the privilege and capacity of hosting an international sports-mega event, they are expected to develop and improve their health and safety protocols in order to address the massive volume of visitors that attend these events. The intention is to enhance the host city's safe handling of the pandemic by providing an amenity of a solid guideline of its pandemic protocols for the residents benefit.

The privilege of hosting a mega event allows Dubai to physically transform their city, socially and economically by providing the necessary health safety rules during a pandemic to support the increased media interest globally, which in turn leads to increased traffic in tourism and be the destination to be safe and secure during a worldwide pandemic.

The Onslaught of Covid19 in the Sporting World

The Covid-19 pandemic has tossed the sporting calendars berserk around the globe with several renowned events, including the Tokyo Olympics and the T20 World Cup of cricket, suspended. Dubai, who had hosted several international mega-sporting events also went cold during the early announcements of the worldwide Covid19 outbreak.

The Covid-19 pandemic that has spread around the globe in its first few months has not only had a serious consequence on society's public health, but also greatly affected the entire

economy. The novel coronavirus has also inflicted anarchy to the sporting calendar. Because of the pandemic situation, all major and minor sport matches and the international and national leagues that were to be held were shelved to avoid the gatherings of large crowds of audience. All global sporting organizations have suspended all their activities to avoid the risk factor of spreading of the coronavirus.

In this critical moment, the amplitude of sports to gather massive audiences together in an event is absent, and is missed by its fans. The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected all the people with the sports life in them because sport is a place where everyone can meet and gather irrespective of differences.

This academic essay describes as to how Covid-19 has ingrained the sports organizations in Dubai, the forthcoming events, and the creation of a bible in hosting sports events in the city. Dubai is taking up new strategies on their guidelines for health safety on hosting events, which will benefit the coming sporting features in the future for the government's sporting body.

Expo 2020 Dubai

Expo 2020 has been a central point for Dubai as a major initiative aimed at attracting both business and tourist visitors to the country. The Expo Steering Committee 2020 is monitoring and regularly reviewing plans and preparations in line with the guidance from the UAE government and its international stakeholders. The committee met on 30 March 2020 to assess the status of the event, and continues to liaise with the international organizing committee regarding rescheduling of the event in 2021.

Expo 2020 Committee has mandated the Dubai Sports Council to hold major events on the Expo venue, plus organize not only local but international mega events such as:

- 1- Giro Di Italia (cycling event)
- 2- International Bowling Federation World Championship (IBF)
- 3- World Chess Championship (FIDE)

Travel and Immigration Industry

On 19 March 2020, the Ministry Of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE) cancelled all pre-approved visas and deferred all new visa applications, including working permits, until further notice. On 23 March 2020, UAE's National Emergency Crisis Disaster Management Authority (NECDMA) and the Civil Aviation Authority announced the suspension of all passenger flights and transit of airline passengers in the UAE. All tourists in the UAE who

were not able to leave due to the shutdown of airport operations are provided the necessary support to remain legitimately in the country. On 30 March 2020, the UAE cabinet also approved a decision to extend residency visa expiring on 1 March 2020 for a renewable period of three months at no extra costs. The government of Dubai announced on 2 April 2020 that it will continue to append equity into Emirates Airlines, because of its strategic importance to the Dubai and UAE economy, and the airline's crucial role in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dubai Covid19 Sport Events Crisis Communication and Reputation Management

The Covid-19 crisis has been traumatic. Society has witnessed a near global shutdown in businesses, social relationships, and education. The impact within governments has led to sport events closures, significant financial stress, a shift to online views of fans, and the cancellation of many lined-up athletic seasons and sporting events in Dubai.

Dubai sports administrative disruption in work routines, ethics, and the industry's advocacy is intrinsically linked to an adaptive challenge in identifying the multi-layered adaptive challenges that has been experienced not only in Dubai, but also worldwide.

With the sudden halt in sports routines disrupted by Covid19, new challenges have arisen for athletic administrators as they continue their role of supporting the government's advocacy to hold events in safe and healthy environments, but also remaining aware of their own personal needs. Rather than attending face-to-face meetings to discuss challenges, everything went online and became the new normal. Athletic administrators are now isolated rather than accessible to one another. Work routine has shifted in this fast-paced industry, as the practice of remote working is expected to impact the upcoming international sporting mega events that the council contemplates to pursue despite the pandemic.

As the crisis endures and continues to bring critical demands to athletic administrators, the pandemic has forced administrators to contemplate their personal balance and holistic health, much like they are expecting athletes to do so during this time.

During this time of crisis, athletic leaders must guide their decision-making in alignment with the mission statement of their governing body, and their life holistically. Particularly in regard to decisions that will impact the physical health of athletes, decision-makers must be called to consider solutions that align with different goals held previous to this worldwide pandemic.

Heifetz and Linsky (2017) suggest “to sustain momentum through a period of difficult change, you have to find ways to remind people of the orientating value – the positive vision – that makes the current angst worthwhile” (p. 120)⁽¹³⁾

Communication and care will need to be modeled by athletic leaders, like Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and the leading figure in sports and athleticism of the city, constantly reminding the residents to wear masks, practice social distancing, and abide by the rules of the Dubai governments fight against Covid-19. Covid-19 has caused adaptive stress, which puts a lot of pressure on people in authority to find a solution to the problems that seem to be causing it by being the model-by-example on what to do and what not to do. These behaviors from the authority figures provided critical clues to the organization’s level of affliction from the pandemic and its necessary methods to restore the equilibrium needed.

This is an ever-changing time. Dubai government leaders must reflect on the ways in which they are balancing their responsibilities towards the health safety of the city and their expectations of their sport-events council. This reflection reveals how their stress management trickles down to those on the front line, and shifts needs in communication to key stakeholders.

Dubai’s athletic administrators at all levels are trained and able to respond to sporting events needs within their area of expertise and responsibility. Whatever decisions are made, there must be full consideration of what limitations and acumen exist within the athletic departments, regardless of job titles. This would in turn be helpful to delegate potentially new responsibilities, short or long-term, to respond to sporting events needs in the pandemic. Also, awareness of employee interest and ability can be an opportunity for professional development and growth for those interested in addressing specific problems and a response to athletic administrator burnout (Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).⁽¹⁴⁾

The Influence of the Covid19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has remarkably changed the lives of global citizens. The threat of getting infected with the coronavirus has forced all communications to move online. It has led to widespread prohibitions and restricted movements on international travel. It has forbidden large gathering of people due to the need to maintain social distancing. The pandemic dramatically changed the landscape of culture, art, and business - including the sport industry.

As the current pandemic of Covid-19 is affecting countries worldwide, there are many variations as to how each country is handling the global health crisis. World leadership, economic status of the country, health care infrastructure, established public health foundations and various other factors that play a crucial roles in fighting the virus was exposed.

Therefore, it has become imperative to understand how the current pandemic, the biggest public health crisis, was handled in Dubai from a public health perspective.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released recommendations on strategic preparedness and handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Based on this, the article aims at discussing the UAE's efficient combat of Covid-19 crisis under priority areas of work.

The emergency response system of the UAE is managed by the National Crisis and Disaster Emergency Management Authority (NCDEMA) and the UAE government was keen-eyed in issuing the first warning to its residents in alerting of the new coronavirus outbreak, even before it was announced by WHO as a public health emergency of international crisis.

The UAE has an advance government-funded health system for the residents, as well as private health facilities, which can deliver high standard of health care to everyone.

The entire health care system of Dubai was fully prepared of a pandemic and alerted the residents with continuous education on health and safety guidelines, efficiently handling and controlling the health scare with an assurance that residents must come together to help fight the pandemic.

Places where people and tourists commune the most were greatly affected by the coronavirus, like communities and areas that have more congested population than other places in Dubai.

The postponement and eventual cancellation of sport activities and events were inevitable. But Dubai is one of the few countries in the world that quickly commensurate the opening of sport event during the pandemic, which immediately received global attention.

The decision to start the sport events in Dubai was enabled by the decreasing rate of Covid-19 infections of the city, as well as collaborative strategic initiatives pursued by the sports council and athlete delegations, which were intended to prepare the city's stakeholders for the possible resumption of the sporting events during a pandemic.

Despite the number of infected cases in the month of June, the successful implementation of prevention mechanisms by the Dubai governmental organizations helped to flatten the curve by a significant margin within the following months. In addition to the promising results of effective response and prevention of the pandemic, the sports council communicated with individual teams to establish additional prevention mechanisms tailored to the context of the sport.

The sports council announced specific guidelines to promote and strengthen protective mechanisms for its crucial stakeholders, including players, staff, officials, and front offices. These guidelines include:

- Prohibition of any scrimmage involving two different teams,
- Requiring strict separation of players and staff from others, and
- Demanding minimized movement of all stakeholders in their private lives.

Even under the conditions of hosting games without spectators, there is a need to establish further guidelines to delineate preventive measures. The restriction on the access to the game is extended to the personnel affiliated with the contending teams, which aims to minimize the potential threat of infection by limiting the number of people entering the stadium. A manual provides specific information on the number of people permitted to enter the stadium, which is purported to allow only the most essential workforce to manage the event.

Maintaining a safe environment within the event venue remains the top priority associated with the sport. However, it is also important to critically examine the conditions that enabled directing resources towards enforcing preventive measures.

One must simply think about a situation in which the cost associated with hosting a mega game (e.g., stadium rental cost, premiums paid to players for winning, management of temporary workers) exceeds revenues that are generated on the game-day. While the Dubai Sports Council are showing their capacity to effectively react to the consequences of the pandemic, thus enabling successful management of mega-sports events so far, one needs to critically assess the underlying challenges for a sustainable management of the league in the post Covid-19 era.

Dubai Sports Industry and Covid-19

In the announcement of the pandemic, the industry significantly affected from the global health policies was the sport industry (Burton et al., 2020; Parnell et al., 2020)⁽¹⁶⁾. The sport industry's main products and services are highly dependent on global transportation and trade,

social gatherings such as sports events, and operations of sport organizations (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Kellison & Mondello, 2012)⁽¹⁷⁾. For instance, during sport events, people have to work together in groups for the production of sporting goods and services (Kellison & Mondello, 2012)⁽¹⁸⁾. Considering the complex nature of the sport industry, which brings many people together, the potential threat of spreading the virus globally could have been enhanced if restrictions policies were not applied (WHO, 2020)⁽¹⁹⁾. Globally, sport events were affected the most, not withstanding all types of sport events regardless it be small-scale, mass-participant, major-scale, and mega-scale, were suspended until further notice or cancelled.

Based on the consumption of sport products and services, the use transportation in sports by producers and consumers that delivers and consumes the sport products is one of the highest in the world.

From an organizational point of view, the sport industries of any country is managed by a commissioner that includes his/her hundreds of employees and staff. The mission of every sport entity is to deliver their products (events) to the consumer in a way that will satisfy their needs and wants.

The sport market value consisted of several market segments, such as sport events (i.e., tickets and sponsorships), media rights, and merchandising (IBIS World, 2020)⁽²⁰⁾.

According to *Business Wire*, the stakeholders involved with sport include sports consumers, retailers, organizations, athletes, teams, coaches, media, sponsors, and manufacturers.⁽²¹⁾

In early 2020, all sport operations were canceled or postponed at a global scale due to the rapid spread of Covid-19, and the industry immediately lost revenue by the millions.

But Dubai Sports Council pursued event operations as early on in 2020, furthering the implementation of guidelines from different governing bodies. Though delayed at the start of its schedules, hosting the mega-sports event was detailed with safety protocols on covid19. The Dubai sports council responded to Covid19 measures by combining all the safety guidelines and protocols from different governing industries of Dubai – from Emirates Airlines, the Dubai Health Authority, the F&B sectors, the RTA, and the Hospitality sectors.

Visa restriction was also lifted to athletes and delegations participating in the sport events in the host city.

It will take some time for the sport organizations to reckon for all of its effect of the pandemic as to how the influence of Covid-19 totally changed the Dubai's sport industry and how it operates. The effects of hosting the mega events during the pandemic on sport have clearly shown that time is of essence, and that it is a race against time to fully plan ahead. All governmental bodies in Dubai must cohesively create skillfully planned strategies and collaboration initiatives among themselves that will enhance their strong guideline for hosting mega sports events during a pandemic in the future. Because sport is a unifying factor that creates a powerful medium for good health and environmental security for all – it can be the forefront to improve a society's overall performance. It is a leader in itself, a positive change agent that influences positive behavior. Global institutions such as the WHO and the UNEP, in cooperation and partnership with the sports organizations, could map out platforms that can ultimately be the solution for public health issues and the global environmental crisis. Such partnerships will play an essential role in the decision-making processes of leaders in sport. The Dubai Sports Council and its authorities could develop policies and laws that control behaviors and practices across all the industrial and business sectors that are associated with the international events.

Technology Sponsorship

The sponsoring power of the Internet.

New brands entering the sponsorship market are constantly looking for innovative methods of reaching the sports audience. Core metrics for audience reach and brand awareness will continue to be part of the KPIs. Instead, they will have to be assessed and measured in the new media reality. It will be important to measure these indicators on social media. In line with current trends, also athletes themselves have become specific sponsorship platforms that can be integrated as a measurable monetary component within sports marketing. The players' ability to influence the sports audience will become more and more important in the years to come in order to build brand value. An integral part of the sponsorship value will be the number of engaged fans they reach.

Consumers have spent more and more time online in recent years. The global pandemic situation has significantly accelerated this trend. The development of social media and streaming platforms has strengthened their role as marketing channels. This is due to the ability to provide

supporting content to rights holders mainly through behind-the-scenes documentaries is now an increasingly important part of the fan acquisition strategy. In addition, the value of sponsorship increasingly depends on digital channels, including OTT services. These services may not yet provide significant subscription revenue for rights holders. However, they are effective marketing tools for sponsors and contribute to the overall value of sponsorship. As these platforms develop, their role in sponsorship and asset creation will become increasingly apparent.

The latest Nielsen Sport report highlights the changing trends that have accelerated most rapidly due to the global coronavirus pandemic:

- **Payment solutions and remittances:** In the coming months, financial service providers investing in sports sponsorship will spend 16% of their spending on promoting payment and remittance platforms.
- **E-sports:** The projected sponsorship revenues for the e-sports sector will increase significantly. Before the pandemic, they were \$ 347 million. After its completion, they are expected to reach the level of approximately \$ 842 million.
- **Sustainable development:** Stakeholders who promote and invest in the idea of sustainable development should earn about 11% more in the next 3-5 years.
- **Athletes as influencers:** Athlete posts generate 63% more engagement for brands than any other social media content. As many as 95% of athletes with over 5 million followers on Instagram generated content with a media value of USD 314 million.
- **Video:** Video content will certainly be prioritized and investments in this type of online content will increase by 26%.
- **Investing in social media:** The value of social media for the top NBA teams could exceed that of broadcast rights through the 2023/24 season. Investment cuts in TV advertising will be the main trend in order to increase activity in social media.

Covid-19 and the World of Sponsorship

The successful spread of the Covid-19 vaccine will eventually soon bring mass rallies back into live events. However, permanent changes can be expected in the context of organizing the largest events by introducing the latest technological solutions. The two worlds of sport

(virtual and live) will interpenetrate each other, opening up new possibilities for interacting with fans, personalizing experiences and even for new sponsorship revenue models. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technologies designed to create unique fan experiences and experiences. Virtual events are constantly developed and improved, resulted in a noteworthy increase in the number of contact points with fans. Consequently, fan engagement and participation in these new hybrid experiences will become the dominant sponsorship metric.

The evolution of the sponsorship industry is redefining value in a complex but fragmented environment. Until now unknown consumer behavior, more channels and platforms, and new and larger fan experiences create many combinations that are responsible for fueling the true value of sponsorship. As material outcomes are the only way to determine value, any form of sponsorship should be assessed against a modern measurement framework using standardized and trend-tuned indicators. In the coming years, these values will certainly be directly related to the ability to generate sales within each brand's marketing mix.

Ensuring the safety of all involved in making the mega-events happen in Dubai presented a major obstacle to the return of sport. Covid-19 will impact how security is addressed at sporting events upon their return. A particular point of focus is the role of technology as a security measure. Technology provides a crucial avenue for Dubai sport administrators in terms of communication with athletes and its delegations, residents and fans and is already a part of security plans at major sporting events.

A key point to remember is that not all sporting events are created equal. Some, like the Super Bowl or a World Cup or the Olympics, are sporting mega-events that demand an immense number of resources and are planned years in advance with security coordinated at local, state, federal, and even international levels.

A deadly pandemic threatening sport is not a new problem. According to the Los Angeles Olympic Games Organizing Committee (1932), the deployment of exterminators within the Olympic Village, “to rid the village of rats, ants and pests of every nature,” was the reason no contagious disease epidemic occurred during the Games (p. 269)⁽²²⁾.

More recently, the Winter Olympic Games in 1998 and 2002 provide an example of how sport administrators can learn from a previous event’s experiences. A flu outbreak in Japan

infected nearly one million people in the midst of the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano (Sullivan, 1998)⁽²³⁾.

While some athletes and quite a few journalists fell ill, this disease directly impacted planning for the next Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Following the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, Mitt Romney testified before the U.S. Congress on some of the lessons learned from Nagano. He singled out how Nagano influenced policymaking for the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake. Romney noted, “[it was] Nagano that brought home . . . the importance of quick identification, reaction, containment and treatment” (Romney, 2004, p. 6–7)⁽²⁴⁾.

Since 2009, two major illnesses impacting sport were the swine flu in 2009 and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2015. Both instances show how events that occur on a weekly basis for several months in a row could enhance their security measures. Sports organizers responded to the swine flu by initially playing behind closed doors and placing additional hand washing stations in the event arena. Organizers installed “heat sensors” at every area that identified potential cases to exchange and allowed individuals to be separated and scanned individually to check for illness. In the examples provided, previous responses have run the gamut from basic health procedures to technological advances and the response depended on the extent of the outbreak.

When fans returned, aside from “heat sensors”, the requirements included wearing a mask, washing their hands at the gate, undergoing a health quiz, and a seating arrangement where every other seat and every other row remained empty (Wade, 2009)⁽²⁵⁾.

Having considered some of the previous problems sport has faced in terms of a rapidly spreading disease, and how officials managed a response, there must be solutions so that sport can return safely with Covid-19. Both the high and low-tech solutions that could be implemented by a sporting organization in terms of technology, the focus is on thermal cameras and syndromic surveillance while also considering the role of privacy in these discussions. There is also a consideration of more basic health measures that organizations could implement. Finally, by providing an example of how a robust communications platform could be implemented to inform the public about a team or league’s policies related to Covid-19, all of these recommendations come with a caveat. If sport is to return with fans, this process should not drain resources needed to protect the health and safety of the public.

Outside of sport, technology is already an essential part of the response to Covid-19. In Dubai, the national government discloses citizen's movements to the public via a database so individuals can determine their exposure to an infected person. Such a system is rare in countries globally and the amount of work to create and implement a similar system in the country seems several months away for some, if not years in some cases, and comes with a torrent of potential issues related to privacy and civil liberty.

The use of thermal imaging on attendees at events that notified a technician if anyone had an above-average temperature was used at the early stage of the pandemic, to refuse entry in their properties who have temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius).

But thermal imaging, does it work for sport? Checking fans to see if they had symptoms of a fever upon entry into the event as part of the security procedure is not unreasonable. Thermal camera identifies potential customers who have a fever and security staff pulls the visitor aside for additional temperature checks. The greatest barrier to such a policy is what has been marked out as the *Achilles heel* of Covid-19 pandemic, the possibility of asymptomatic transmission. Someone could unknowingly be carrying the virus, present without a fever, and thus the fever check would be rendered useless. In addition to questions of effectiveness, there are questions of spectator privacy that must be considered. If officials decide to employ technology to detect fevers, protecting fan privacy should be one of the foremost considerations.

Covid-19 has not only hugely impacted Dubai's elite and community sports, but also facilitated the adoption of electronic platforms (e-platforms) in its sports industry. Mega event organizing committees acknowledged the importance of the increasing use of e-platforms during the pandemic and reported that they used e-platforms to keep in touch with athletes, delegates, and staff. E-platforms offer a means of communication to provide services of physical activities to individuals. In effect, Covid-19 inadvertently expanded business practices by providing more opportunities for people to use technology during the lockdown period.

The dependence on electronics during Covid-19 has become a reality in almost every aspect of daily life. This includes the arena of sports.

Also, coaches and sports organizations use electronic platforms to teach yoga, aerobics, fitness, and sports skills, etc. Fitness instructors provide online personal training. YouTube offers fitness instruction and app-taught exercises. The post-Covid-19 era will open up a whole new

page in human history; a page that will include the current and increasingly popular use of e-platforms for sports.

While a massive market exists to employ technology to increase safety, there are also low-tech solutions that are more readily available. For Dubai's local or regional sporting events, this may be in the form of extra hand washing stations around venues and signage encouraging attendees to wash their hands. In addition, leagues and arenas could require the use of some form of hand sanitization or wearing of a mask to enter an event. Such an idea is as important to security and public health as a metal detector. One solution suggested would be to discourage handshakes and high fives during sporting events to prevent the increase of the Covid-19 cases.

These potential solutions are not just a problem for the security department. All of the above will require flexibility in other areas of the sporting landscape, from sales to marketing. Implementing security policies will require several important steps including a robust public communications system to let ticket-holders know they could potentially be denied entry into an arena if they presented with a fever or other Covid-19 related symptoms. As argued by Dickmann (2013), "[t]here is an urgent need to better understand and implement risk communication in the strategic management of events" (p. 86)⁽²⁶⁾.

Sport teams and leagues can be part of this solution by working in conjunction with local and state health officials to form and implement well-defined policies.

Dubai's response to implementing a clear-bag policy provides an example. Messaging about the decision appeared in "electronic format, radio, print, [and] day-of-event campaign signs" as a joint venture between several governmental departments. Dubai's communication plan provides a framework that sport administrators could implement as they plot their response to Covid-19. This system would need to be accompanied with something similar to a "raincheck" policy that allowed someone to attend an event at a later date. These policies should not be punitive but rather a way of ensuring public safety. Leaders in sport will need to be creative and show leniency with fans that cannot attend at the moment for health reasons. If an organization pushes messaging that encourages fans to stay away if they feel ill, then these departments will need to be resourceful in how they handle refunds or vouchers for attendance at a later date. There is a way to ensure the safety of all without making other fans feel ostracized and not part of the process. One of the questions facing sport in the coming months will be if solutions can be scaled so that they are effective, both in cost and in impact, for sporting events of all sizes. A solution that only works in

a limited capacity or that requires resources unavailable at a local or regional level does nothing to solve the problem. Sport security officials can use Covid-19 as an opportunity to implement new ideas and theories that will help them be better prepared the next time a pandemic threatens sport.

The Effect of Covid19 in Dubai Sports

As Covid-19 imported travel-related cases were reported in Dubai, the government held a press brief and announced that the level of response to the new virus would be raised to the highest “emergency” status. The government instantly implemented a series of strategies and measures to fully respond to the disease, as follows:

- to enhance mechanism and organization structures to tackle the disease;
- to strengthen immigration control;
- to minimize the risks of virus infection and minimize its spread in the local community;
- to enhance the personal hygiene of the public;
- to improve anti-epidemic facilities and services; and
- to allocate sufficient resources for the strategies and measures

Over the past two decades, the Dubai Government has pursued the position to be the capital of Middle East sporting events. Thus, a serious concern arose among sports professionals: Could Dubai lead in its sports reputation through the pandemic? Or, would the Dubai sports industry crumble under Covid-19?

Year 2020 was also an Olympic year and athletes from all over the world had set their eyes on qualifying for the quintessential festival of global games. However, Covid19 put all Olympic dreams on hold. The saying goes that ‘if it takes a entire village to raise a small child, then it takes more than a village to train Olympic athletes’.

Dedicated Dubai Sports Council committee and their teams work hard to raise the sports from a recreational to a possible level substantially boosts the morale of leaders who have dedicated years of service to sports. Unfortunately, Covid-19 created numerous obstacles. Training centers were open to athletes competing for the Tokyo Olympics, and new parameters were imposed for the safety of athletes and coaches that came to Dubai to train. Travel arrangements were made possible even with the complicated and unstable transportation infrastructure in all major international airports. Olympic qualifiers were coming in by record

and Dubai Sports Council took this into all account and addressed the concerns with confidence, in small scales and large.

Critical Case Study

Case Study 1

Challenge: Top athlete scheduled to compete for the DP World Golf Tour tested positive for corona virus in his home country in UK. The challenge was to bring him to Dubai despite his positive PCR test result and allow him to compete in the tournament as scheduled. This case involved a lot of coordination and paperwork with government authorities and key industries in sports that the author undertook to include the top international golf player to travel to Dubai for the DP World Golf 2021. The process marked the first template on how to assist an international player when the test positive for covid19.

Background Information

Prior to the event, the athlete tested positive in his home country and isolate himself for ten days as required by the UK health system, but after 10 days, an NHS (National Health Service) certificate was issued that the athlete still tested positive.

Because of this, he cannot board any flight with the negative NHS result.

Despite the mandatory ten days isolation, some mild cases still occur that can go up to one month.

Alternative Solutions

The author of this paper coordinated with local government, with the Dubai Crisis and Management Committee to support the international golf player to allow him to travel despite the strict travel conditions imposed by Emirates Airlines to come and travel to Dubai to participate in the event competition.

This permission from the Dubai sports committee, as issued by the Dubai Crisis Management Committee in support of the athlete - with the NHS certificate (still negative) and the flight details – to allow the international player to have an access pass.

The local government sent the request to Emirates Airlines station in UK (London) to allow him to board the charter flight to Dubai.

He entered Dubai, still positive of the coronavirus, but as per the rule in Dubai Health Authority, he completed his 10 days isolation in London and was allowed to participate in the competition and there is no more need to further isolate the athlete again upon arrival.

A team of DP World Golf medical staff together with the DHA monitored the athlete from his arrival to his departure and was allowed to compete in the sports event because his coronavirus was very mild.

Result

The result of this case prompted a special protocol used to allow international players who tested positive to join the competition in Dubai. It is possible to accommodate an athlete when all documents and cooperation from different organizations to assist in travel so as the player can join the event despite his condition with considerations of health safety for all involved.

Recommendations

The author of this paper made clear assessment of the situation and coordinated with local governing bodies of the possibilities of this case. Cooperation and assurance from all parties to help mitigate the situation was consulted on how to facilitate the athlete who tested positive of the coronavirus and help him with his travel arrangements.

This was important because an athlete can participate in the mega-sports event if his/her case is mild according to health authorities and will not cause further transmission to other individuals in proximity.

Necessary precautions still hold in place like face masks, consistent hand washing and social distancing.

Case Study 2

Challenge: Handling international athletes that tested positive during a PCR check upon arrival in Dubai. There is no current guideline on how to handle athletes or its delegates, who upon arrival needed assistance for medical attention and isolation protocols.

Background Information

The pandemic opened a lot of challenges for the sports event organizing committee and one of the repeated challenges was when athletes, upon arrival in Dubai, tested positive of the covid19 virus.

This concern was immediately evaluated and assessed on how to help the athletes with their isolation in the duration of their stay and help them recover from the coronavirus.

Alternative Solutions

The author of this paper coordinated with Dubai Health Authorities and Emirates Airlines, and assigned an isolation accommodation designated by the local government bodies. A specified hotel is assigned to incoming athletes who tested positive upon arrival. They are transported directly for isolation and arrangement for board and lodging, with a designated medical crew assigned in the hotel to help in the recovery of the athlete.

Result

The result of the author quick assessment and assistance to the athletes made them recover safely and fast, and was able to join the competition.

Recommendations

With dedicated cooperation from the author, from the Dubai Sports Council, Dubai Health Authority, the airline authorities and the hotel management, athletes are treated with extra care when they test positive upon their arrival. They are given optimum assistance to regain their health back to be able to join the competition. A paid insurance, among the required payment included when purchasing the Emirates Airline ticket in their travel to Dubai, helps in the coverage of their health recovery.

Case Study 3

Challenge: Athletes bound to attend a tournament or the scheduled mega sports event in Dubai but their country of origin is on the red zone list, or countries on a “lockdown”.

Background Information

The IPL league opened a lot of challenges for the author of this paper as many teams and most players attending the mega-event comes from a red-zone list, as published by the IATA cognizant to the WHO regulations in containing the coronavirus. All athletes and its delegates in the red zone are restricted or not allowed to travel when their home country is on a “lockdown”.

Result

The IPL organization has a very strict protocol adhering to the bubble system and is strictly imposed in all teams from all countries. The bubble system is in place two weeks prior to travel with a PCR check test every three days.

Recommendations

The author instigated the use of the local carrier, that only Emirates Airlines is required for all IPL teams and their delegates because of ease of communication. A special permission was issued for these teams to travel to Dubai issued by the Dubai Crisis and Management Committee. Coordination with government and semi-government entities helped in the travel of the athletes in coming to Dubai despite the red zone list, with supporting documents from government to government communication. Supporting letters are issued by the author to the concerning authorities in allowing participants of the mega sports event happening to board Emirates Airlines, such as the IPL, and assist all the way upon arrival to the bubble system the team must hold.

The bubble system is coordinated with daily security checks to make sure that teams abide with the rules of the bubble. Medical teams for regular PCR test are also done.

Statistical Analysis (SURVEY)

This section provides information from a survey conducted by the author, on how the Dubai Sports Council handled the Covid-19 pandemic from controlling the novel coronavirus spread, on finding the best solutions for Covid-19 while hosting mega-events in Dubai. You will find information about the responses from selected 30 athletes, delegates and team bodies

relative as to how well did the government do to contain the spread of Covid-19 and maintain continuity of sport activities in Dubai.

The author conducted a survey titled “The pre-caution and preventive protocols for sports events in Dubai during pandemic.”



The precaution and preventive protocols for sports events in Dubai during pandemic (covid19)

The things to consider when planning the trip for a sporting event in Dubai was detailed through a series on protocols given by the Dubai Sports Council in adherence to different governing entities involved in the mega-sporting events.

As teams are planning the trip, they are also reminded to be mindful of every possible scenario one could come across. By taking a continuous proactive approach on their journey, one can help keep themselves and those traveling with them safe.

Here are a few questions from the Dubai Sports Council that a participating team must consider when creating the whole travel itinerary.

- Is COVID-19 spreading where you're headed?
- Is COVID-19 spreading in your community?
- Will you or the people who you are traveling with be within six feet of others during or after your trip?
- Are the people who are traveling with you at high risk for COVID-19?
- Do you live with someone who is at high risk?
- Will the state or local government where you live or at your destination require you to stay home for 14 days after traveling?
- If you get sick with COVID-19, will you have to miss the game or other obligations?

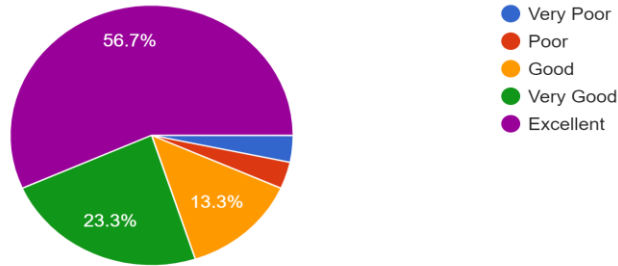
As long as teams apply everyday precautions to their travels, the risks can be minimized significantly. They can do this by following the social distance requirement and wearing a mask around those who are outside of small circles, keeping hands sanitized and not touching the eyes, nose, or mouth if hands are not clean. Being in environments where mask compliance is strong is also important in minimizing risk and keeping occurrences of Covid-19 transmission to a low.

A survey was conducted and here are the results;

Question 1. If you were traveling, how effective the precaution and preventive protocols for covid19 were during your travel experience.

If you were traveling, How effective the precaution and preventive protocols for covid19 were during your travel experience ?

30 responses



1. Many countries has eased up on its travel warning for the UAE to Level 1 – meaning "low" -- and required its travelling visitors to be fully vaccinated before going to Dubai. This does not exempt the sporting arena where all athletes and delegates must present a vaccination certificate and a PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before departure for the city of Dubai.

In the survey result, 56.7% of the respondents saw that Dubai effectively imposed a strict preventive protocol to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

They were asked before proceeding to the airport to:

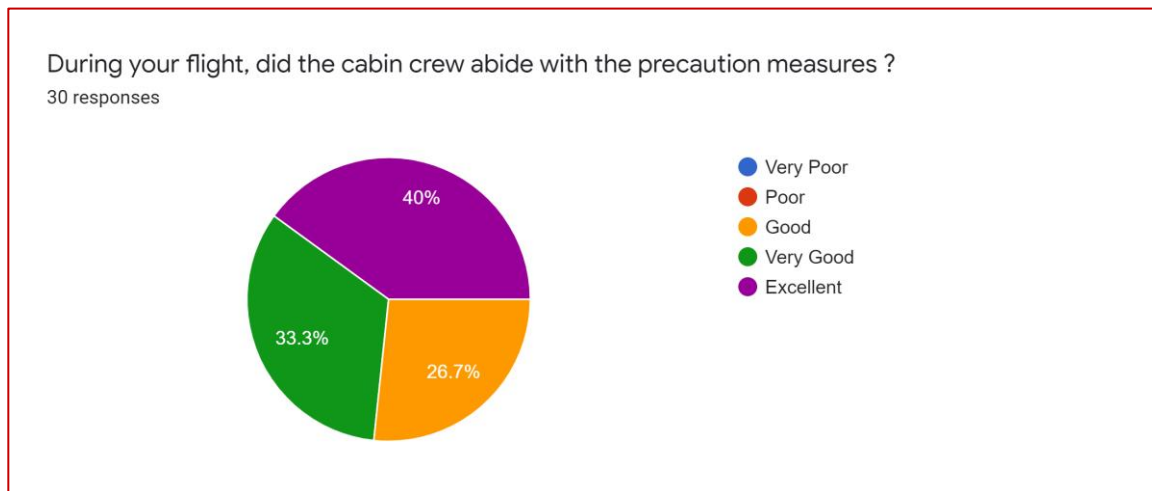
- *You must ensure conform with the testing protocols where it is applicable.*
- *Refrain from traveling if you have a fever or cough. Seek immediate medical advice if you are not feeling well.*
- *Perform all of your your travel formalities before going to the airport. This includes:*
 - *Completing e-VISA or travel authorization, contact and health information declaration as per local regulation.*
 - *Do your airline check-in online for your flight, and if possible print your bag tags at home.*
- *Always bring sufficient masks with you and hand sanitizer for your entire travel.*

While at the airport, before departure:

- *Never forget to wear your mask - at all times.*
- *Be conscience of social distancing wherever possible, including when boarding and deplaning the aircraft.*

- *Always wash your hands with hand soaps or sanitize hands as frequently using alcohol-based hand sanitizers.*
- *Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth, especially after you contact with commonly touched surfaces.*

Question 2. During your flight, did the cabin crew abide with the precaution measures?



2. 40% of the respondents scored excellent on the survey, with 33.3% saying in was very good. The remaining 26.7% scored good in the overall survey. As a result of the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic Emirates Airlines, which was the carrier of athletes and its delegates into Dubai, has put in place strict and new health measures to ensure the comfort and well being of the participating teams. The safety and well being of all passengers and team members is of top priority. The measures that Emirates airline took to keep everyone safe in every step of the journey was a series of compliance of the requirements when entering Dubai.

Air travel has proven to be safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is air circulation in the cabin with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters between 20 and 30 times every hour to trap the prevalence of airborne particles. Overhead air vents in the cabin provided a wash of air circulation to keep viruses isolated making the virus risk on a flight low. This is a required aircraft systems for all aircraft, including Emirates Airlines, as they executed health safety while travelling and did a really good job in controlling airborne Covid-19 viruses.

Travel Forms and Entry Requirements

Before booking your flight with Emirates Airlines, the teams were ensured that they have read the entry requirements for the destination and that they have filled the necessary travel forms. Entry requirements can change with little or no notice and it is essential to stay informed regarding the latest regulations before you fly during the pandemic.

The Covid-19 information page was a guide to the teams in understanding the key travel requirements needed. This does not change the usual information already provided by government and other authorities. While the airline makes its best efforts to keep the latest information out, athletes and its delegations are responsible to comply with all, regulations and laws and the travel requirements of countries to be flown from/to.

Passengers Responsibility

A Confirmation Reference and valid Passport must be presented upon checking-in, together with any other travel documentation required for the travel they are undertaking, like a visa in the country.

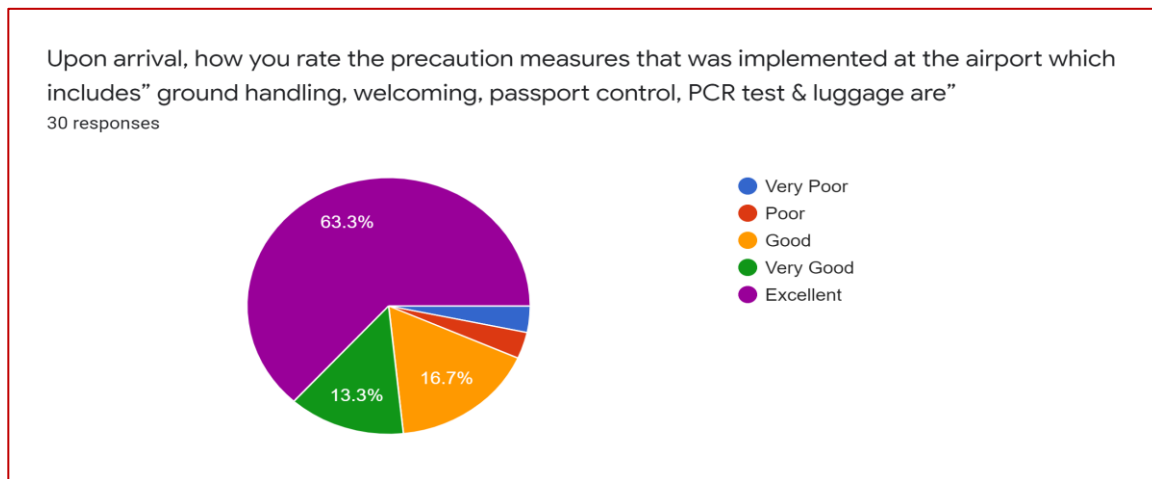
There are currently limited flights to Dubai each day. Check-in lines will be long as compliance for safety will be imposed from airport to airport, but moving through Dubai would be a breeze with the swift assistance of the Dubai Sports Council. Emirates Airlines gave away travel kit essentials for health safety like facemasks, sanitized hand wipes and gloves before boarding the aircraft. Passengers were again given the same onboard with the kits. All flight crews were fully covered in protective gowns with face masks/shields and gloves. Flights were not full with designated seating assignments and empty seats for social distancing en route to Dubai and back. Inflight service will be normal, with several packed meals and snacks being served throughout the flight. The arrival procedures will be with airport officials checking for Covid-19 test results and administering temperature screen checks.

During the flight:

- Always wear your mask at all times.
You must wear it properly, over your nose and mouth.
Change your mask when it becomes dirty and damp.
- Do not make unnecessary movement during the entirety of the flight. Avoid congregating when waiting to use the toilet.

- You must inform the flight attendants if you are not feeling well and seek medical care immediately if you become sick while airborne.
- Always wash hands as frequently by washing with soap and water, and sanitize them by using alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially after contact with commonly touched surfaces.
- Do not rush to disembark from the aircraft after it stops at the parking bay. Do practice the same hand hygiene and physical distancing when deplaning.

Question 3. Upon arrival, how do you rate the precaution measures that was implemented at the airport which includes: ground handling, welcoming passports control, PCR test and luggage are.



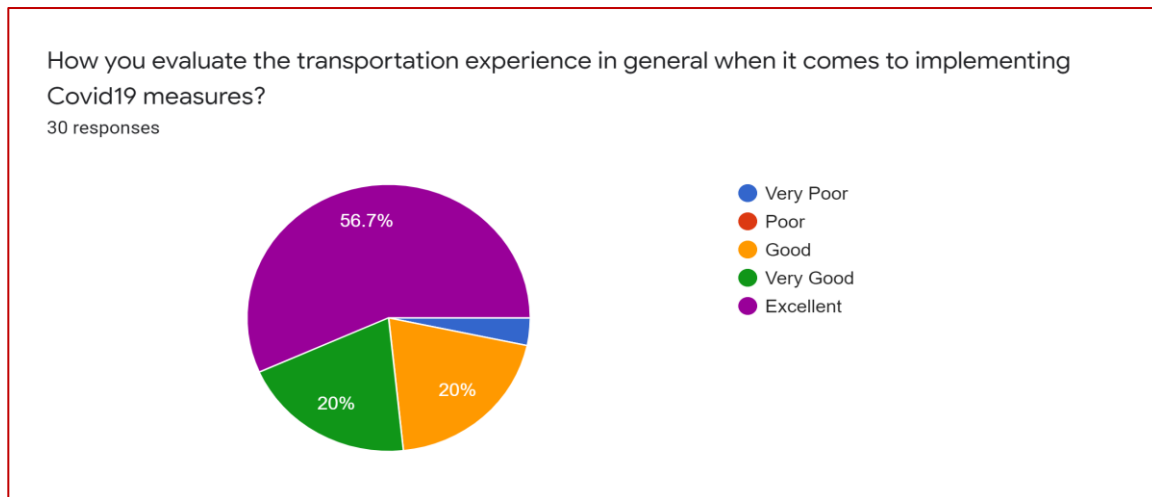
3. Traveling by plane during a Covid-19 pandemic requires a more cautious approach than before, but this is done while lowering the health risks for every participating teams travelling to Dubai. On how to approach travel right now, 63.3% from the survey result rated the process upon arrival in Dubai to be excellent. 13.3% rated in very good with 16.7% saying it was good. This still holds a positive response from the pie chart.

At the arrival lounge, teams were strictly instructed to:

- Always wear protective face covering or mask, at all times
- Whenever possible, maintain social and physical distancing, including when at airport grounds; immigration and baggage claim.

- Frequently wash, sanitize or clean hands by washing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially after contact with commonly touched surfaces
- You must comply with any local regulations on contact tracing.

Question 4. How do you evaluate the transportation experience in general when it comes to implementing covid19 measures?



4. The Covid-19 pandemic has literally altered the daily travel patterns of international athletes as team mobility behavior conforms to the rules and regulations of keeping the health crises at bay. The mandatory stay-at-home orders (or must be inside the bubble) and the fear of contracting the virus made travel plans reduced. Athletes are on advised to avoid public transit in trepidation of contacting with novel coronavirus. Since crowded public transport is considered a risk for the spread of the virus in urban areas, and as an alternative, teams rely on private assigned vehicles as modes of transport.

56.7% of the respondents scored the Dubai transport process as excellent with an equal 20% rating the experience as very good and good. It is necessary to understand the complex effects that Covid-19 has had, and continues to have on Dubai transportation system. The mobility behavior of people, both visiting Dubai or its residents, need to be determined with an aim to assist policy decisions on how to approach the *new normal*, which adheres to the current health protocols and be resilient in the case of a future pandemic.

But under the commercial transport sector in Dubai which is managed and regulated by the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), it successfully steered the crisis into an opportunity by improving the processes in this important sector, especially the private coach or private rentals which the participating international teams heavily used. It has shown consistency and strength under these exceptional circumstances of the pandemic - thanks to the quick response and resilience of legislation and economic packages approved by the Government to leverage the transport economy during this global Covid-19 crisis. Such measures shaped the speedy recovery of the economy effectively, and the transport sector played a key pillar in the ease and continued of movement of people and goods during the lockdown period while complying with the precautionary measures and the instructions of both the Ministry of Health and Prevention and the Dubai Health Authority.

More than 26,000 registered new vehicle licenses in 2020, establishing an 11% growth rate when measuring to the same period of the preceding year. These growth indicators in the commercial transport activities grew to as much as 9% in the number of registered companies in the commercial transport sectors run by RTA's Licensing Agency in 2020, in comparison to the preceding year.

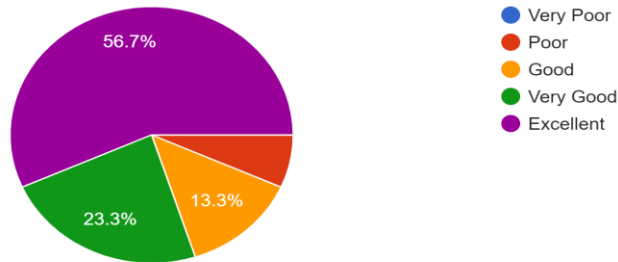
The top four fastest-growing transport sectors were:

- Delivery sector, topped all commercial transport sectors recording a stunning 355% growth
- Commercial licensing services, be it in heavy truck transportation (47%)
- **Transportation of passengers in rented coaches (39%)**
- Light truck transportation (34%).

Question 5. If you are staying in a hotel during your visit, how would you describe the cleanliness of the hotel and room?

If you're staying in a hotel during your visit, how would you describe the cleanliness of the hotel and the room?

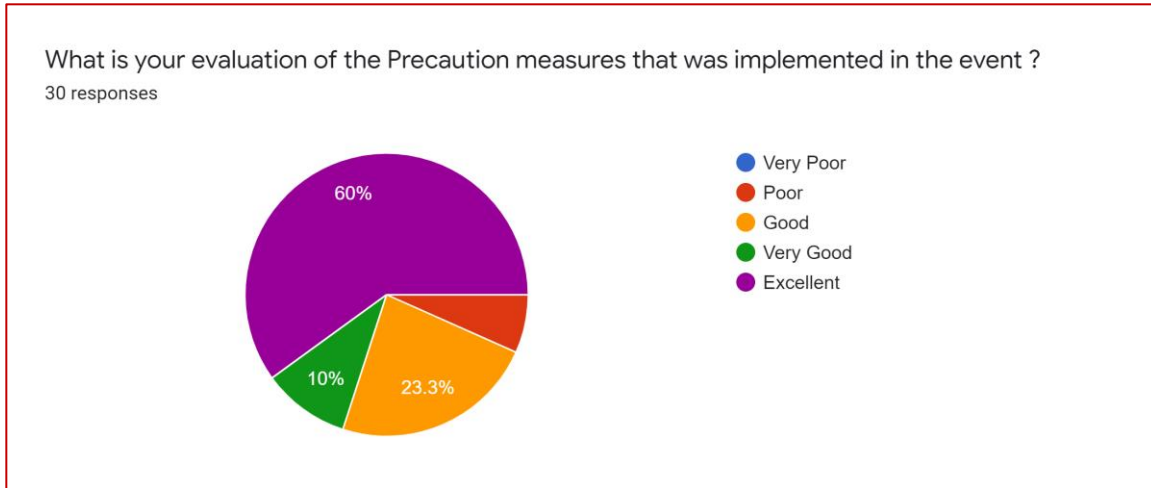
30 responses



6. A majority of 56.7% of visiting athletes and their delegates coming to play mega sports event in UAE are satisfied with their stay in Dubai hotels and their provided accommodations in the occurrence of the pandemic, with attendees confident that Dubai and UAE hotels apply the required level of sanitization. Despite strong inbound travel restrictions among many of the sports main source markets: *Dubai hospitality survey* fuels hopes of recovery for the emirate's hospitality sector. More than 23.3% rated their experience in the survey as very good and were willing to stay at a hotel in Dubai, notwithstanding Covid-19, with most of them willing to return as tourists for fun and leisure

The *Dubai Assured* stamp, an initiative launched in June 2020 by the Dubai government, with the purpose of assuring visitors that hotels, restaurants, retail outlets and attractions are in line with international health and safety standards and protocols also served to build guest confidence.

Question 6. What is your evaluation of the precaution measures that was implemented in the event?



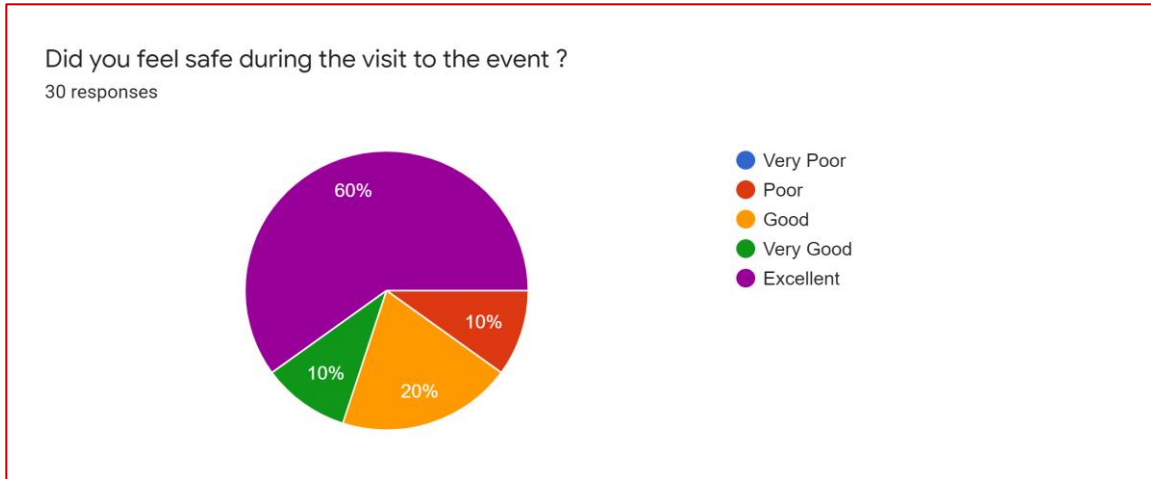
6. 60% of the respondents say they are comfortable attending the sport event held in Dubai. In addition to forcing the postponement of numerous sporting events across the globe, Covid-19 has a marginal impact on athletes attending mega-events and participate in Dubai. The share of athletes comfortable attending a sporting event with a percentage point to 10% says Dubai was very good in implementing precautionary measure with 23.3% saying it was good. The share of respondents comfortable accumulates almost 2/3rd of the pie, satisfied with Dubai Sport Council’s handling of the pandemic. The “net comfort” rating — shows that majority is comfortable attending a sporting event in the city.

Dubai’s COVID-19 sanitary crisis and the measures taken to contain it have had and continue to have an unprecedented impact on the organization of sports events, including on policies and practices on safety, security and service.

The survey report examines the overall impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Dubai and the sports organizations in the center of it, notably identifying good practices/lessons learned and challenges ahead, both short and long-term.

Dubai Sports Council holds an aggressive discussion on the findings of all event report during an ongoing evaluation and exchange the latest developments and measures envisaged to tackle the current pandemic.

Question 7. Do you feel safe during the visit to the event?

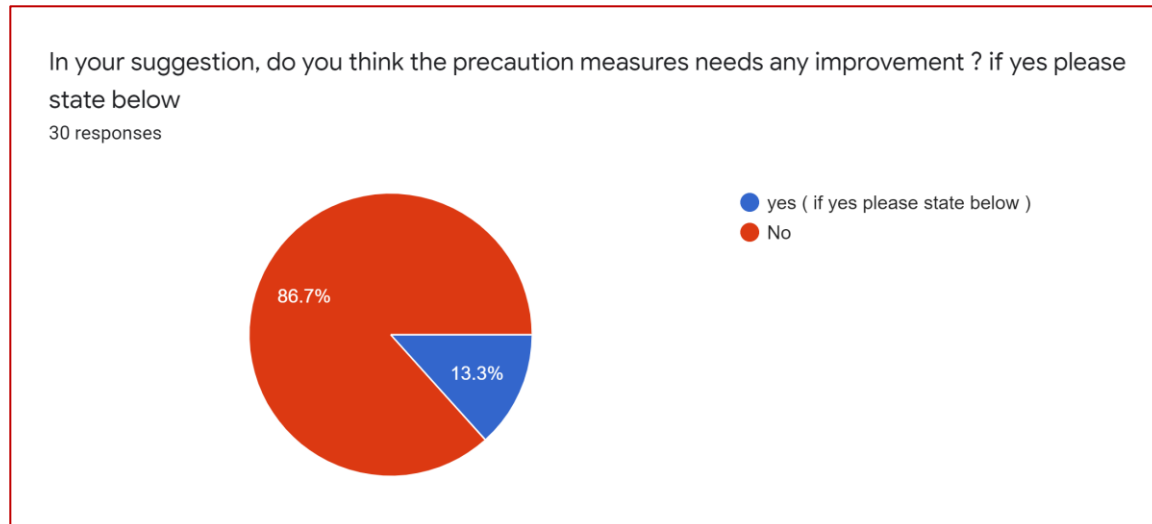


7. As Dubai is going through incredible lengths to return to play, international sports agencies and teams continue to face major challenges as the pandemic drags on, but 60% of the respondents on the survey felt safe during their participation in Dubai’s mega-sporting events despite the challenges.

Dubai airport, one of the world’s busiest travel hubs in the world, is fully operational since the coronavirus pandemic erupted in March 2020. Travel via Dubai even increased at the end the year in 2020 and most of 2021, with expats – who make up most of the emirate’s population –travelling back to Dubai and tourists coming to celebrate the sun.

The latest travel advisories from Dubai and the restrictions of its governing agencies must be dealt with, with Covid-19 tests and required vaccinations, to how to stay safe and healthy on their stay in the city, and what they need to know about government placed protocols. All these are clear assurances of the safety for all incoming participants of the sporting games. 60% from the survey agrees, that safety was foremost considered during a mega event.

Question 8. In your suggestion, do you think the precaution measures needs any improvement? If yes, please state below.



8. Tourism is an economic linchpin of Dubai welcoming millions of visitors in 2019, 2020, 2021. The UAE has pushed a comprehensive vaccination campaign for nearly 10 million of its residents, local or expats. Dubai is relying on the six-month Expo 2020 Dubai trade exposition to boost the economy, recording more than ten million visits since it opened on October 1, and is not slowing down tourists from coming.

Exploring Dubai now — the pandemic has never slowed the city down one bit. The energy in Dubai was just as exciting as it was pre-pandemic, and even with all the safety restrictions in place. Sporting events went as usual, and the experience holds a memorable one because it happened during a pandemic. Mask and all, mega-sports events in Dubai held on.

In the past, when there were economic crises, there was a general perception that the world of sport was immune to all sorts of recessions. This was because it was assumed that fans would attend their favorite teams’ matches, no matter what, which would have an overall impact on the scale of sport revenues. However, a situation with COVID-19 has brutally verified these optimistic assumptions. An overwhelming 86.7% of the survey respondents confirmed that Dubai did an excellent job in the precautionary measure and the protocols they imposed for the sporting industry.

The Future of International Mega-sporting Events

We are constantly reminded of sport’s importance to the fabric of our everyday lives during the various global lockdowns associated with Covid-19. The absence is felt from a run in an empty park during a time permitted for outdoor exercise, to the bewilderment triggered by the

decimation of national and international tournaments, to the lack of analysis on game matches juxtaposed with the ever-present mystery of when and how major leagues will return to play. Sport acts as a critical reinforcement for our physical and mental wellbeing. Sports always have given us something to associate with, and connects us to a wider community; be it a physical interaction or preoccupies engagement online. Except for the weather, when we encounter friends, neighbors or even strangers, sport can often be the common denominator for starting a conversation between and among us. As such, sport provides much of the cement that binds us; an extended period without it serves as an important reminder that “sport matters” (Dunning, 1999)⁽²⁷⁾.

Once the dust settles following the curtailment of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic, undoubtedly there will follow a prolonged inquisition spearheaded by several penetrating critical questions. These questions not only focus upon the need for a strong and solid guideline for international mega-sports events in Dubai and stop the spread of this appalling plague, but on the ways through which the Dubai sports committee dealt with, and if even possibly, contributed to this catastrophe.

The coronavirus crisis and various global lockdowns has brought many things that we take for granted into sharp relief, including the absence of sport. Now that the opportunities to train, play, and compete in sport opens in Dubai, with which have been stripped away from so many countries, we can re-examine its importance of sports for Dubai from a unique position of an enforced guideline.

Across communities worldwide, technology has come to the (partial) rescue. Through our ability to watch and perform through live internet streaming services, scheduled at-home workouts have become a vital hub of both digital and physical sociality across the globe. This trend has added structure to the increasingly blurred days in lockdown, and is a vital source in drawing some of the physical and cognitive benefits associated with “normal” sporting practice. However, given the choice between an at-home workout or an in-person class, most participants would likely choose the latter. And for participants normally engaged in more carnal and/or team-based sports, their choices remain limited to doing what they can, where they can, as limited public sporting space becomes reduced and “live” becomes “replay”.

In our (pre-Covid-19) everyday lives, sport often exists in the space between work and home life. Aside from participation, engagement with sports media and fandom can be an

important oasis. It is not just the event that we covet; sport also contributes to our identity, sense of belonging, pride, and, ultimately, hope (Malik, 2020)⁽²⁸⁾.

This is in part why fans across the globe continue to pay exorbitant fees to access live sport, through the prism of commercial media or in person – a ransom paid willingly to largely unaccountable (inter)national sporting oligarchs (Millward, 2011)⁽²⁹⁾.

Yet when global, national, and community sport has ground to a halt, it is worth scrutinizing sport's place in the popular imagination, along with the role and effectiveness of those that control our access to and engagement with sport.

The international sport system is an anarchic society where the capital is king. Dubai fitted right into the mold.

Once the guideline is fully formed, Dubai could lead, coordinate and oversee, in a superordinate manner the governance and regulation of international sport as it continues to be articulated through the organs of existing governing bodies and their subdivisions.

The sports industry has been bruised severely by the Covid-19 crisis in ways never seen before. As a result, Dubai Sports Council demonstrated a skillful crisis management to offer not only high-quality services to their government but also to the international athletes. For this purpose, it was necessary and still is to take risky and innovative actions. The council faces the gap and turned to novel engagement strategies to compensate for losses by highlighting new strategies of monetization and the commercial use content of sports brands. As viewers shifted their focus to digital platforms in high numbers, double-digit TV viewing growth has been overshadowed by three-digit growth on social platforms, with hundred million views of videos watched and shared on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat on the mega sporting events Dubai hosted.

The sports landscape will change much more in the next decade than in the previous few. This will bring a completely new spectrum of possibilities that, thanks to proactive and quick action, can be used by other countries to minimize the negative effects of the current situation as much as possible. The ongoing pandemic has changed the habits of athletes and spectators building an incentive for everyone in the industry of the sport ecosystem to adapt the mega-sporting event models and succeed in the post-Covid-19 world.

Financial Management

The Dubai sports industry must generate new ideas and concepts to adapt to the current situation and survive, which is the obvious foundation for the future of any host city. The international teams that emerge victorious from the crisis will be those introducing positive changes that would otherwise take years without the shock of the current crisis. Ultimately, the winning athletes will be bold, intelligent and determined with their teams, willing to take risks and adapt to new patterns of sport consumption around the world.

Financial challenges

The council in recent years, based on financial data from previous years, can foresee that the future will continue to be characterized by systematic and enormous growth in financial aspects. The main challenge is to use the current time to restructure the organization so that it can prosper in the coming years. The post-pandemic environment should accelerate the shift away from a mindset that stubbornly refuses to accept rapid change and innovation. Competitive advantage will become more and more important, because international participating teams will look for the right areas in which to obtain it.

Revenue Diversification

In the beginning, the council will deal with solving short-term problems and financial obligations, probably aiming at reducing spending on transfers and wages. But there is also an urgent need to reflect on the long-term economic consequences for survival. One of the strategies that sporting agencies need to consider is revenue diversification. The idea is very simple – attract new sources of funding. Diversification can at least mitigate the dramatic effects of crises by extending to new products beyond current goods or geographic regions. Some events held in Dubai have started to introduce this kind of innovation some time ago, setting “innovation hubs” that collaborate with tech startups, for example, to discover new fan experiences through the use of digital technologies using artificial intelligence or virtual or augmented reality solutions – VR and AR.

In the context of revenue diversification, the council should realize that they cannot rely on profits tied to sports performance. An important role is to be able to apply general business rules so that the team still maintains financial liquidity after the crisis is over. Clubs need to put

the client's interests ahead of their own. All sport teams need to focus on the next generation of fans who demand more convenience, comfort and an overall better sports experience. Having a solid foundation with fans, sponsorship, and media is key to systematic progress. The emphasis on short-term results needs to be balanced with the importance of long-term profitability.

COVID-19 has created an opportunity, albeit under clearly undesirable circumstances, for sports organizations to undertake the internal self-assessment needed to mitigate the effects of future economic crises.

External Investors

External financing could be one way to achieve economic goals. The right private equity partners often ensure financial discipline, knowledge and professionalization on the business side. Russian oligarchs, Arab sheikhs and Chinese billionaires have regularly bought European football clubs over the past 20 years, while American private equity firms have also been significantly involved in the process in the last several months.

As it is well known, the world of sport has been hit by a huge recession, which completely changes the perception of the indicated number of transactions. The largest clubs from the top leagues have rarely been the target of foreign investors, so they began to focus on other clubs with less potential, from teams from lower leagues with a chance to be promoted to the top league, to clubs with real opportunities to qualify for major and massive events.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created special circumstances that can even be encouraging for investors who are looking for a bargain while waiting for sports to return to normal. The increased cost of operation in a pandemic compared to their revenue streams that were severely hit by a lack of match-day revenues for much of the gaming season and some media and commercial deals were contested by sponsors. Consequently, many sports events experience devaluation making them a potential investment target in addition to being able to purchase a team at a cheaper price. Investors are attracted to the opportunity to find players for lower rates in the upcoming transfer windows, as some clubs may have to sell players to increase their funding.

Digitization of the Sports Industry

Certainly, the current crisis forces and will force organizations to accelerate their digital transformation. It's a key moment in the context of the digitization of business processes, products, experiences and services and the rapid progress of innovation in these areas. For example, financial services moved physical channels to online, healthcare providers swiftly moved to tele-health and tele-advice, or retailers developed non-contact purchasing, online booking and delivery systems. Such digitization will continue and will include more products, services and experiences in the sports industry. With no sporting events and limited travel options, we've seen a lot of clubs focus on social media content. This trend will develop even in the world of live sports events due to the positive response to new formats of sports consumption.

Interactions With Fans

Entertainment networks and their commercial partners face economic challenges as a both fan attendance and consumer interaction changed with the sport because of Covid-19. Mega-sports events that can and are willing to innovate have a unique opportunity to stabilize through the pandemic. On the other hand, Dubai Sports Council accepted the status quo of the risk and put it on top consideration in these uncertain times. The impact of Covid-19 has become the catalyst for fresh ideas in innovation.

Overall, sport is a field of entertainment. At the elite level, 99.9% of the team's fans are outside the stadium. Through TV, social media, streaming or OTT (over the top) content, sports fans consume the sport differently. However, when the world of sport came to a standstill, 100% of the fans were outside the stadium at all times. This meant thinking outside the box and making decisions outside of the norm moving away from the traditional activation on how to market and sell sports. From a content point of view, the winners will be those who can think creatively about the resources to which they can create and have access.

Because of advance technology and global distribution, sports and entertainment brands will have more fans around the world in the future. They will compete for the best possible experience, making fan engagement crucial. As the sports industry is forced to invent new strategies to interact with fans as a result of the coronavirus, advance technology innovation may

simply stand out as its savior, and the real winners will be teams and rights holders of these technologies who are prepared to adopt.

Cryptocurrencies

Cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology are undoubtedly among other “game-changers” on the sports market that have developed dynamically during the pandemic. On the surface, it may seem that the world of sports and cryptocurrencies constitute two completely separate and unrelated industries, but after a closer look at the matter, they have a lot to offer each other. The sports industry is rapidly adopting blockchain solutions, revolutionizing its revenue streams. Fan tokens are similar to membership cards in that they give fans the option of voting on various club matters, for example. Fans can take an active part in such events as proposals for outfits for the new season or the selection of charity initiatives.

At the moment, it is difficult to find a league case among the largest in the world with no relation to cryptocurrencies. This trend is popular now.

Fan Experience and Stadiums

Staying with issues related to sports arenas, it must be remembered that creating an unforgettable experience for viewers is extremely important in the context of their monetization. This can be achieved by building a positive and safe environment in the stadium where it is easy to find seats and seamlessly buy food and drinks and game memorabilia. Social distancing requirements will accelerate the use of digital innovation to improve the experiences of spectators. This may include using contactless technology to reduce physical touchpoints and optimize queuing times, or to ensure delivery to a specific seat in the stands. Some of the clubs that have recently implemented similar solutions will certainly gain a competitive advantage. An example of this is Tottenham Hotspur, whose stadium opened in 2020 is the first, completely cashless facility of this type in Europe.

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated digital trends and sports facilities will increasingly foster “phygital experiences” by connecting the physical and digital worlds. In recent years, several sports entities have developed their own OTT platforms to be able to fully customize the frequency and type of content delivered to fans according to their requirements. As the crisis

prompted the consumption of short, non-live and varied content, experts believe that the number of such platforms owned by football clubs is likely to increase soon.

Another digital solution used during a pandemic is the broadcasting of artificial sounds of fans coming from the stands. This is to compensate TV viewers for the lack of real fans in the stands. On a Dubai scale, broadcasters also very often allowed viewers to watch matches naturally. The representatives of media must step further, like deciding to impose virtual fans during the broadcast of league matches.

The Dynamic Development of E-sport

One sector that has benefited significantly from the current pandemic is the ever-evolving world of e-sports. As the focus turned to digitization, Dubai sports also changed their communication strategy, focusing on new forms of engagement, trying to create innovative online content, mainly through social media. In addition, a realization that e-sports could provide a platform for building the Dubai brand away from the real sports pitch. Most of all, it provides a natural way to connect with a new, younger audience. Moreover, the e-sports community boasts a global audience, which gives the club greater opportunities to communicate the Dubai Sports brand internationally. Therefore, the council considers in including computer games in their modified operating strategy, even when the audience in sporting events return to normal.

Finally, e-sports is not only a brand-building marketing tool but also a potential source of income in the long term. While current valuations are considered on the high side, an e-sports investment can act as a kind of hedge fund for clubs, against a potential future decline in sport revenue compared to other forms of entertainment.

Marketing and Commercial Trends During Pandemic

According to media trend research, before Covid-19, approximately 25% of consumers watched live and videotaped videos of other people playing video games every week. In the case of Millennials and Generation Z, it was about 50%. These numbers have increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. After the pause of sports, many pro athletes stayed in touch with their fans by uploading their online games. This phenomenon of playing, streaming, watching

and making new friends in video games will continue to grow and expand even as the blockages and restrictions related to the pandemic are eased.

In the world of marketing, it has been known for a long time that content is of key importance. If sports does not establish contacts with fans outside of won matches, it is doomed to failure in terms of marketing. Undoubtedly, once the Covid-19 ends, the spectator experience in the stadium will be completely different. Many sporting teams should take advantage of the current situation to start collecting data about their fans to get to know them better and deliver more personalized content. By having the right data architecture and a set up digital foundation, a football club can improve many areas within its organization.

Summary

The insanity and social necessity, of sports during the pandemic, despite its risks, watching pro mega sports has given many the needed reprieve. Because the pandemic shrouded many people around the world this blanket of grief, many struggled how to confront it so as to provide any solace. Then sports swooped in.

We were all warned regarding the dangers of holding sporting games during the pandemic. Yet many people needed — the return of professional sports.

Pragmatism, science and common sense — tells you that playing sports in a pandemic is a foolish idea. But Dubai says otherwise. It doesn't make sense, but what has it proven?

If anything, this pandemic has proved just how deeply sportsmanship is misunderstood and misinterpreted one country to another, of sense of values and our beliefs. The pandemic witnessed a generation, or to relish the joy the feat brought their countrymen, seeing them high-fiving and dancing online, and uplift a nation in grief of the health crisis.

To many this sounds silly, or offensive. Should we be celebrating goals and touchdowns when scientists warn we could be on the precipice of the pandemic's darkest days, when some weeks more deaths are counted each day from the? Should we be thinking less about home-field advantage and more about the nurses in hospitals or the grandparents in nursing homes?

It is impossible to separate the emotional from the moral. The return of professional sports in Dubai ultimately would contribute to the spread of the virus, but there is room for nuance.

While sports continue to “cause outbreaks constantly partly because of the vast infrastructures, resources and relatively big number of players — Dubai have managed to effectively control the coronavirus.

Pro sports during coronavirus have created a substantially less dangerous environment for the players and staff because the sporting leagues have generally kept their infection rates below that of the general expectation.

Every mega sports league Dubai held was operating in a “bubble” environment to shut back criticism and doubt. The question was not if pro sports would prove dangerous, but just how dangerous pro sports would be. The answer, miraculously: not as dangerous as many thought.

In a year drenched in despair, the continuation of professional sports has been an essential respite and a reminder of the normalcy everyone yearn for.

Dubai was in the move to let it happen.

Many are still as divided as ever and if sports can change that — Dubai began to reach toward a semblance of normalcy in the early corona crisis, then sports did give everyone an excuse to offer one another a little more grace. But once the economy can safely, fully open, perhaps sports can supercharge our sense of community again.

In the summer of 2021, when many hope vaccinations will be widespread, we may all turn our eyes to Dubai unlike any before. Historically the city’s great unifying sporting event is coming together of international athletes and old nations will take on a new meaning, as the globe quite literally reunites through sports.

We watch these athletes, perhaps without masks and in close proximity, some of them coronavirus survivors, march together, united in sport and struggle. If the city of Dubai pulled it off, expect the world will heave a collective sigh of relief.

Will we see sports differently after that? On the other side of this coronavirus misery, it may turn out that sports — which have predominantly functioned as cherished but inessential extensions of leisure — are recognized as more spiritually essential than we realized. And

sporting competition, as old as society itself, may be remembered as the first manifestation of a world reborn and liberated.

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