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How has the Covid-19 pandemic changed the sport of soccer?

In March of 2020 the United States of America recorded its first case of Covid-19. Slowly but surely the world started to shut down because of the rising cases. People were forced to stay home from work and sports stopped for the first time in over 100 years. This is significant because of how powerful sports are in life, today. Sports are a big part of the lives of the youth. The stoppage of sports, specifically soccer is not an ordinary deal. There are so many different levels of the sport beyond what you see on a soccer field. Covid-19 has hit so hard and so close to home that it is affecting the beautiful game of soccer. Research has been done to show how big of an impact the disease has had on the sport. Covid-19's impact on soccer can be connected with the concept of David Vs. Goliath. The beautiful game of soccer is David, the underdog, the one that most think will not come out on top. And Goliath being Covid-19, the heavyweight, the favorite to win. Through the research that has been done, it will come to light how bad Covid -19 has negatively affected the sport of soccer . Whilst, the facts of how bad the coronavirus has hit the sport of soccer you will see that like David, soccer will come out on top.

Behind the scenes, what the fans of these big teams do not see is the business side of the team. There are many people incharge of actually running the club. With Covid, there has been

money problems and markets have been on the down. That means these businesses & soccer clubs are down as well. The structure of the sport of soccer is

laid out in a way where if there is not a lot of money there is not a lot of success. The more success the more money to be made at times like these in this day and age. The payout these teams get for certain competitions are enormous, so teams strive to do better each year to take home more money. No team in the world right now does not want to be left behind. The clubs definitely do not want to be in debt due to a lack of income. This also puts peoples jobs on the line like never before. Clubs are not waiting around while they lose one hundred million a season. No, they are figuring out ideas and plans to make their club run even if it might not benefit for the future of the sport. .

Covid-19 has negatively affected soccer because it has prevented fans from coming into stadiums. Fans do so much for the players than people realize. That cheer and motivation you get from home fans during the game often gives players that extra drive to do something special. That is what the game is all about the special moments .The game is meant for the supporters and it is huge when they are not present. In December 2020, rising cases were slowing down, so some premier league clubs allowed 2000 fans into games and already you can tell what was missing from the beautiful game. A writer, Mr Rory explains in his article how it was for the first couple fans to be let in since lockdown. “To witness the return of fans, though, was to realize how much deeper the absence ran. Fans are, in a sincere but intangible way, the meaning of

soccer, the meaning of sports. It is fans who define and determine what all of this means”(Rory). Since Covid stopped letting fans into games, soccer has changed. The games have not felt as they used to and the performances showed. But since the rise of cases have dropped the Premier League allowed 2000 fans into stadiums to see the outcome. Perfect

atmosphere, the fans brought so much life to the game and made soccer supporters around the world realize what they had been missing.

Fans not being allowed into stadiums is a huge blow for soccer clubs. As articles and other information surrounding soccer clubs are coming out, things are being learned. Something that generates a lot of revenue for a soccer club are match days. On Match days that is when tens of thousands of fans come to stadiums, support and watch their team play. This generates massive amounts of money for the club. And when they are not able to host fans it is a big loss. In an article written by ESPN, one of the biggest clubs in the world Manchester United are revealing their loss when playing matches behind closed doors. “Sources have told ESPN that United lose between £4m-5m every time Old Trafford stages a match behind closed doors and the club has, to date, played seven competitive games at home in front of empty stands.” One of the richest and biggest clubs in the world are having difficulties with the pandemic. Manchester United are one of the many teams who are struggling with their performances due to no fans but also financially. With no fans in the stadium where is income coming in? Losing four to 5 million pounds every

game is a huge amount of money. The debt grows and grows and grows for clubs during the pandemic.

Because of Covid-19 soccer players are struggling mentally. The MLS was just getting started on their season. The players were ready and it seemed like the hype was real for this upcoming season. Because of the rising cases play was stopped for the league and it left players frustrated. "I felt just about 90-minutes fit, and all of the sudden, all your preseason goes to waste," Roldan said. "You find yourself being in an

awkward spot. I haven't been in this situation ever in my life. I've always constantly been able to train for games, and now we don't." Players are frustrated with being stuck at home and not playing games. They have never had to experience this sort of training alone before. They realize how serious the situation the world is in currently and understand the decisions that have been made to keep them safe. Hearing from players in the MLS like Matt Besler and Bedoya who play at such a high level feeling the same frustration as other people really hits home. Even they get the urge to go out but realize why they cannot. The goal is to communicate the effects of the pandemic on professional soccer players.

Now that some of the problems occurring because of Coronavirus are shown, there might be solutions to help as well. To help deal with the overwhelm of covid-19 the rules of the game have changed for players. Soccer is a sport that happens throughout the year every year and has a regular two month break during summer months. Soccer has never seen a sudden stop in the

season due to covid. The stop can be good or bad for players depending on injury and fitness. Fifa has looked into this issue and made new changes to the game. “Normally, soccer coaches can make three substitutions. Due to the COVID-19 changes in the calendar season, up to five substitutions were allowed. During international and official matches, soccer coaches have 12 available substitute players. Therefore, the regular law of the game allows “only” ~13% of substitutions (3 players out of 23 available). This is too few compared, for example, with other popular invasive team sports (e.g., handball), which can replace 100% of players, with substituted players allowed to re-enter the game. The increase in soccer substitutions due to the COVID-19 (five players) increases the percentage to ~21.7%, but it is still small considering the high physical demands” (Mota et al., 2020). Because of covid the demands of the game it was changed to prevent injuries and too much stress on players during this time. One of the better solutions to the problems in soccer right now because of coronavirus.

To help deal with the money problems many big clubs and owners came together to try and create a european super league to generate a garantined \$250 million every season for clubs. Some of the top clubs in soccer have lost massive amounts of money because of coronavirus. As stated in the article earlier, money is the biggest asset in soccer. Money matters to the clubs and owners. They will not sit while they lose millions of dollars. The owners and top people in clubs across europe tried to make a way for them to start generating money again. “By walling themselves off from competition, the founding clubs have been accused of orchestrating a massive cash grab that would harm smaller competitors, and potentially doom the elite Champions League, which is contested by top-division clubs from across Europe.” In

some circumstances soccer club owners are not in touch with the beautiful game. With the European super league it would have taken the competition out of the sport and it would have been bad for the game. Money is a big part of the sport and as you can see club owners are only focused on the money and not the sport or the fans. This is supposedly a structure to help the lower level, less rich teams get a share in the money by having teams who do not finish in the top 4 have a chance at some money playing in a european league . A solution that was presented to help the money problems but was actually something that would ruin the game of soccer.

Ever since Covid-19 made its way into the world it has been putting our regular life on pause. One of the things it put on pause was the sport of soccer. Soccer has not just stopped because of no games. The business side of soccer keeps going and the people and players are feeling all the burden of coronavirus. Coronavirus has negatively affected soccer because it has prevented fans from coming into stadiums. Without the fans cheering the players on the results and matches have not been as intense and pleasurable to watch. In addition, the poor performances not having fans in stadiums is causing big teams to lose millions every time they have a game. To wrap up, the soccer players are struggling mentally as well. Particularly MLS players share frustration of having to stop the season in the middle of their start. Why is covid-19 negative effects so concerning? To know a club so rich can go bankrupt overnight should worry most. But for the people passionate about the sport are saddened to see how deep covid has hit the sport. It is more than just a sport.

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