



On Wednesday, March 25th, Athletics Ontario CEO, Paul Osland, lead the very first AO virtual town hall conference call for coaches and club affiliates. The purpose for the call was to provide coaches with some updates on what is happening and some potential planning for the future that they will be able to share with all of their athletes and club members.

Today's agenda items included:

- 1) An update on the Outdoor Season
- 2) Coaching support & online opportunities
- 3) Program & funding updates
- 4) Training guidelines & opportunities

The current social distancing measures in place are creating a lot of unknowns and anxieties as a result. People are looking to governments and other authorities for guidance and answers that is simply not available, yet. No one knows what is going to happen in the next 24 hours let alone the next several months.

We have already come through a terrifying couple of weeks with dramatic announcements and changes that we are forced to deal with. We are living in a world where we are confronted with the realization that we have little to no control over what is going on in the world around us.

People are spending hours watching various news channels or even worse, social media pundits forecasting various doomsday scenarios and at the end realize that all we have done is create more stress and anxiety in our lives.

1) **Outdoor Season**

With the hardest hit areas of China just starting to ease their lockdowns and slowly return to business with restaurants opening and people gathering outside in a controlled fashion, it provides us with a glimpse of what we may expect once the peak has passed in Canada. I even heard that China had started to hold track meets again. China's peak was about 6 weeks ago, so we can expect that once we hit our peak in Canada it will be around 6 weeks before we can really get functioning again. Our gov'ts and health authorities will be providing us with direction in that regard.

At this point we are looking at all outdoor sanctioned events and anticipating that all events in May will be cancelled or postponed, you should plan for that and we will update our website shortly. There is a strong likelihood that events in June will also be cancelled or postponed, especially the AO Championship events.

Most of you have heard that AC has cancelled the Olympic trials in June and yesterday the World Masters Championships scheduled for July 20-Aug 1st were cancelled. As a result, we will have some openings to the calendar that we can use if the Coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

With those developments we are currently working on a couple of scenarios to provide outdoor opportunities for Ontario athletes. These scenarios include looking at July and August start dates as well as holding track meets into the first couple of weeks of September.

The AO Competitions Committee will consider a number of factors in any rescheduling that will include things like

- When athletes are able to start training outdoors in group workouts – the idea would be to have at least 4 weeks of training before competitions start
- Meet sanctioning requirements looking at multiple events happening at the same time across the Province due to limited window of opportunity to hold competitions
- Championship event formats, scaled down multi-age groups on the same weekend etc.
- Local High-performance events in the absence of any international opportunities for high performance athletes.

At this point we are still working with the ministry to determine if the Ontario Summer Games scheduled for July 31 & Aug 1st will continue. The Province will make that decision and at this point have not indicated when they will make that decision. We are in contact with them and will update the membership as soon as they let us know. Given the size and complexity of this multi-sport event and the situation with hundreds of kids staying residence I would be surprised if they don't cancel. I expect that they will provide us with direction long before June, based on the planning complexity.

The Cross-country season should not be in jeopardy, but we should know that answer long before the end of summer.

We understand that there are some very big questions for some athletes that will be looking at setting performance results to receive US and CDN University scholarships as well as next year carding standards. We will do our best to get any competitions happening at a local level as soon as we are given the go ahead. In addition, we are working with the ministry and Athletics Canada on impacts to funding programs. I will update this further a little later.

2) Coaching support & opportunities

With the current social distancing requirements, it is highly unlikely that any of our April Coaching courses currently scheduled will take place. We will work with the course organizers to reschedule to a future date.

At this time the Sport Coach, Club Coach and Performance Coach courses are not available to be delivered online. Athletics Canada has a national Coaches workgroup, which AO has representatives on. They are discussing how quickly we can get some of these programs online. The current situation should help to expedite this process. There is a call this afternoon with this group and we will provide further updates after the call.

Now is a great opportunity to look at a number of coaching courses that are already available online and get your Professional Development points done. As a reminder all coaches are required to get 10-30 PD points, depending on Coach certification, every 5 years to keep their certification current.

We have summarized a number of the more relevant courses that you should be interested in. Some of them, like the Respect in Sport and MED courses are mandatory for either AO Coach membership or for Club Coach & Performance Coach requirements.

The summarized list is posted on the [AO website under coaching courses](#).

In addition to online courses, John Stevenson and Saheed Khan are available to help you get through some of your coaching evaluation requirements. Most of this can be done virtually. John and Saheed can walk you through the steps and show you how to use the AC coach evaluation portal. Email coaching@athleticsontario.ca for further information.

3) Program & funding updates

The Team Ontario athlete and coach funding is on schedule and will be released within the next 7-10 business days.

As part of the OHPSI Team Ontario program, Athletics Ontario is working to put together a video series with tips and tricks to stay healthy and active during this time. We will be able to provide this information to all members, not just the Team Ontario athletes. Once it is complete we will post to the AO website.

We have spoken to the Ministry and they have confirmed that Quest for Gold is on schedule and all payments will be made this year as planned regardless of what happens to the outdoor season. The deadline for applications will remain as March 27th at 11:59pm.

We are consulting with the Ministry, Athletics Canada and other Provincial Sport Organizations regarding the 2020-21 QfG criteria, once we have a clearer picture of the scenarios that may occur, including a partial season, or no season at all, we will update the membership.

The Ministry had previously told us that they were reviewing the entire Q4G program and were going to be announcing revisions to the next version of the program. We don't know what that means and we don't know if the Coronavirus situation will impact those plans. We will continue to work with our ministry advisors and will provide updates as they become available.

The Athletics Ontario Board is having discussions on any potential refunds or partial refunds if the outdoor season is partially or completely lost. They will obviously have to review the potential impact to ensuring the ability for AO to continue as a viable organization. With the potential risk of a third or more of membership revenue at stake, many factors will need to be looked at.

Over the past 5 years the AO board has been focused on building a reserve to safe guard the organization against any significant financial challenges and we are confident that we will be able to get through this period.

The AO board is committed to ensure AO will be able to weather this storm and remain in business, we are in the process of applying to the Federal governments 10% wage subsidy for small businesses, I encourage any clubs that are incorporated not-for-profit and paying staffing salaries to apply to this program. We will provide a link on our website. But if you Google Covid-19 wage subsidy you will find several links to the program.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/578596-covid-19-wage-subsidy/>

You can also look at the Federal government's economic response plan that has other information on potential support from the feds. I encourage you to share the information with the members of your clubs as there may be people out there that are looking for support.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

Currently the Ontario gov't has said that they will be providing support to small businesses, however they have not yet announced any details. We will keep our eyes open for this and update you when the gov't announces anything.

4) Training guidelines & opportunities

At this point most recreation facilities are completely closed. There are a number outdoor locations that are still open, places like Downsview and Central Tech plus a myriad of small school tracks were still open this week, that could change at any time if the government feels people are not following their social distance guidelines. A guideline is posted on our website.

All formal club training sessions should not be happening at this point and that means coaches should not be holding workouts. If small groups of individuals train together they must ensure that they follow the gov'ts social distance guidelines. We recommend no more than two to three together and always maintaining at least 2 meters distance between each other. Now is not a time to break the rules or think that we are an exception. We all must do our part in order to get through this quicker and avoid many more potential lost lives through accidental exposure.

Clubs can look at being creative in helping their members through this time by providing workouts that can be done alone on the roads, in a park field etc. Ontario has a vast amount of Greenspace, even in Downtown Toronto there are empty fields for throwers to work out and parks and trails for runners to run on. Throwers please make sure you that you thoroughly clean your throwing implements before sharing with anyone else.

We encourage clubs to create opportunities to connect with their members, set up video workout sessions. Use readily available, and free, video technology like Google Hangouts or Zoom video conferencing to do some virtual circuit training, have different athletes take the lead on a circuit routine.

The athletic community has always been a place for people to come together and support each other. The current situation makes this community support even more critical; we just need to be creative on connecting virtually while respecting the social distancing mandates.

The AO team is working remotely to provide support and community for our members, we are currently investigating the use of video conferencing software and going forward would like to be able to have more interactive sessions with our members. As this is new technology for us we are just figuring our way through it. This Pandemic is helping us to change and learn new technologies that will enable us to better support our members now and in the future.

As we are managing through this time of social distance workouts we want to showcase and share stories of the creative and innovative ways our clubs and athletes are managing through this time. It could be virtual circuit training videos that anyone can do at home without any special equipment, or a video of mental health tips to help with coping through this time or it could be unique ways in which groups are connecting remotely to stay connected and supportive of each other. The other night a small group of masters I train with had a virtual pub night, I assure you I was only drinking water as I had just finished a workout on my own.

So, please send us your stories and video links that we can share with the entire AO Community.

Closing Remarks

We are planning weekly update calls every Wednesday at noon. For future calls we would like to try and get more interactive and also leverage some video conferencing capabilities. In next week's call we will have the option for people to join in through video conference on their computers or smart phones. This will give us more interactive opportunities like chat room, Q&A and real time polling. Please be patient with us as we are learning how to use these new technologies. Hopefully, we can learn together and there will be opportunities for you to do the same with your own clubs and communities.