

COVID-19

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IN A PANDEMIC

THE ETHICS BEHIND PLAYING



Introduction

In the light of the unfortunate world events, society came to a screeching halt. Businesses shut down, restaurants closed their doors, some for good. The things we took for granted in our everyday lives were put on the chopping block almost overnight. One of those being professional sports. Beginning on March 11th when the NBA suspended the season indefinitely with the positive test results of a player, other sports organizations followed in their footsteps. Weeks went by without a single sporting event on television and the country started to feel the effects of its absence. Outrage and mixed emotions spread across the country demanding for the continuation of these events. Arguments raised about the ethics of a restart; whether or not to hold these events without spectators, testing of players and coaches. For a moment, the sports world was helpless.

The Ethical Dilemma

It wasn't long after the outrage was sparked that athletes spoke out about their positions on a potential restart of sporting events. Some were in favor, citing the country needed a distraction from the everyday issues we were all facing. Some rejected the idea of continuing during a momentous time in history. They didn't feel that the organization cared about the health of the players and that it was reckless to jump back into their sports.

The safety concerns of these athletes were rational. In hindsight, some sports lax attitudes towards the necessary precautions caused the transmission of the virus to multiple members of their respective teams. Take Major League Baseball as an example, two weeks before the start of the regular season 28 of the 30 teams had positive COVID tests (Kennedy, 2020). After long negotiations between the League and Players Association on the safety precautions, this is not the outcome the players had fought so hard for.

As the organizations they play for are fighting to get games back on TV, some athletes have taken their health into their own hands. Players from all different sports have opted out of playing this season. Stating that their own health and the health of their families was more important to them. None more noble than Kansas City Chiefs offensive lineman Laurent Duvernay-Tardif.

Fresh off of a Super Bowl win with the Kansas City Chiefs, Laurent Duvernay-Tardif is on the frontlines of this pandemic fighting for his patients. He became the first person to opt out of the NFL season, saying " If I am to take risks, I will do it caring for my patients" (Gordon, 2020).

Where we go from here

With sports back in full swing and the NFL allowing spectators into stadiums, it is difficult to say if we are doing everything right. We are still in a time of immense confusion and disorganization when it comes to precautionary measures. Sports organizations are aiming to make up for lost ground but the ethics behind how close to normal they can return to are still unclear. Understanding that this pandemic is ongoing and has yet to be defeated is essential to a safe return of organized sporting events.

Conclusion

Sports are a way for the nation to heal. In the past we have used them to signify the continuation of life after tragedy. Like the President throwing out the first pitch after 9/11 or the first Saints game after hurricane Katrina in 2005. It showed the country that life goes on and there was a constant we could all turn to for brief feelings of happiness and community.

The world is feeling the effects of COVID-19 and sports have helped mend the issues we faced. But it is still necessary to keep the athletes safe and understand the situations we are putting them in by continuing sports. Taking their experiences into account should be paramount; making sure they can do this service to their country safely is important.

As far as safety goes, we still have a long way to go. But using these issues, new solutions arise and further improvements follow. Together we can reach a safe way to continue, but only through constructive communication and transparency.

References

Kennedy, M. (2020, July 10). Nearly Every Major League Baseball Team Has Had A Coronavirus Test Come Back Positive. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/10/889735793/nearly-every-major-league-baseball-team-has-had-a-coronavirus-test-come-back-pos>

Raymond, A. (2020, July 10). When (and How) Sports Are Returning Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/when-sports-returning-covid-19-pandemic.html>

Gordon, Sean (2020, September 17). This NFL Star Walked Away From Football to Join the Frontline Against COVID. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://www.menshealth.com/health/a34014282/laurent-duvernay-tardif-doctor-covid-kansas-city-chiefs/>