

High Performance sport – post pandemic and beyond

This environmental scan looks at the post-pandemic environment to consider a number of drivers pertinent to high-performance sport.

While COVID-19 is having a significant impact, change was underway ahead of the pandemic, as evidenced by the following quote from the 2019 Association of Summer Olympic International Federation’s report on the ‘Future of Global Sport’.

“ Stakeholders are having to rethink their value proposition, prepare themselves to integrate or compete with new market players and elaborate a sustainable strategy to remain relevant in the future. This requires a higher degree of entrepreneurialism than was previously the case.

While the pandemic has brought obvious short-term disruptions, it’s interesting to consider how it will affect these pre-existing trends. To explore this, the scan is split into the following three sections:

1. **Post pandemic context:** The global context that will form the backdrop for future competition, including the pandemic’s conclusion and future movement.
2. **Future elite sport practice:** The future competitor environment; particularly wellbeing and the use of biometric data.
3. **Future business dynamics:** Highlights the future business challenges, innovation opportunities and potential new business models.

This resource is part of a series which considers the changes and trends most likely to impact the future of the play, active recreation and sport sector and what we can do to best prepare for change.

Summary implications

Post pandemic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coronavirus vaccine unlikely to be ready before end of 2021.• In absence of vaccine, travelling or participation in events outside a defined 'bubble' will probably rely on testing – logistically challenging and costly in an environment where competitors would need to be presumed positive ahead of screening and continually tested while in contact with others.
International mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate implications on events and training opportunities. Heightened collaboration with Australia and other virus-controlled countries.• Implications for NZ's attractiveness as a host nation for sporting events with quarantining and reluctance to travel compounding existing geographic distance. Conversely, early 'elimination' and perception of safe haven may make NZ more attractive as athlete training and competition destination.
2021 elite event prospects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued uncertainty on whether Olympic/Paralympic Games will proceed and if so, in what form. Women's cricket and rugby world cups in NZ among other events that may be disrupted.• Pandemic may be opportunity for IOC to fast track changes to Olympic programme, with possible impact to sports that NZ target.
Global economic downturn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial viability of national sports organisations threatened, with flow-on impact on athlete preparation, negative (disruption) and positive (less loading, injuries, cost).• Economic downturn, with consequent increase in inequality, could see sectors of society become far more price-sensitive to engagement in sport. This, and return to a more voluntary run sector, has potential to impact the athlete pathway.• May result in pressure on global sport revenues and individual discretionary spend, although sport historically immune to short-term discretionary spend cutting.
Physical distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May result in reduced demand for physical contact sports and increased demand for non-contact sports. May also result in decline in fan base for some codes through increased nervousness about being in crowds.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May become competitive advantage given our temperate climate and topography which allows year-round outdoor activity, and ability to develop athletes without the manufacture of suitable environments.• International sport travel may become a target for protest given high carbon footprint from flying. Would impact NZ's 'home advantage' as struggle to meet increasing requirement for eco sustainable events. Further promotes eSports.
Global power shifts and the demise of neo-liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of sport may take on heightened importance with international diplomacy to support East/West relationships and cooperation.• Global power shifts may impact scheduling of key events, international federations, changing of rules and awarding of events e.g. India's influence on cricket. Will NZ increasingly align to China vs US/UK? What impact will this have on our high-performance programme?• Reversal of globalisation will have implications for talent pipelines of elite teams and opportunities for athletes.• Winning and competition have been part of a neo liberal approach that's diminishing. What does high performance sport look like within a more collaborative world?

Broadcasting disruption and decline in live audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly reduced sports media unlikely to return at same level or in same form. Consolidation occurring through comcast and Disney. Is this the entry time into sports broadcasting for Google, Apple or Netflix? Also, eSports is challenging traditional sport to rethink how it promotes itself as an entertainment, event and media proposition that appeals to younger audiences. • These changing priorities among younger fans, along with high ticket prices, poor in-venue experience and changing viewing habits and media consumption all contribute to declining revenues from ticketing and merchandising from live events. This will be further compounded by 5G-enabled virtual reality devices that allow fans to experience live games from virtually anywhere and with friends across the globe. Opportunity for sport to capture return on their IP. • Pandemic has accelerated rise of eSports with live sports broadcasters considering it a much better investment than most second-tier sports.
NSO sustainability and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for NSOs to adapt to match ever evolving competing interests, heightened by consumer brands following customers to likes of eSports platforms. May result in move toward dog-eat-dog environment commonplace in US and Australia. • Sustainability of funding model has been exposed by COVID-19 with NSOs needing to reflect on their operating models and cost structures. May impact focus and support for elite athletes.
Sport activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete activism is likely to increase with athletes speaking up on matters of public importance if they do not have access to good advice to make good decisions. What implications will this have on fan engagement, sponsorships, relationships within teams, athlete health and welfare, trust in international bodies where commercial stakes are high and pressure on integrity will increase.
Change in Government priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent support for sport from government may become more variable as budget challenges mount from likes of recession, climate change and aging population. This will demand strong alignment to government priorities of the day. How strong is high performance sport's alignment to wellbeing?
Digital revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of data available in the future is going to potentially overwhelm participants and coaches seeking to compete at the highest levels. • Access and capability to use data may result in disparity between competitors, and ownership of personal data may open financial opportunities and corresponding contention about where the benefits should flow. • The flow of personal data associated with sport and individual body function is likely to form a useful complement to proactive health interventions, if privacy concerns can be effectively addressed. The deployment of ingestible robotics to monitor elite performance could become a competitive edge

**Human
enhancement
through
technology**

- If all physical disabilities can be remedied by augmenting technologies, we will need to redefine disability as lack of access rather than lack of core ability. Advances in bionics may redefine what we believe to be possible, while those able to use training wearables are likely to be at a significant advantage with continual feedback on performance.
- The ability to repair significant injuries and potentially upgrade capability will change athletes' career patterns and options.
- Genetic based predictions may influence talent identification, but at what cost to balanced activity? Similarly, is gene-doping a foregone conclusion, or a development to be avoided at all costs?
- Is there an opportunity to develop cross-over opportunities that use immersive environments to improve real world physical skills?
- Will these enhancements undermine the inspirational element of sport?

**Identity and
gender fluidity**

- As genderfluidity develops, strongly gender-aligned activities will come under pressure, with mixed teams possibly increasingly the future norm.
- The emergence of new forms of identity expression may weaken the traditional relationship between the individual's sense of identity and its embodiment through specific sporting codes.
- Risk to the integrity and public acceptance of female sporting contests where there are transgender athletes participating.

**Athlete
wellbeing**

- The mental pressures associated with high-performance are now being compounded by the pandemic's impact, with international athletes contemplating a future of competing in countries with less successful COVID-19 responses.
- Lack of commonly accepted definition of athlete wellbeing risks under and overplaying responses.
- Increased expectation that sport organisations and athletes receiving public money must act in a socially responsible manner

Equality

- Possible deacceleration of women's sport. While sports have made a big show of investing in women in recent years, the current scramble for survival will test the enduring nature of that commitment.
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Post pandemic context

A conclusion to the pandemic and its impact will determine the extent to which high-performance sport can return. Virologists and public health experts generally agree that immunity is vital – either through widespread safe and effective vaccination, or when enough of the global population has recovered from infections and gained herd immunity. singularityhub.com

What's changing?

Vaccine availability

- Coronavirus vaccine may not be ready before end of 2021. Severin Schwan, Roche's chief executive, predicts 12 to 18 months (businessinsider.com.au). Anthony Fauci, US director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, aligns with this projection. newyorker.com
- Distribution will further delay things. Panel of experts assessed enough doses of approved COVID-19 vaccines to inoculate 25 million people would not be distributed in the US before April 2022. goodjudgment.io

Testing

- In the absence of a vaccine, travelling or participation in events outside a defined 'bubble' will probably rely on testing. These continue to develop and are getting closer to real time analysis. Coronavirus testing using CRISPR detects disease in under 40 minutes. cnet.com
- Would be logistically challenging in environment where competitors would need to be presumed positive ahead of screening and continually tested while in contact with others.

Potential complications

- Critical assumptions are that the virus remains relatively unchanged and for most, the health implications are relatively mild. This is being challenged as the recovered population increases.
- Scientists from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have discovered coronavirus is adapting to humans with mutations that could help it spread more rapidly (independent.co.uk). A more detailed understanding is also emerging of the unexpected ways the virus hits the human body including the blood, brain, heart, kidneys, and immune systems (technologyreview.com). Might this have more impact on elite athletes who place more strain on their bodies?
- The question of immunity is thrown into doubt by studies on similar coronaviruses that found people frequently became re-infected with the same strain. technologyreview.com
- These elements likely point to a future where the virus never fully goes away. The WHO's Dr Michael Ryan makes this point and suggests the virus may become just another endemic virus in the global community. science.thewire.in

Prospects for international travel

- Unlikely that patterns of global mobility will return to pre-pandemic normality. In addition to severed air links, geo-political and regional factors will likely influence the timing of national re-connections.

- Impacts of coronavirus will ultimately be determined by the length and severity of the outbreak. However, the longer consumers and businesses adjust to restrictions and identify potential cost savings, the more likely these changes will become structural and long-lasting. Decreasing convenience and increasing costs. techxplore.com
- Industry commentators see Asia-Pacific region as key first mover for re-opening of 'regional bubbles' (e.g. Trans-Tasman sciblogs.co.nz). However, prospects for easy global connections appear to remain a long way off. This will impact our athletes to bench-mark themselves against others and deprive them of competition.

The silver bullet of immunity passports

- Given the variable nature of countries' response to containing the pandemic, the obvious solution is to rely on an individual's clear test or recovery to allow freedom of movement. Heathrow's CEO, John Holland-Kaye, backs the idea of "immunity passports" to allow people who have already had COVID-19 to travel more freely. theguardian.com
- The complications with this concept though, suggest it's unlikely to achieve widespread adoption. medicafuturist.com
- Immunity passports would inevitably create artificial restrictions on who can participate. May even encourage people to become infected. adigaskell.org

Reversing the trend of globalisation

- The COVID-19 pandemic increases the distance between countries and among people, with consequent implications for trends of globalisation and urbanisation. Some suggesting coronavirus could throw global progress into reverse. axios.com
- Pre-pandemic article from New York Times looked at flow of high-performance athletes across borders and noted world will continue to shrink for most elite athletes (nytimes.com). This is unlikely to be the case post-pandemic.
- Pandemic could exacerbate power shift from Washington to Beijing. Move away from US dollar-reliance could be assisted by China encouraging digital yuan usage at 2022 Winter Olympics. Trend toward cyber-currency propelled by need to move away from cash-handling. finews.asia
- VISA, prime sponsor of Olympics since 1986, currently adapting its marketing plans following Tokyo postponement (sportspromedia.com). In next decade, could be eclipsed by Tencent (WeChat) and Alibaba (AliPay).

Future elite sports practice

Deloitte completed its annual review of critical sport industry disruptions ahead of the pandemic and noted the rise of women's sports, continued evolution of esports, legalised sports betting, college athletes maximising their short-term value, 5G and sports in the cloud (www2.deloitte.com).

Reflecting on list through a post-COVID perspective, potentially hindering some trends (e.g. women's sport) while accelerating others (e.g. esports). Implicit in many of these trends is the use of data. Post-pandemic environment will place even greater emphasis on collection and use of sport-derived information.

What's changing?

Ubiquitous connectivity

- Adoption of 5G likely to be accelerated by the pandemic – infrastructure will be a critical component of new trends in fan connection and player performance monitoring and enhancement. The *Ericsson Mobility Report* estimates 5G will handle 45% of global mobile data traffic by end of 2025 (2.6 billion subscriptions). siliconrepublic.com
- From remote work and virtual events to virus-monitoring big data, *Singularity Hub* notes a number of new technologies (including 5G) that are now entering centre stage as a result of the pandemic. singularityhub.com
- By 2025 there will be somewhere between 75 billion and a hundred billion connected devices on the Internet of Things (IoT). That's 10 to 12 devices for every human and each of these devices will have about a dozen or so sensors. sebastiaans.blog
- 5G and further expansion of IoT devices are expected to increase data consumption and connectivity. This increased demand will need heightened security. newelectronics.co.uk

Future sports medicine

- Future of sports medicine may well be found in technology-driven prevention, early diagnosis, minimally invasive surgery and using body's own cells to rejuvenate cartilage and ease injuries. jerseysbest.com

Prevention and monitoring

- Understanding the biological performance of the body on a real-time basis will become increasingly ubiquitous across all sporting levels. Trend toward monitoring tools that provide all-in-one health tracker capability. E.g. 'BioSticker' strip of electronics sticks on the body to continuously monitor vital signs for up to 30 days. medicalfuturist.com
- Blood profiling and monitoring (part of emerging field of sportomics) is being increasingly used to provide more focused, in-depth data on athletic performance (researchgate.net). Data from a simple blood analysis allows coaches to optimize performance and prevent injury. fitnesscity.com
- Combining sportomics approaches with ingestibles is an area of significant potential and growth. Global smart pills market already nearly a billion dollars (USD). whatsyourtech.ca

Repair

- Ground-breaking cartilage regeneration techniques are assisting damaged joints to regain function. Demand from an expanding elderly population will help develop technology and provide greater access to athletic community too.
- The promise of regenerative medicine lies in its use of stem cells and tissue engineering to “fix” tissues that have failed to repair themselves. However, expectations have sometimes run ahead of the science, and its potential to repair and rebuild cartilage has yet to be fully realised. [arthritis.org](#), [sports-health.com](#)
- At the cutting edge is the development of a ground-breaking roadmap of how human skeletal muscle develops. While primarily focused on developing muscle stem cells in the lab for regenerative cell therapies for muscle diseases and ageing, insights should support more effective regenerative medicine approaches across populations. [medicalxpress.com](#)

Recovery

- Advances in minimally invasive surgical procedures associated with artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are delivering faster recovery time for high-performance athletes. The result is fewer athletes permanently side-lined by injuries.
- Internationally, the growth of Medical Robot market is being driven by rise in demand for accurate laparoscopic surgery for ageing population, and the increasing cases of trauma and brain-related injuries ([medgadget.com](#)). Growing AI and robotics in sports medicine means surgical procedures are becoming more minimally invasive, precise and personalised, with shortened recovery time. [sportsmd.com](#)
- Robots outside the operating theatre are being used to help stroke survivors walk faster and farther ([techxplore.com](#)). Scientists have now developed a robotic arm that can sense touch and be controlled with the mind ([hackster.io](#)). Perhaps such technologies may play a part in future sport rehabilitation and training. Will advances in sports medicine be widely accessible? [dw.com](#)

Data: the life-blood of sport?

- The level and dimensions of information derived from athletic activity appears to be at a tipping point, with an almost infinite number of data points being scrutinised for performance and commercial advantage.

The athlete / technology interface

- The size of the potential commercial opportunity afforded by new data streams is reflected in recent market acquisitions. Whoop, a company that meshes wearables with machine learning and number-crunching analytics to help athletes optimise their performance, has raised \$55 million in a round of funding ([venturebeat.com](#)). Makers like Whoop are now offering ways to track coronavirus symptoms. [bizjournals.com](#)
- Google and Adidas have teamed up to create a wearable designed to be placed in the insole of a soccer boot to measure players’ data - how far they have run in a match and how fast, how hard they kick the ball, or when they collide with other players. This can be used to improve performance and be fed into video games such as FIFA20. [forbes.com](#)

- Last season, Louisiana State University players wore neuroimaging headgear for the first time to get a peek at how their brains function in simulated athletic conditions ([nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)). Tennis is also looking at ways in which it can assess a player's mental perspective during intense competition. [sporttechie.com](https://www.sporttechie.com)

Data science and analytics

- Using data to engage and manage fan bases is also becoming more critical both to maximise revenue and reduce risk in the post-COVID environment.
- Motion analytics company Inside has upgraded its platform to monitor crowd movement and spacing inside sporting venues. This could help enforce social distancing once sporting venues reopen to the public. [sporttechie.com](https://www.sporttechie.com)
- It is regarded as essential to now have an effective Fan Relationship Management (FRM) tool to work based on data and information in an objective and integrated way. *Nuno Mena* observes that those who adopted this methodology in times of crisis (2008/9, 2012/13) achieved significantly better marketing and commercial results. [sportsvenuebusiness.com](https://www.sportsvenuebusiness.com)
- It seems inconceivable that computing power can keep up with the exponential amount of data now being produced. However, new Quantum Computing tool processes enormous sets of data and finds patterns never previously discovered. E.g. Google's quantum computer was reportedly able to solve a calculation in 3 minutes 20 seconds, that would take the world's fastest traditional supercomputer around 10,000 years. [insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com)

How will data change sport, and for whose benefit?

- With a tsunami of data being used for everything from player performance and health, to critical commercial decisions, it will increasingly raise challenging questions around the ethical use of information, its ownership and athlete privacy. [digitalpulse.pwc.com.au](https://www.digitalpulse.pwc.com.au)
- US soccer academies are part of a \$7 billion business as they develop talented players and sell them to other teams. Technology now allows them to provide objective measurements of player ability. [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)
- [Driblab](https://www.driblab.com) has for several years carrying out complex analyses based on the data generated by players to advise soccer clubs on their transfer decisions. At a time of financial stress, the incentive to apply advanced data analytics will only increase. [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)
- At pro level in the US, who owns the data, who can sell the data, use the data, and for what purposes is already an area of negotiation between player associations and franchise owners. [legalsportsreport.com](https://www.legalsportsreport.com)
- In December 2019, [a study by Andrew Manley and Shaun Williams](https://www.sportperformanceanalysis.com) from the University of Bath triggered a new debate of whether the essence of the sport (i.e. enjoyment of the players) seen during the amateur era and the early professional years has been lost. [sportperformanceanalysis.com](https://www.sportperformanceanalysis.com)
- As use of data expands, it will become increasingly necessary to focus on the development of trust. Athletes will be mindful of how their information is shared, managed and stored, and the protection around that. [leadersinsport.com](https://www.leadersinsport.com)

Athlete mental wellbeing

- Mental pressures associated with high-performance (emphasised in the Manley & Williams ref) are now being compounded by the pandemic's impact. Our international athletes will likely contemplate a future of competing in countries with less successful COVID-19 responses.
- Clinical sport psychologist Kristin Keim advises Olympic athletes denied an opportunity to participate need time for self-reflection. Research indicates it will take time to steer negative emotions into a productive direction. [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com)
- Ironically, the greater mental challenge may be for those athletes forced to compete in a COVID-comprised environment. Fearful athletes are likely to be more vulnerable to other forms of injury. [explica.co](https://www.explica.co)
- There is a potential for cross-over here too between managing player wellbeing and pandemic-constrained workplaces. A platform used by Cycling Australia and Australian Football League clubs is enabling staff to record how they are feeling about work and their overall wellbeing. theleadsouthaustralia.com.au
- Athlete wellbeing extends beyond mental wellbeing. The lack of a universal and comprehensive understanding of wellbeing can result in its misrepresentation.

Gender equality

- According to Deloitte's '[2020 Sports Industry Outlook](#)', the rise of women's sports was at the top of their list of predictions earlier this year. It appears the pandemic has raised potential to stall this momentum.
- Strong concerns here that women's sport will be adversely affected by COVID-19 as sports bodies put money first ([stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz), [rnz.co.nz](https://www.rnz.co.nz)). These reports follow the International Working Group (IWG) on Women & Sport Global Executive's decision to declare the pandemic a significant threat to the 'women in sport and physical activity' movement, globally. [womeninsport.org.nz](https://www.womeninsport.org.nz)
- A report commissioned prior to the pandemic, but released only recently, outlines the future needs of women's sport. [fifpro.org](https://www.fifpro.org)

Addressing transgender perspectives

- The contentious debate around transgender participation looks set to continue, if not intensify, as competition opportunities are constrained post-pandemic.
- Transgender athletes at all levels of sport are winning medals, spurring a contentious debate over the future of gendered competition ([wired.com](https://www.wired.com)). It remains a source of growing contention. [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)
- Last year's failure to agree new transgender guidelines suggest sport is still grappling with the issues, first articulated in 2005 ([bjbm.com](https://www.bjbm.com)). These issues are likely to be much canvassed ahead of the next Olympics. [open.ac.uk](https://www.open.ac.uk)

Business dynamics post pandemic

Deloitte's report "2020 Sports Industry Outlook," has been updated to reflect the subsequent impacts of the pandemic on the sector. It suggests three critical strategic approaches that sports organisations need to consider for recovery:

- How to help fans feel safe returning to live events
- How to leverage digital tools to support year-round fan engagement
- How these tools support a holistic, data-driven strategy for their business
- Given the financial challenges at both domestic and global levels, these questions will be increasingly relevant as sport organisations consider critical investment opportunities and the scrutiny of potential sponsors and media players facing the same financial constraints.

What's changing?

Olympic prospects for 2021 and beyond

- As the premier event of the elite calendar, the ability of the Olympic structure to bounce back from 2020's postponement will be a critical determinant of high-performance sport's future.
- Japan Medical Association president recently argued that the Olympics are only possible if infections are under control in the host country and globally ([kxan.com](https://www.kxan.com)). Others suggested the games should be cancelled altogether given other more pressing economic demands in Japan ([bos-cbscsr.dk](https://www.bos-cbscsr.dk)). This seems unlikely. Estimated market effect of Olympics and Paralympics more than JPY 32 trillion.
- Pandemic provides opportunity for international sports federations to re-evaluate their role and function. Last year's [ASOIF report](#) already called for organisations to engage in more entrepreneurial thinking.
- An article ahead of last year's SportsAccord observed trends are placing an unprecedented strain on the organising body model as it stands, but engaging creatively with these developments could inspire effective, positive change. [sportspromedia.com](https://www.sportspromedia.com)
- Several national organisations remain focused on future Olympics bids despite the current disruption to the process. India is planning to revive its bid for the 2032 Olympics and 2026 Youth Olympics. [gamesbids.com](https://www.gamesbids.com)

Financial pressures

- All national sports organisations are reporting significant financial hits relating to the pandemic. ESPN analysis of the US found the sudden disappearance of sports will erase at least US\$12 billion in revenue and economic catastrophe will more than double if college football and NFL are wiped out too. [espn.com](https://www.espn.com)
- Canada's sports ecosystem is experiencing significant pressure and government has promised CA\$0.5 billion in support for the Arts, Culture and Sports, which puts the NZ Government's support package of \$265m in a very positive context. [cbc.ca](https://www.cbc.ca)
- UK leaders from football, cricket, rugby union, the Olympics and Paralympics have advised a parliamentary select committee they collectively face a potential £740 million shortfall. [msn.com](https://www.msn.com)

- The financial dimensions of the proceed/cancel decision for the 2021 Olympics are significant (nbcmontana.com). Financial ramifications for postponed Olympics are massive, with Japan's National Audit Board estimated total cost to be \$22.3 billion. Cancelling the Games outright would multiply this figure, perhaps incentivising organisers to proceed even if health conditions are not ideal. forbes.com
- There's significant desire to get the 2021 event on track to assist repair of global balance sheets. portsmouth.co.uk
- While the immediate financial impact on sport will be severe, history has shown that harsh global economic conditions have had only a modest impact on sport's commercial growth. twocircles.com

New business opportunities

- Beyond international competition and government support, the emergence of data-related revenue streams is compelling. US professional sports leagues may have hit on a way to cash in, selling their official data to gambling companies. apnews.com
- For individual competitors too, the combination of biometric data and consumer demand for wearable technology to deliver health and fitness goals has the potential to deliver a unique new source of earnings; both during and after conclusion of a playing career. mondaq.com
- Ownership of data may be an issue of contention. Organisations cannot profit from data unless they can claim ownership of it. They cannot do this without partnering with athletes.

Media / sponsorship

- With global sport disrupted, and business models under pressure, media companies are looking to drive new revenue streams. The current suspension in play presents an opportunity to explore creative ways of driving digital fan engagement. sportspromedia.com
- Velon, a cycling consortium focused on using IoT and data to transform the economics of the sport, is experimenting with innovative fan engagement techniques. ey.com
- Apple investing in this area is a clear indication of future commercial opportunity – acquiring NextVR, which creates sport-related content and experiences for virtual reality. arstechnica.com
- Farhan Ahmed, Twitch's strategic partnerships manager, described the Amazon-owned streaming service's trial broadcast of last year's Formula One Mexican Grand Prix as one of its "biggest success stories to date" in Europe. sportspromedia.com
- These exciting developments are tempered with a cautionary perspective emerging from the Australian industry. [theroar.com.au]
- In a broader context, the shift towards more focus on the intimate, digital connection with fans is being driven by wider pressures in the advertising sector. singularityhub.com

Insurance

- Future event insurance is likely to be regarded as a prudent necessity and a greater cost for those staging competitions.
- Wimbledon showed how pandemic insurance could become vital for sports. [insurancejournal.com](https://www.insurancejournal.com)
- The insurance industry will price such cover accordingly, particularly as losses from this event are likely to be the most expensive in the history of the re/insurance industry. [reinsurancene.ws](https://www.reinsurancene.ws)
- Given the extent of these losses, even expensive cover may not be available. Insurers have already moved to strip coronavirus from event-cancellation cover. For those planning music, sporting or trade events now, there may be no protection. [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

eSports

- The trend toward esports was already well established and is again an area that will likely benefit and be accelerated by the pandemic. It combines the elements of entertainment, social distancing and potentially gambling, thereby throwing the gaming industry a small lifeline.
- All game segments have seen an increase in engagement and revenues as a result of the COVID-19 measures, but mobile gaming saw the biggest increase. In total, mobile games will generate revenues of \$77.2 billion in 2020, growing 13.3% from 2019. [venturebeat.com](https://www.venturebeat.com)
- With a void in live traditional sports created by the pandemic, gaming appears to be in prime position to capitalise and create a very different future. [sportspromedia.com](https://www.sportspromedia.com)
- The COVID-19 crisis was the break FIFA20, NBA2K and other competitive video games needed to really go mainstream. Regular sports fans discovered it is not much different to cheer for your favourite teams in real life or in a virtual gaming environment. [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)

Scheduling

- COVID-19 has disrupted the international sports calendar. E.g. we have become accustomed to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, taking place two years apart, as has occurred since 1948.
- Moving the Tokyo Games to 2021 has caused the World Athletics Championships to move to mid-2022, when both the European Athletics Championships and Commonwealth Games are taking place. Athletes will have to prioritise events over each other, as will broadcasters, fans, and sponsors. [twocircles.com](https://www.twocircles.com)
- Whilst there is significant consumer demand for sport, there will be losers in this scheduling battle. They will be those events that get rescheduled to a date that negatively impacts the attention they receive, or don't get rescheduled at all because they are deemed surplus to requirements.