

COVID-19's Impact on Sports

The sports broadcasting industry will never be the same in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has not only killed tens of thousands across the globe but changed the way we as an international community will communicate/interact for the foreseeable future. Worrying about sports and specifically sports broadcasting may seem like such a micro-issue when dealing with widespread pain and suffering. The reality is that sports has helped us as a society come together and bond over the love of various games and serve as a healthy distraction from the cruelties of the world. Currently, there is essentially no sports so clearly there is no sports broadcasting, but eventually the pastimes we love will come back and it will be important to consider how that will look when the time comes.

The sports world is grasping for straws right now when it comes to content. Luckily the NFL free agency period and draft have taken place in the last couple months to serve as some reminder of the world we have left behind and some parts of society we hope to cling on to as we adapt into a new age. Shows like *First Take* and *Undisputed*, along with ESPN and Fox Sports' other daily programming helps fill the void, but with the rare new topic the debates that were already becoming a bit bland far and few between have much to discuss. Normally, the United States is never

without sports, even though there is the slow period in the summer after the NBA season has wrapped up, fans of baseball are still able to tune into a game they love.

Fans across the globe hope that sports will be able to safely return in the next few months. In nations like the United States that have been critically affected by this coronavirus, we will have to decide whether we value the economics of the sports and broadcasting industry or the safety of the players and fans alike. Some countries like South Korea, have already begun their baseball season with no fans in attendance, due to the fast and efficient preventative measures their government and people took to stop the widespread outbreak of the virus. The United States, which has arguably the biggest sports industry in the world, will not be able to safely resume sports in the fall due to the lack of available testing and leadership at the top levels of government. The sports broadcasting industry will likely have to use methods, such as Zoom, Skype, and other video chatting platforms to continue the somewhat typical broadcast we normally watch on television. If the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB do the right thing when they decide to restart their respective seasons they will do so with no fans in attendance and with readily available testing in place.

Hoping for the U.S. to do the right thing instead of push for economic stability has proven to be a fruitless pursuit. Especially when the president and his cabinet members claim that COVID-19 might possibly be a hoax or that a solution to the pandemic may be to inject a bottle of bleach into our veins. Hopefully, the sports

world sees the foolishness that is taking place and does not cower down to those who wish to bully the industry into revitalization. Sports broadcasting and sports in general has given so many who love these games a voice, whether it be play-by-play or analysis. It hurts living in this time without a huge part of our lives, but if we want our games to live on the industry has to implement itself when it is safe even if it means waiting a year or two for the pandemic to subside due to a successful vaccine. Having a vaccine in place is the quickest way to get sports back in a safe and responsible way, but if these industries just cannot wait then they must wait until the United States is able to push testing for all. It would be a very bad look for the sports leagues to get all of their players tests when there are thousands out there who need them and are unable to receive them currently.

Sports coming back is really important, but it is also important to remember that socially and economically the world is not going to look and feel the same. Social unrest is already taking place and will continue to do so, and the economy is looking worse than it did in 2008. Even if fans are able to come back to the arenas in the late fall or early winter many will not want to be in a crowded area in fear that they will get sick. The average fan will also most likely be going through an even tougher financial period, which will lead to decreases in ticket sales. The sports industry must consider these consequences, which is why they might as well play without fans or wait until a vaccine is developed and is hopefully freely available to

the public. The other issue that arises with this is very specific to our sports broadcasting industry because if there are reduced sports or no sports for months to several years then broadcasters will be out of a job. A career that many have dedicated their whole lives to gone in an instant. Sports television or radio then becomes very expendable and those jobs begin to disappear, as well, leading to a global sports downturn. This is a clear worst-case scenario for the sports industry as a whole, but one that is not completely infeasible. Sports will have to adapt to the times or die, which is a common reality a lot of important industries will have to face or already do face, such as coal or cable TV. The harsh realities of our lives, even in sports, become exacerbated when those who are supposed to lead us do not have our best interests at heart and who only wish to serve themselves. Our sports and our economy could have survived this pandemic if our well-being as a people was being considered over the money that is supposed to line pockets. This may seem a bit harsh or deep in a discussion about the future of sports and sports broadcasting, but if we want to look into the future we must learn and observe the past, so that we can fully explain why things happen and where they might go because of this. Sports varies in importance from person to person, but it is a career and lifeline for many and a world without it is a lesser one. Hopefully, even the tragedies of a global pandemic that has sent the world into unforeseen chaos can serve as a catalyst for a

reboot in the way we are all treated, which should nurture sports and whatever industries we hope to pursue.