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# A Grand (Slam) achievement at the 2020 US Open

Peter Francesconi | October 05, 2020

Remember in the spring, when the USTA announced its plan to stage the 2020 US Open? Many were doubtful it could be done amid the coronavirus pandemic. Even if the tournament got off the ground, what would happen if players, staff or officials started testing positive over the following two weeks?



Players were concerned. There was back and forth about the size of the entourage a player would be allowed to bring to New York, where they could stay, and how exactly the “bubble” would work. Many said that if the Open were able to be played, it would be an “asterisk” year—implying that the lack of top talent and a lower quality of tennis would make the 2020 tournament not worthy of previous editions.

Well, as we all saw on TV and online, the Open played out brilliantly, even if fans weren’t allowed on the grounds. The players—who all had the choice of whether or not to come to the Open—were superb. The tournament brought some much-needed live sports and excitement to this country and around the world.

This should not, by any means, be considered an “asterisk” year for the US Open.

Over the two weeks, the USTA performed 13,000 COVID-19 tests—and 99.9 percent of them were negative for the virus. No one in “Tier 1” (players, coaches, key officials, staff, etc.) tested positive—proving that the bubbled worked extremely well.

By making the bold yet reasoned decision to play the Open this year, the USTA realized possibly \$40 million—far short of a “normal” US Open, but a sum that should no doubt help keep this industry on an even keel.

For all of us in this industry, it’s important that the Open was able to be played. As we’re all trying to recover from the challenges posed by COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, it was great to see at least some normalcy in this sport.

But maybe even more important for this industry was how the 2020 US Open came about. Credit of course goes to the USTA, which acted quickly, decisively and transparently through the whole process. Mike Dowse, who just took on the role of USTA executive director and CEO in January (talk about trial by fire), made it perfectly clear what needed to happen for the Open to take place. He and his staff were concise, consistent and open in their messaging.

This is important not just for the largest professional tennis tournament in the world, but also for how this new USTA administration has been dealing with the industry at large. Back in March, as businesses were forced to shut down and incomes dried up, Dowse & Co. set the tone for how they planned to interact with and help this industry through the collaborative Tennis Industry United and other initiatives. And while the USTA reorganization may be causing some pain among staffers, I think few would argue that change was in order for the governing body to move this industry forward.

We certainly have more challenging times ahead—this industry is in no way out of the woods, and probably won’t be for many years. But for the first time in a long, long time, I’m feeling more confident that we’re all finally pulling together.

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