

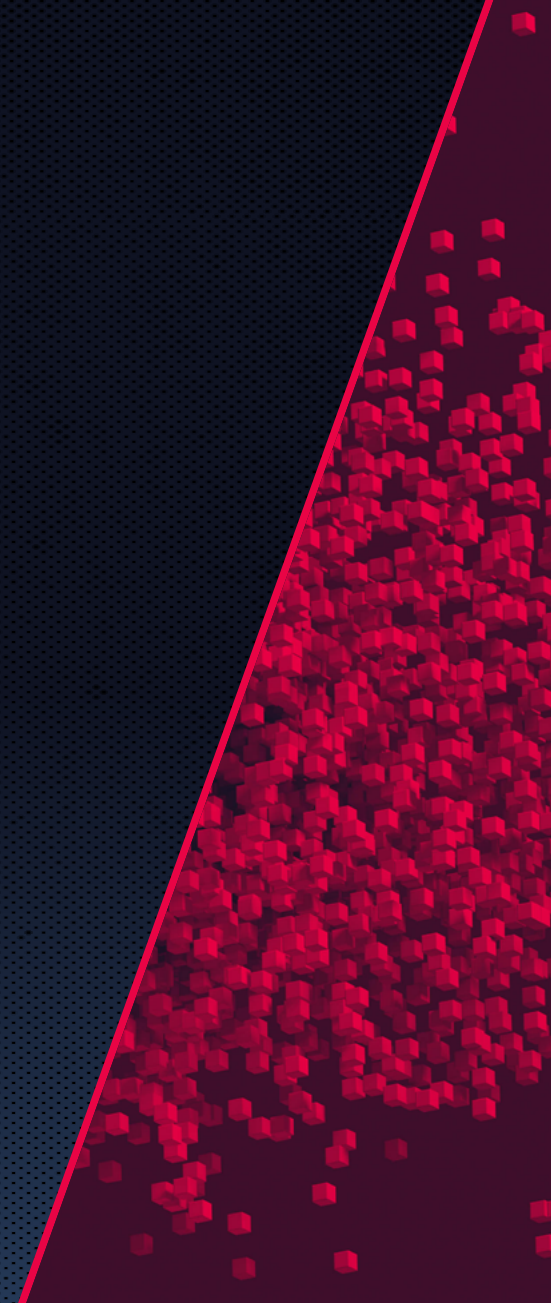
23-27 Nov.
2020

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CONFERENCE CONCEPT:

BUILDING FOOTBALL'S ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE



RESUMPTION OF PLAY: CRITICAL LEARNINGS FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'NEW NORMAL' FUTURE

A global pandemic causes a great many things in industries, none of which react in the same fashion – barring an intensive introspection. The same has happened within the football and largely sports industry which has looked inward to discover new learnings as ad-hoc solutions in the 'new normal' feel like long-term ideas. All football leagues, including Women's Champions League started at different times and have completely redesigned future planning of their respective seasons. It only begs the question: just how much has this resumption of play prepared the sports industry for the next major crisis?



GOVERNING A RENEWED WORLD OF SPORT

Sport today is fast becoming an integral part of identity for anyone involved – be it a fan or otherwise. In this new world that is quickly taking shape as 2020 ends, more has changed at a governance level than ever before. Progress for the sake of progress has rightfully been prohibited as top-level administrators understand the very basic needs of people making the matches, tournaments and all-around sport events happen.

GETTING 'MESS-I': THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS & SALARY CAPS IN A POST-COVID INDUSTRY

There was not much that can shake up the news other than COVID-19 in 2020, but Lionel Messi's transfer saga that kicked off shortly after the delayed UEFA Champions League conclusion made the cut. Much like Cristiano Ronaldo's move to Juventus a couple years back, this news brought up the implications of clubs' commercial dependency as well as the debate about salary caps in order to prevent flouting of FFP rules in the sport. With LaLiga having done their bit in the last decade to control the situation, is it time to follow the example of lower league clubs and put stricter regulations in place?



THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE: BUILDING A PROGRESSIVE FUTURE POST-COVID

The pandemic that ravaged the world of sport has affected every country globally and in ways that go beyond football. For the ever-growing influence of the American continents over football as a whole, the recovery from such an event will be crucial to say the least. In order to gain the best perspective of the leadership needed to steer through such a crisis, we are in conversation with the top men in charge of bringing out the American nations on top of the situation, for a truly progressive footballing future.

SPORT WITHOUT THE FAN: A NEW METHOD OF ACTIVATION

‘There is no sport without the fans’ – the year 2020 has truly shed light onto how right these words were. Without the fans in the stadiums, everything from ticketing to broadcasting and even all the way to sponsorships and activation has become a barely recognizable version of itself. However, where there is crisis, there is opportunity. And in that spirit, innovative forms of partner activation and other commercialization have come to the fore. The question is, just how effective are they really?

The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the text is a thick, orange curved arrow that starts under the 'a' and points towards the 'z'.

A CHANGE OF DIRECTION IN PARTNERSHIPS: NEW NORMS FOR FOOTBALL SPONSORSHIPS

As a consistent theme in partnerships and sponsors-based deals, dynamic decision making is the key to surviving just about anything. Whether it was Lionel Messi's tussle with FC Barcelona or the no deal with Amazon for naming rights for Tottenham Hotspurs' stadium, there is never a boring day in commercial operations. With the financial implications of COVID-19 now well and truly in place within the sports industry, new norms for future football partnerships are starting to take shape. Will these be self-preventive in anticipation of a future pandemic or will there even be a potential deflation in transfer market – it's time to address these concerns now.

HOSTING A SPORTS EVENT: REDEFINING THE OUTLOOK ON FUTURE FIFA WORLD CUP BIDS

Sports and football at large returned to much reverence over the latter half of summer of 2020, albeit without the fans and a major change in use of a stadium. Limited number of officials and deep sanitization procedures were underway, making sure there was nothing left to chance after the hiatus. With mass-gatherings quickly becoming avoided-events, the question arises about the potential World Cup bids to come next. Yes, fans will return to the stadiums one day, but for countries unable to transform their infrastructures to such high standards of bio-safety, how will the future proposals to host the biggest show on Earth take shape?



UNLEARN TO RELEARN: HOW TO ESTABLISH A BETTER RESPONSE FOR FUTURE DISRUPTIONS

The greatest difficulty in any industry is when a deeply successful model has to be altered through no fault of its own. After all, why “fix something that ain’t broke”? Sadly, with the complete revamp of the sports industry due to the raging pandemic, the time came to forget old traditions and methods, and understand that evolving with new decisions – like fan-less matches, one-leg knockouts and more – need to become the norm. Has this episode of manic and mayhem truly prepared us for the next disruption in sport? What is that we, as a collective sports and events industry, can do to make sure we are ready when the wheel breaks again?

VISION 2030: WHAT WILL FOOTBALL LOOK LIKE IN 10 YEARS?

In 20 years, a robot will sit in front of you.” Arsene Wenger’s wise words are never far off the mark. The Professor of the modern game spoke about the changes our beautiful game will go through in the coming decade and it has us wondering what else may just happen. While technological developments in football seem increasingly for the benefit of the worldwide TV audience rather than the match-going fan, by 2028, the ability to squeeze HD camera technology into tiny spaces could well have caught up with broadcasters' tireless desire to get a closer look at the action. Is that what the future holds for football in 2030?



GROWING DIGITAL: ASIAN FANS CALL FOR CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In a 2019 report by Nielsen Sports, China and India, the world’s two most populated countries, have shown a level of interest in football at about a global percentage of 30%. To put this into perspective, India has a far higher level of fan-participation at 22% ahead of perennial World Cup powers such as Germany, Spain and The Netherlands. These are not isolated results, given the immense amounts of Asian followers for clubs like Juventus, Arsenal, Borussia Dortmund over apps like TikTok, Line, WeChat and Weibo. This has added a sense of responsibility for creative heads at major football clubs to generate round the clock geo-localized content for fans across the wide Asian continent. Which clubs are leading the way? Which type of content and platforms are best to engage with the Asian audiences?



CREATIVE VENTURES ONLY: THE GOLDEN AGE OF SPORTS CONTENT

In the times of social distancing, forced or just recommended, there has been an acceleration in consumption of multimedia-based content due to smartphones penetration and cheap mobile internet availability. This has led to higher adoption of mobile video viewership, with sports being number one across multiple genres getting cemented in the 'entertainment bucket'. Extending beyond mainstream sports content, it is all about gaining consumer attention through podcasts, sports influencers and more. Clubs, leagues and even federations are playing catch up on social media to stay relevant as the fast-paced lifestyle of the virtual world is quickly becoming more real, and they cannot afford to miss tapping into this massive market.



VIRTUALIZATION OF SPORT: IMPORTANCE OF THE 'DIGITAL FAN'

'Stop broadcasting, start interacting' was the unofficial motto of every major OTT provider as soon as the news of the sports shutdown became official. Now, as football and other sports have made their comebacks in their own ways, the one common idea floating is to fully understand the importance of digital engagement with fans from around the world. What comes next is looking beyond just fan-engagement, and accepting a future of 'digital-only' followers of the game – which itself is fast becoming more virtual.

GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY: FOOTBALL COMES TOGETHER TO CARE FOR ALL

The beautiful game is also the world's most exquisitely powerful social change driver. This past year has shown the need to stick together as a gigantic sport family and effectively tackle some of the world's main challenges. It is truly a never-ending match that requires the football industry to team-up in order to win – whatever it takes. With clubs, governing bodies, leagues, organizations and players worldwide becoming increasingly involved in humanitarian activities, we take a look at some of the most interesting projects established for COVID-19 relief and how they are achieving significant changes through the unmatched power of football.



FOOTBALL IN 2021: HOW WILL THE NEXT SEASON SHAPE UP FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

From March 2020, women's football was under a huge hiatus that led many to wonder just how much of a crossroads will the sport be upon its restart. Crowds, participation and commercial interest in women's football all rose sharply after the 2019 World Cup in France, with a record peak of 1.12 billion viewers worldwide. The UEFA Women's Champions League's return was followed with a widespread debate about the calendar of the upcoming season, citing concerns that the sport had not been visible this summer, which could slow the momentum gained before. How can the value in women's football be better utilized post a pandemic-affected season?

#BLACKLIVESMATTER: NO TOLERANCE FOR RACISM

As old as the inception of the game, the acts of racism and gender biases at grounds were far worse in the past. Sadly, the recent events have shown it to spike again, leading to the collective efforts of bodies like FIFA and UEFA to kick it out of football, and even the NBA joining the movement with severe enough deterrents. Players taking the knee before matches across the European leagues, the “No to Racism” message from UEFA and “Kick it Out” campaign from FIFA have aimed to increase public awareness of intolerance and discrimination in football, as well as develop ideas and strategies on how to fight them. However, is it high time to consider even stricter measures like closed-off games, before we witness players walking off the pitch sometime in the future.



BREACHING BOUNDARIES: NEW GLOBAL POSSIBILITIES IN SPORT



ESTABLISHING NEW TRADITIONS: WHICH CHANGES IN SPORT ARE HERE TO STAY? FOOTBALL?

Sport traditions, when done right, lend a certain magic, spirit, and texture to the overall pleasure of being a fan. Whether it is the Mexican wave at a stadium or players sleeping at a particular hotel before a derby – some of these traditions will never be the same. The onset of a larger focus on the health, sanitization and prevention of a virus has redefined preparations for a football match and there are larger implications when you consider massive events like the Olympics, Euros and the World Cup. We are taking a look at the new changes which are here and now in sport, and intend to revolutionize the way we recognize each other as new fans.

STORY OF A FOOTBALL LEAGUE: HOW TO PREPARE FOR A NEW SEASON AFTER THE PANDEMIC FOOTBALL?

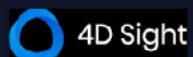
The aftermath of COVID-19 saw season-defining decisions taken by Leagues across the world as they sought to swiftly tackle the resolution of their respective 2019-20 calendars. While the Dutch and French leagues in Europe decided to end the season prematurely, their German, English and Spanish counterparts focused on a restart. Meanwhile, the football league in Belarus did not even take a pause. Looking back with experts from Europe's top leagues, we bring your exclusive insights into the workings of a League during – and after – the pandemic.



In partnership with Global Sport Innovation Centre (GSIC), WFS Live saw the kick-off of the StartCup Edition 2020 to locate the best sport-tech projects and/or startup across the globe transforming the football and sports industry. It is now time for the final 8 most promising startups to present their project. These startups are ideas and projects that offer solutions that impact the football particularly and/or sports industry in general.



8 FINALISTS



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