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## **Malta Basketball Association Protocol**

*Moving towards the return of local basketball amidst the  
COVID-19 pandemic  
– a directional policy document*

The **Malta Basketball Association (MBA)** aims to promote safe sports practices consistent with advice from public health authorities.

In view of the continuation of the 2021-22 local basketball season, the MBA is issuing its updated basic health and operational guidelines for all local basketball clubs and nurseries, setting out obligations and other health and safety measures.

This protocol lists the outline of sanitary, medical and hygiene measures as well as the basic operational protocols that are to be applied when official local competition matches are held.

One cannot plan and project with any form of certainty given that the situation, re the COVID-19 pandemic, may change daily and our environment is dynamic and unpredictable. In this regard, while it is impossible to establish or guarantee a completely risk-free environment, the MBA's aim is to lower the risk as far as possible by applying current medical and health authority's advice and best practices.

At the same time, the MBA will do its utmost to ensure that all persons within its premises adhere to social distancing and correct hygiene measures that are critical to the success of any return to regular training and game events.

It goes without saying that the general health and safety of athletes, officials and staff involved is of primary importance and the following protocol/guidelines should help to ensure that this is in no way compromised.

This protocol is **subject to change** based on the evolving local scenario and are **in no way intended to supersede the general guidelines issued by Public Health Authorities.**

**Social distancing and good hygiene are the best ways of infection prevention and remain the guiding public health principles.**

## **Use of Masks**

There is growing evidence that the use of a mask, when in public areas and particularly in circumstances where maintaining social distancing may not be possible, will reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection.

General face protection using a mask is encouraged when around other people while not practicing sport. Preferably the use of the Mask is recommended over the use of the Visor.

- A face mask should cover both the mouth and nose and be worn close to the face
- The mask should not be touched or moved with the hand from outside
- If the mask is damp or contaminated with secretions, it must be changed immediately, disposing of the used mask immediately followed by hand disinfection
- If a reusable mask is worn, it should be washed at 60°C afterwards and disposed of after several washes
- Masks are to be worn even when passing through indoor areas where there is mixing of people
- Masks should NOT be used when practicing strenuous or vigorous exercise

## **Protocol/Guidelines**

The following guidelines are intended to help the local basketball clubs/nurseries and are to be read in concurrence with the latest guidelines published both by Public Health Authorities and SportMalta.

**Kindly note that these guidelines are NOT intended to supersede or replace the guidelines published by the health authorities.**

Please note that these guidelines may also be updated from time to time.

If you have received a booster shot (18 years and over), your certificate will be valid for **nine (9) months** from the date of that dose.

If you have not received a booster shot, your certificate will be valid for **three (3) months** from the date of your last vaccine dose.

- All individuals must be fully vaccinated or provide a negative result from a PCR test 48 hours prior to the game or a negative result Rapid Antigen Test 24 hours before the game to be able to participate both in training practices and games.

- If one has not received the booster shot, the certificate will be valid for three (3) months from the date of the last vaccine dose.
- If one has received the booster shot, then the certificate will be valid for nine (9) months from the date of the last vaccine dose.
- All individuals should, in the case of both training practices and games, arrive separately (ideally with a maximum of two (2) people per car) wearing facemasks and be ready for training/game (i.e. wearing the appropriate kit). Arrival to the venues should be staggered if possible
- One should aim to travel in own vehicle to and from the game and/or training and maintain social distancing even when not training or playing
- Congregation in any common areas, outside or within the training/match facility venue, is to be prohibited and social distancing practiced at all times
- Temperature is checked before entry to the training/match facility venue. Entry should be denied if over 37.2 degrees Celsius or if there are any signs/symptoms. The person/s in charge of the temperature check reserve/s the right to ask about the health status.
- Hand Sanitiser is applied upon entry to and exit from the training/game facility. Individual hygiene measures are the most important activities to protect against infection
- Social distancing applies until the start of the training session or the match
- No person should attend training or games if feeling unwell (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat or difficulty breathing) and call for medical advice. One should then only return to team activities after being cleared by a doctor, and/or a NEGATIVE Real Time PCR swab test result.
- Any persons who are feeling unwell or show any signs/symptoms should stay at home. We recommend that a PCR or Rapid Antigen test is taken and they are under no circumstances to attend the training session/game before symptoms clear and receive a NEGATIVE test result.
- Anyone who feels unwell during a training session/game is to stop, immediately leave the court and go home.
- Masks are to be worn when not doing physically demanding activity. This means that coaches, technical staff, table officials and other authorized personnel must wear a mask. These are to be maintained in all common areas
- Players and other authorized personnel, both in training and games, are to, regularly and thoroughly, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. This can be supplemented with the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Players and other authorized personnel, both in training and games, should avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth as well as follow good respiratory hygiene by covering

the mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing followed by the tissue's disposal

- Any water and/or any food/snacks must be personally brought by the player/coach/authorized personnel and no sharing is allowed. Players are to have exclusive use of individual drink bottles/towels/etc and shared bottles or cups should absolutely not be allowed.
- Players/coaches/authorized personnel should use hand sanitizers regularly but particularly during substitutions, time-outs and intervals of play/training
- No water dispensers are to be allowed in the training/game venue
- Players and other personnel are to maintain social distancing on the bench during training/games
- Shower facilities and changing rooms remain closed. Showering may be a possible conductor of viruses / aerosol generator
- The use of toilet facilities should also be limited as much as possible
- Only necessary individuals should be with a team, at all times. No unnecessary personnel are to be allowed both in training or any form of match. Only persons occupying a role in the holding of a training session or a match and/or authorized personnel shall be allowed entry on court. There is to be a limit to essential support personnel on the bench and absolutely no individuals that do not have an active role in the game (no observers or spectators). Persons who are not essential for the direct course of the game can be contacted via other communication means such as mobile telephony and/or video calls.
- Balls must be disinfected (and possibly rotated after sanitization) every 20 minutes during training/match (at the end of every quarter during a match).
- No sharing of personal or intimate equipment is allowed. Any equipment, training or otherwise, should be disinfected before and after use. Ideally no equipment is to be shared e.g., resistance bands etc, but should there be any equipment that must be shared, this must be disinfected thoroughly after each use
- Re Training Practices: A team is to wait outside the training facility until the same facility is vacant and available.
- Re Games: Teams are to wait to enter the court in the opposite corners until the court area is vacant and available.
- There is to be no handshake, hugs and/or high-five between teams, referees, table officials, etc., i.e., no unnecessary physical contact with an opposing team, referees or match officials.
- Players' substitution seats to have bigger and minimum physical distancing (from each other and from the official table)

- During a time-out, teams are to move to the dedicated area
- Persons, such as team bench personnel, who have contact with several players should pay attention to hygiene and protective measures
- Exemplary individual behaviour about hygiene measures, both inside and outside the training/match facility venue, is a must. This includes an absolute ban on spitting or clearing of phlegm during the game/training session itself
- Clubs need to monitor the hygiene practices of respective individuals in their teams, monitor for illness and fever and consider regular COVID-19 testing
- The clubs shall ensure compliance with obligations related to annual medical examination of players
- Every Club shall designate a Liaison Officer who shall be available to report regularly on the state of health and activity within his/her club. The person designated as Liaison does not have to be a doctor or come from the medical profession
- Each club should keep an attendance register for all the training sessions being organized.
- As regards media personnel, the authorized media persons must follow the respective media plan/protocols including planned social distancing for media interaction.
- The principle of solidarity means that everyone is responsible for and can protect the others.

Every local club, through its officials and coaches, should always keep the above points in mind to ensure the safety of all participants, at every level and of all ages. Clubs should review the measures implemented in response to these regularly:

- ✓ keep up to date with Government, Health Authorities, SportMalta and the MBA guidance. Clubs should ensure that such guidance is followed at all times and communicate these guidelines to all individuals connected to the club
- ✓ undertake regular risk assessments of the club's activities. Risk assessments should be updated and reviewed regularly to mitigate any new or changing risks
- ✓ ensure that everyone, be they committee members, coaches, first aiders, volunteers, parents, and players, is aware of the club's and MBA's Covid-19 protocols.
- ✓ do not undertake an activity if the club has any concerns about the safety of club officials and/or participants

Non-compliance with this protocol set out by the MBA may lead to disciplinary measures.

## **In the case of a Player/Coach/Team Official with a positive COVID-19 test:**

- The Player/Coach/Team Official shall quarantine as per Public Health Authorities' guidelines.
- Every registered Player or Coach/Team Official that has been deemed positive to COVID-19 shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any form of basketball activity, up until such person has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period.
- A repeat swab test will be normally arranged by Public Health after 14 days of quarantine and at least 3 days of showing no symptoms. After two negative swab tests in the absence of symptoms a Player/Coach/Team Official may be considered to be recovered.
- Once passed fit to exit any quarantine, the Player/Coach/Team Official must undergo a medical examination and follow a graduated return to play protocol.
- Thus, the return of the player with a positive swab test to the sporting activity is permitted with a clear signed certificate and clearance from a doctor and has two negative samples, more than 24 hours apart from each other.
- Every club shall ensure that any of its registered Player or Coach/Team Official that has been deemed positive to COVID-19, shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any basketball activity, up until the registered Player or Coach/Team Official has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period.
- Any Player or Coach/Team Official that has been found guilty of an offence against these directives shall be automatically suspended from any basketball activity for a minimum period of two (2) months as from the date of the second negative swab test after the quarantine period.

## **Close contacts of positive Player/Coach/Team Official**

- Close contacts can, for example, be defined as persons who share the same household or attend training in the same vehicle.
- These shall quarantine for 7 days with a swab test taken at the end of the 7 days prior to reintegration with the rest of the team in the absence of any symptoms.
- In the event of a competitive match falling within these 7 days, they may be allowed to play if they return a negative swab test on the same day as the match, in the absence of symptoms.

# Rest of the squad

- No need to quarantine if they return a negative swab test and have no symptoms.

The same approach will be taken with referees and table officials.

**This guidelines/protocol can be changed at short notice.**

## Conclusion

During this time, the public's view of local basketball, the teams and players in the current situation will be even greater than before.

In this regard, exemplary behaviour about hygiene and insulation measures even outside the basketball court, and most importantly, prudence when participating in social activities, is a must.

The MBA calls on every stakeholder for maximum cooperation with the Public Health Authorities and for the MBA to always be informed of health-related developments.

In fact, diminishing the risk to any forthcoming MBA competitions from COVID-19 surely relies on the right preparations by all involved but surely to a great extent on the cooperation, behaviour, attitude and understanding of all the teams, players, coaches, team officials and technical staff as well as all the referees and table officials and all other personnel involved in any game.

The present scenario is surely a difficult context for everyone and the co-operation between and from every stakeholder is of utmost importance for the good of the local basketball game at any level.

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# Addendum

## Media Personnel Protocol

The aim is to protect each individual and to ensure that the media personnel are as completely separated as possible from the players and other authorized personnel on the court.

Maximum protection can only be achieved by consistent hygiene, a sense of responsibility and a minimization of time overlap or spatial proximity.

- All media personnel must declare their agreement to comply with the hygiene regulations and the necessary health checks by the person in charge of entrance. Access is only granted after a health check
- Individual hygiene measures are the most important activities to protect against infection
- Regulations for the arrival and departure of media personnel must be observed
- Mandatory use of mask/visor, i.e. mouth and nose protectors: must be worn after entering the training/game venue and in all MBA areas. Observe correct putting on and taking off as well as carrying (complete covering of mouth and nose)
- The time spent in the training/game venue is to be reduced to the minimum
- Avoidance of private/unnecessary conversations, as these tempt to reduce the social distance requirements
- Mandatory conversations/interviews should be held in a small circle, be kept as short as possible and maintaining social speaking distance
- Hand disinfection: Basically, before and after every use of jointly used equipment (focus on broadcast technology)
- Observe social distancing and spatial equalisation for reporting/game observation spots on the media stand
- Observe the minimum distance and spatial equalisation for camera positions on the media stand
- Walking/roaming around the venue should be reduced and there should be no crossing of the players' tunnel whilst the tunnels are in use by the players/officials
- Adopt protection of microphones, headsets and/or other media equipment/apparatus
- Cleaning of equipment and surfaces with a surface disinfectant before the start of and after the activity, after assembly and disassembly on the production day by the service provider
- The principle of solidarity means that everyone is responsible for and can protect the others.

**These recommendations can be changed at short notice.**