



U SPORTS
2021-22



RETURN TO SPORT 2021

Preparing for Pandemic Aftershocks Of COVID-19

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Disclosures

- I have no conflicts of interest to declare

CONFLICT OF INTEREST



Trajectory for Today



What happened in between

Research findings: effect of interrupted seasons on mental health

Real life impacts of COVID-19/lack of sports on our sport communities

Where we started

Abrupt change in everything we knew
Cessation of sport
Disbanding or communities
Questioning our passion

Where we are going

PREPARATION:

Returning to sport
Repairing our communities
Rebuilding our passion

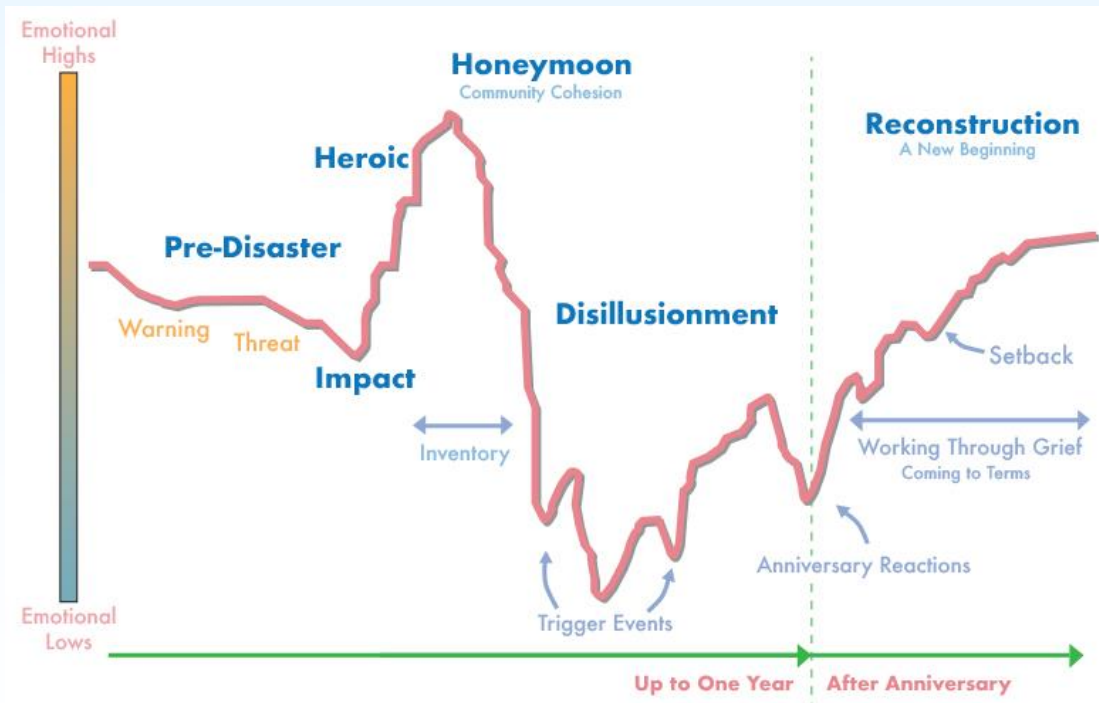


The Year in Review (a mental health perspective)


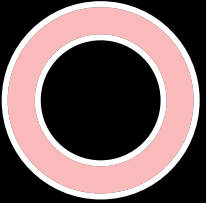

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The Impact of the Covid-19 era on Psychology


- The evolving psychological experience of individuals through the COVID-19 era follows a similar path as response to disaster
- “aftershock”- an aftereffect of a distressing or traumatic event



Adapted from Zunin & Myers as cited in DeWolfe, D. J., 2000. Training manual for mental health and human service workers in major disasters (2nd ed., HHS Publication No. ADM 90-538) <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters/phases-disaster>

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Reconstruction Phase- a Great(er) Place to be!

- The reconstruction phase is characterized by an overall feeling of recovery
 - Individuals and communities begin to assume responsibility for rebuilding their lives, and people adjust to a new “normal” while continuing to grieve losses
 - It often begins around the anniversary of the disaster and may continue for some time beyond that
 - Following catastrophic events, the reconstruction phase may last for years
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Reconstruction Phase- What are we facing?



Let's understand where people will be returning from:

Canadian data (unpublished): Bradley et al.(2021)

- Data collected from varsity athletes from 5 schools (2 AUA, 2 OUA, 2 CW)
- Measures included:
 - Depression (PHQ-9)
 - Anxiety (GAD-7)
 - Insomnia (ISI)
 - Self-reported changes since COVID-19, extent of training since COVID-19
- Preliminary results:
 - Moderate depression
 - Mild anxiety
 - Subthreshold insomnia symptoms
 - Trends: Atlantic>Central>West*
 - Limitations: numbers, no baseline measurement for comparison, many variables uncontrolled



Reconstruction Phase- What are we facing?

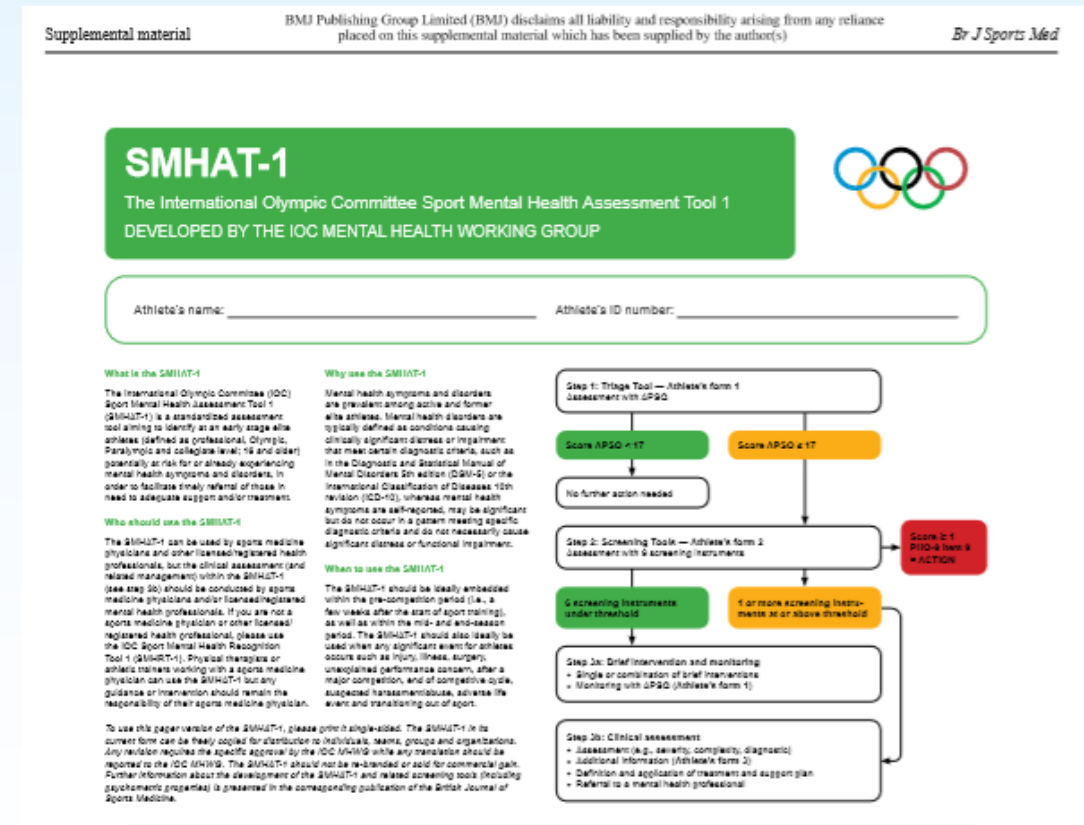


US data: (Iannone et al. 2021)

Data collected from 148 NCAA varsity athletes representing 20 sports evenly distributed across all years

- mean age 19.61
- 65% female
- 73% Caucasian
- Represented 17 states (+ 2 Canadians)
- 53% were in quarantine when the season began
- 70% of the sample lost at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of their season due to COVID-19

SMHAT1: IOC Sport Mental Health Assessment Tool-1
Developed by the IOC Mental Health Working Group



Reconstruction Phase- What are we facing?

US data:

- Measurement:
 - SMHAT subsections:
 - Depression (PHQ-9)
 - Anxiety (GAD-7)
 - Overall Wellness (APSQ)
 - Others:
 - Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
 - Brief Resilience Scale
 - Created by authors: Self-reported changes since COVID-19, extent of training since COVID-19, RTP concerns/mindset





~~Reconstruction~~ Phase- What are we facing?

US data:

Results:

- APSQ- elevated, $F > M$; $Jr/Sr > Fr/So$
- Depression: mild, $F > M$; $Jr/Sr > Fr/So$
- Anxiety: mild, $F > M$, no sig diff in yrs
- Resilience: low avg, $M < F$, no sig diff in yrs
- Wellbeing: below avg, $F < M$, $Jr/Sr < Fr/So$

Fr= freshman
So= sophomore
Jr= junior
Sr= senior



Reconstruction Phase- What are we facing?

Other measures:

Over previous 2 weeks:

- 21% increased substance use
- 72% sleep disturbance
- 61% unhealthy eating or body image concerns

>66% also reported:

- Less motivated
- More sad or blue
- More lonely
- More anxious

Anticipated impact on 2021 season:

- 84% - significant negative impact on season
- 64% indicated “definitely” would return to play in 2021



Looking Within- the subgroups



The COVID-19 disruption affected everyone differently

Athletes:

- Some graduated without completing their careers
- Some deferred graduation to play their final season
- Rookies are still rookies
- And then there are more rookies
- Some programs folded
- Some athletes dispersed

Coaches:

- Wages cut
- Laid off
- Staff laid off
- Variable support from institutions

Integrated Support Team

- Laid off
- Left for other jobs
- Wages cut

Athletic Dept Admin

- ++ financial uncertainty
- Variable communication with university decision-makers
- Variable support from university decision-makers



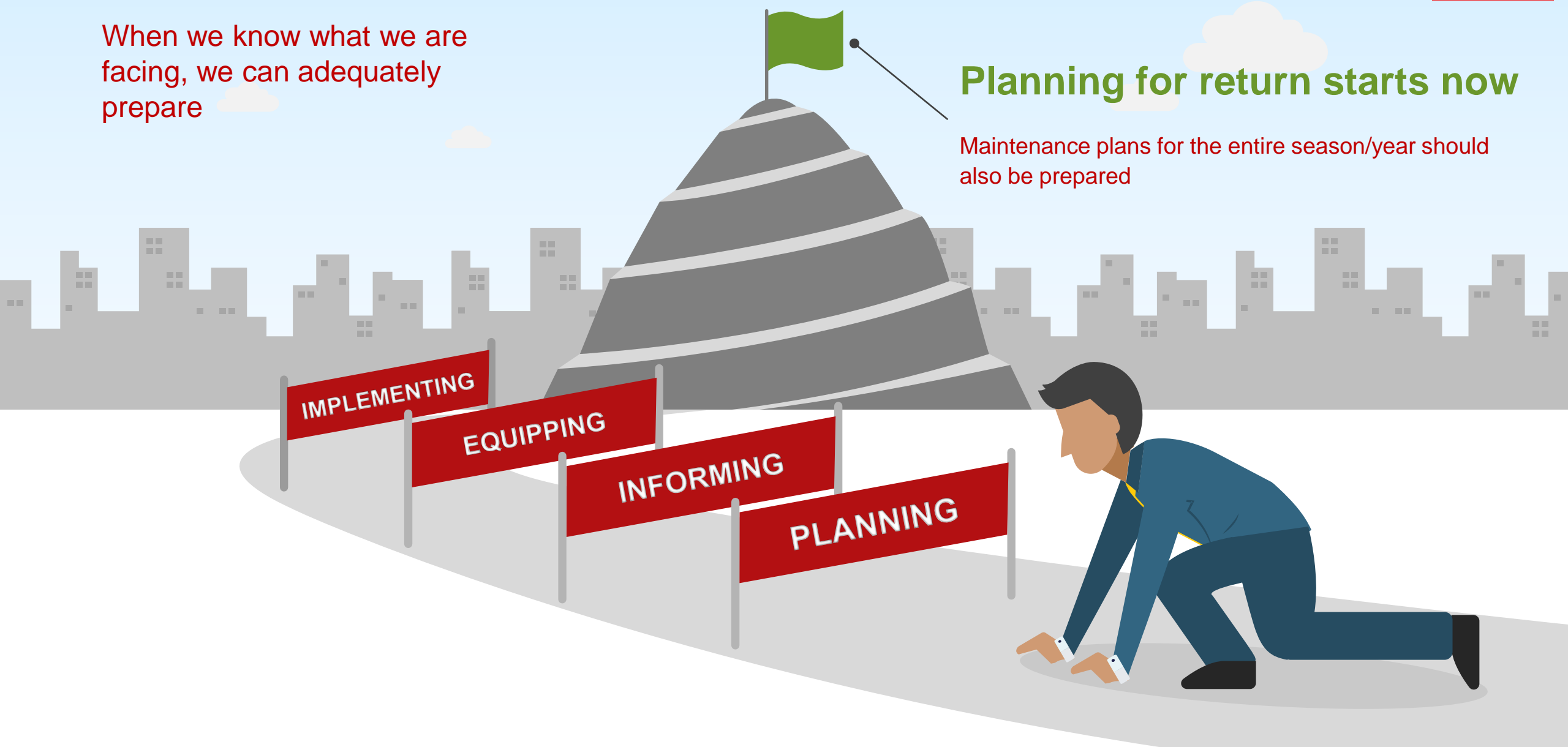


Translation to Action

When we know what we are facing, we can adequately prepare

Planning for return starts now

Maintenance plans for the entire season/year should also be prepared



Important Elements to Address Student Athlete Mental Health on Return to Play (COVID-19 era)



Ensure teammate connections

Promote an environment of mentorship between athletes in your program

Check in during the season

Consider re-screening the athletes in the middle and end of seasons to evaluate mental health and wellness

Back up plans

In case of further disruptions, have a scaffolding upon which you can easily construct an off-site training plan

Remember your wellness

Regularly review your (and everyone's) self care and overall wellbeing. Stress is not going away- we need to be great stress managers!

Ongoing Communication

Instilling/ensuring a sense of community will reduce loneliness and maintain connection

Preparticipation screening

Should include mental health measures for mood, anxiety, sleep and wellness (consider SMHAT-1 or PHQ-9, GAD-7, APSQ, ASSQ)

Map out your support plan

These should include supports based in athletic dept (as available)*, student wellness, or external resources

Take advantage of a new opportunity

Consider using this opportunity to enrich mental skills training for your athletes when they are not together or training in person (resilience, mindfulness, gratitude, self-compassion)

Success!

Celebrate every success, no matter how small—this can include navigating challenges, staying healthy, successful return to sport, and being able to be together again!

Let's Play!!



Heading back to sport

Returning to campus, groups, and classes will bring normal levels of anxiety and reluctance that will need to be anticipated, prepared for and addressed



For specific sport RTP:

- **Communicate**- your plan
- **Connect**- your group
- **Plan**- your supports
- **Screen**- see where people are at
- **Re-screen**- stay aware
- **Have a back up plan** (minimize further disruption)
- **Prepare and practice** mental skills

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