

# GSIC

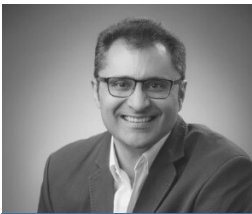
Global Sports Innovation Center

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## THE FUTURE OF SPORTING EVENTS IN ASIA AFTER THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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### Our experts



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“When you see the whole spectrum of what you can do with digital transformation you realize there are different pillars. On one level you have your content delivered in a traditional way but there are other paths to reach your fan base like e-commerce and consumer experience which represent opportunities to engage sponsors based on fans data collection.”

Sports business and specially events have turned upside down fairly quickly. The sports industry is not the only one being affected but also all the industries around it like event companies, presenters and all the people involved in sports. In Singapore we are preoccupied and trying to work with government agencies to see what level of support needs to be provided to keep as much jobs and organizations on float after this crisis. Moreover this situation represents also an opportunity to train the industry and push it to build new capabilities.

Technology transformation has taken a place in the last two months that we have never seen before. Singapore Sports has been trying to built a lot more technological and online capabilities on an eye in future transformation in which these two parts will be blended and integrated in the way we think about 365° engagement of sports consumers and fans.

What is going to affect a global city like Singapore? Particularly the traveling because a large proportion of events are international like Rugby, marathons, FINA World Cup, among others. National athletes are hungry for more competition but we have to bring international athletes.

Besides, at a community level the return of sports is going to reflect a new normal and we will se a gradual resumption to exercise and then to sports. There will be a gradual opening of fitness facilities and after that sports facilities. What is keeping us busy is what we are doing with the fitness industry. Health and fitness needs to have a strong value proposition specially when they are a part of national defense against COVI19 and being able to work with them in order to deliver a good online content and that people can engage across the country. We are using technology in order to create and interactive experience and begin to think about data exchange.

**Mustafa Ghouse**

Chief Executive Officer  
of JSW Sports



**“** *Having fans in the stadium is magic. Now sports have the challenge to create modern atmospheres that allow everyone to enjoy this new normal. From everyone’s perspective the impact that technology will have in live sports is very important.* **”**

The sports industry has been disrupted all over the world. We are a part of JSW, a group that specializes in core infrastructure sectors in India. Seven years ago there was a decision of investing sports and giving support to up coming athletes. As part of corporate social responsibility we wanted to help promote to olympic sport in India. A big part of the problem was that India lacked of high quality infrastructure and that prevented young athletes from developing and reaching the potential they could.

We created the project of a high performance centre and right now we have more than 150 athletes training, going to school and learning to the level of international sports and organizations. Because of COVI19 we went to lock down a bit before from the rest of the country and we kept everyone in house because the athletes are from all parts of the country. We`ve been trying to maintain the athletes routine as normal as possible, with all the security measures, focusing on their strength and conditioning and tying to take them to the best level possible.

As we progressed down the road of the commercial side business of sports football was the first sport to come to our mind. We have a team in the Indian Super League that has been very successful on and off the pitch. We believe that it will grow extensively in the years to come.

The second investment was in Kabaddi. This was a rural sport used to play in mud grounds in villages. It has been turned into a very cool happening and fans watch it in prime time in Indian TV. When they were expanding we secured a team with great popularity in the sport.

Finally our third investment happened when we realized that if you want to be a strong sport business you can`t ignore cricket. It took many effort because the market is very closed. We were able to close a deal with the Deli franchise in the Indian Premier League and we rebranded the team with a new marketing strategy. We just had the best season that the team has had in 12 years after finishing 3rd. That has been our journey in regards the sports business and we are looking forward to see what is coming for us.

**Niharika Singh**

Head of Product at ONE  
Championship



“The best thing we did was start thinking about our consumer and technology long before the COVID situation. Their plans got accelerated and there was a lot of experimentation going on. Digital transformation has been more out there and people are recognizing it more.”

ONE Championship exists because we celebrate martial arts as an inheritance but also because of the values that it carries. Every day more and more families want their kids to train in martial arts to inculcate these values because like humility and discipline in their kids. Similarly, we try to impart this with our philosophy of uniting the entire world.

When COVID19 started going up we realized that more and more governments gave the order not to make big gatherings. As you can imagine live sport is what excites organization and fans the most. We pride ourselves with quality stadium production and experience so we were not happy but we were the first sports entity in the entire world that acted on what was happening when we had the first closed door event on the 28th of February in Singapore. It was broadcasted all over the world and we reached a bigger audience than when we sell a full stadium event.

This as a company has allowed us to step back and be more creative. I want to point out that being a sports media company like us is not only being the live event but also to create content and in today's economic scenario is a big opportunity.

We have many freedom in how we use our sport to connect with fans and we have the privilege to have millions of fans around the world for whom we were already creating content that didn't only involve live events. For example, One Warrior Series blends travel reality with martial arts events. In terms of putting replays and a different variety of content we were already doing that, but we have become more creative and innovative there. We have now 6 more type of shows taking advantage of our athletes, their backgrounds, behind the scenes and the most exiting events of all times.

When it comes to people that have not been directly in touch with us we developed an app in association with Evolve, a very authentic training, with a feature that fans received very well. While we are disappointed that we are not able to offer an entire 360 experience in a stadium with our fans we are also quite excited about how many opportunities this has brought and the different type of content that we have discovered.

We were looking for more digital interaction way before this COVID situation so this has helped us to accelerate many process and we will have very exiting news to share in terms of gaming, community and online interaction.

**Malcolm Thorpe**

Manager Director South  
East Asia Lagardère Sports



“What is happening now is an acceleration of opportunities, that’s what this crisis situation is bringing. The interest of private equity in sport is also very important there is no traditional finance going into sports and bringing new opportunities that we have to identify.”

We have business all around the world and each area has been affected differently because of the distinct type of working fields. In Asia we were lucky enough to be able to organize the Singapore golf event staged in January. The business we had in servicing Asian brands who are interested in buying and securing rights in global properties has taken a significant hit. We are now waiting to see what is going to happen to our biggest event in this part of the world that is the AFF Suzuki Cup that has been scheduled for the end of the year.

The impact is very much up and down depending on where the business are and their focuses. In terms of operation we are in home mode and in some ways it’s been very easy not only in our business but across business in how well people have adapted to the situation. We’ve been busier than ever not only doing our daily work but also with contingency planning and thinking our way through in how things are going to develop.

What do we mean with post COVID? What would happen in the reopening stage? It could be 6 months or 18 months and things will begin to go back to normal but fully post COVID is from 2 to 5 years away when everything is operationally more back to normal. The re-opening stage will be more operative and its going to be decisive how we will be able to operate in different sports and regions with different regulations. In Asia each market is unique and each place is going to manage their own process.

The new world is going to be more about understanding how consumers have changed and how their attitudes have developed. People are looking for different services and social responsibility is going to have more expectation from consumers. For us as an agency we are thinking how that would affect the people we are engaging from brands all the way through media and consumers. Our job is to connect all the different stakeholders and create value. The big thing that is going to affect everybody is the massive recession period and we have to start action and adapting to that financial challenge.



## KEY OBSERVATIONS

- When you see the whole spectrum of what you can do with digital transformation you realize there are different pillars. On one level you have your content delivered in a traditional way but there are other paths to reach your fan base like e-commerce and consumer experience which represent opportunities that engage sponsors based on the fans data collection.
- Athletes have to question themselves what type of sacrifices they are willing to take to adapt and deliver a full range product.
- With COVID19 the organizations that were ahead in innovation are going to execute in the next 6 months are probably things that they would have executed in 12 months anyway.
- Companies are giving more importance to their investments and they want to recognize where are they spending money in order to be more prudent.
- Technology will be smart enough to use models where you could implement performance based sponsorship and it will come to the balance of power between the brand and media.
- The amount of experimentation that this period has created has been interesting but the passion of real world will not be filled with the novelty gap.
- What is happening now is an acceleration of opportunities, that's what this crisis situation is bringing. The interest of private equity in sport is also very important there is no traditional finance going into sports and bringing new opportunities that we have to identify.
- Digital and data will become the centre and everyone is focusing more in their investments and the impact of them. Being aware of global trends gives you the opportunity to maximize the situation in your market.
- The most difficult thing has been about being able to create a new vision of a future where sensibilities are starting to occur out of necessity. Sports need to think forward and all the groups of interest should work together in order to be prepared.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

- One of the biggest challenges has been with athletes which are going to a very difficult time being at home and trying to prepare for their events with a lot of uncertainty with the calendar.
- As a sport property you have multiple stakeholders in your business like athletes, media, sponsors, fans, stadiums but the two most essential stakeholders for the business to survive are athletes and fans and you have to stay true connecting these two.
- When it comes to non live event content athletes experiences are crucial. The athlete brand is very important and has a huge amount of loyalty.
- It is very important to blend digital with live events. For example, gaming is a way of engaging your audience and let them experiment the sport in different ways while you collect data.
- The next five years are going to be very important. From the worst case scenario is that we experience the pandemic in waves. The sports industry will have to be able to build a new model of sports where athletes connect with fans and find more ways of revenues.
- Having fans in the stadiums is magic. Sports have the challenge to create atmospheres that allow everyone to enjoy this new normal. From everyone's perspective the impact that technology will have in live sports is very important.
- This situation has taught everyone that when you don't know the answers you need to be on your feet and have different plans in which digital plays a key role. Sports companies are resilient and we have seen them survive all kind of crisis.
- People understand that health is important and brands are demonstrating how creative they can be.
- Unmish Parthasarathi, GSIC Ambassador and Founder of Picture Board Partners, thinks that this crisis and all the uncertainty is going to impact the consumers attitudes and expectations and there is going to be a larger social community in which technology will be fundamental.

# THANK YOU

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