

Track and Field Athlete's Barriers Evolving with the Postponement of the Olympics

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ABSTRACT

Due to the global Coronavirus pandemic the International Olympic Committee, IOC, rescheduled the Summer Olympics to a date beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of everyone involved in the Games. As the Olympics have been postponed, this could consequently affect track and field athletes. The only other time in the history of the Olympics that there has been a postponing or canceling has been in the case of a war. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to study Olympic athlete's psychological, physiological, and physical barriers encountered due to the pandemic and subsequently the postponement of the Summer 2020 Olympics. A phenomenological research study was conducted to identify themes if athletes were and are affected each day of the postponement and pandemic. **METHODS:** The researcher interviewed 10 Olympic qualifying track and field athletes asking them open-ended questions about how they originally got involved with the Olympics, how they found out about the postponement of the Summer 2020 Olympic Games along with their initial reactions and emotions, the training stage these participants were in, their physical reactions to the pandemic and the postponement, how they plan to prolong their seasons, their mental and psychological effects as well as conversations they had regarding mental and emotional states, perceived anxiety, and how they felt in general months later into the postponement and the pandemic. The participant's data was recorded and transcribed with the aid of NVIVO. The researcher coded the interviews for common themes. **RESULTS:** The data showed the themes of fear of the unknown and an optimistic outlook. These athletes physically had to stop in the middle of their season leading into the Olympics, bringing fear of the unknown. However, athletes adapted, athletes were creative, and athletes were innovative. Psychologically, athletes were able to control their emotions and mental state while addressing the ambiguity of the pandemic and postponement. Athletes know their coaches, their selves, and their support groups, and how they can communicate with them to stay in a positive threshold of a mental state. Physiologically, athletes were able to also be creative to keep up their physicality throughout the pandemic. As these Olympic athletes were faced with a phenomenological event, they strived to reach optimism in every aspect of their lives as athletes. **CONCLUSION:** In conclusion, the study can be used for future studies on track and field athletes, cancellations of worldwide mega-events, and/or worldwide pandemics and their effects on major events. This qualitative phenomenological study concluded optimism, even throughout a global pandemic.