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World Athletics President Coe says the sport may return to empty stadiums

By: David Rowbottom

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World Athletics President Sebastian Coe says meetings may have to take place in empty stadiums as the sport attempts to return to normality in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this week the World Athletics flagship series, the Diamond League, announced a new provisional calendar of 11 meetings this year, starting in August and running through to October.

Asked by *insidethegames* if circumstances may require athletes' efforts to be viewed via television rather than directly by spectators, Coe responded: "In the short term we may have to compromise on that.

"We can't be oblivious or tin-eared to what we are being told by local communities and public health authorities.

"It may well mean that.

"It's clear that football is going to come back quite quickly with the Bundesliga plans.

"And that will be behind closed doors.

"I don't think anybody is contemplating this as the ideal long-term solution - sport would wither on the vine quite quickly if that were the case.

"But that may well be a compromise we have to make in order to get the athletes back into competition, leagues finished, at least some kind of competition."

Some athletics meetings may need to be held behind closed doors as the sport seeks a way back from the coronavirus pandemic ©Getty Images

World Athletics has also created a window of opportunity for national championships to be held between August 8 to 9, and Coe reported encouraging signs having spoken at length to members of the European Athletics Council.

Other impromptu events have been held by remote link, such as the self-styled Ultimate Garden Clash, which took place on May 3, involving Renaud Lavillenie, Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Sam Kendricks.

The three pole vaulters were connected via a live video as they competed in their own back gardens and the event attracted more than 250,000 live viewers globally, with more than one million people watching the broadcast around the world within 24 hours of it taking place.

Today a second Ultimate Garden Clash of pole vaulters, involving Olympic champion Katerina Stefanidi of Greece, two-time United States indoor champion Katie Nageotte and Canada's Commonwealth Games champion Alysha Newman, is due to take place.

Meanwhile, Coe has reported that the first meeting between his federation and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) over the securing its share of revenues expected from the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games had been "very good".

Several International Federations (IFs) are set to request an early payment of sums they expected to receive from the IOC from the Games, after the postponement created cashflow challenges.

So proud of these guys ... should have been a pole vaulter

! <https://t.co/mwZggOna8u>  
— Seb Coe (@sebco) [May 3, 2020](#)

World Athletics - which subsequently shifted its World Championships in Eugene in Oregon from 2021 to 2022, is one of three IFs in the top group for revenue distribution, along with the International Swimming Federation and the International Gymnastics Federation.

Each is expected to receive around \$40 million (£32 million/€36 million)

from the IOC from revenue secured from Tokyo 2020.

"The teams met the other day," Coe said.

"It was a very good, very respectful meeting.

"The IOC team have gone away to further deliberate.

"We were very clear about what the main challenges were.

"We also made that point that the cost of moving the World Championships was, to us, not cost-less.

"We were able to adapt very quickly once the Games had been postponed."

An IOC decision on the matter is not expected until the end of the year.

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