



Opinion

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COVID-19 Return to Sporting Activities

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Abstract

Analysis of the directives suggested by various sporting confederations across the world concerning return to sporting activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, to assure a prudent beginning of the new season of sporting-events particularly for football as the leagues across the world begin, with the English Premier League starting on 12th September 2020.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Sport Activity.

The Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the first worldwide disruption to the sporting calendar with majority of sporting events coming to a standstill. Hence a strategy for safe return to sports-training with a structured level of phased re-opening including planned training routines within sporting environments has become a necessity.

Possible Solution:

Sporting governing bodies have implemented various guidelines for resuming football training with a view to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Implementing virtual team meetings and imposing social distancing of at least 1.5m during training sessions are key parameters to be followed by the players. Limiting on-field time and person-to-person contact by the “**Get in, train and get out**” strategy should be adhered to. Attendance at venues are to be limited to essential staff and athletes, restricting the number of spectators to a minimum in the initial phase. Frequent cleaning of all shared sporting equipment and facilities should be scheduled as an infection control measure. Regular monitoring of temperature for all team members and education on strict hygiene measures should be implemented. Promoting healthy practices such as consuming a balanced diet, having adequate hydration and sleep helps the athletes build a good immunity.

Mandatory COVID-19 RT-PCR tests are to be conducted for all participants prior to resumption of training and on a scheduled basis during all events to identify and isolate any infected individuals at the earliest opportunity is the key.

Most countries have advocated a gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions with a four-phase plan for return to sports:

Phase-1: Outdoor professional sport activities allowed with less than 5 athletes in a group.

Phase-2: Outdoor activities with less than 10 people may participate.

Phase-3: Team training up to 40 people allowed for professional sports. Team competitions are allowed without spectators.

Phase-4: Local and international sports competitions with spectators allowed.

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