



MBAESG

Sports Event – A Fan’s Perspective

A Report

Arjun Sridhar

Meghan Ankola

Anwar Sayeed

Rohit Mukherjee

MBA in Sports Management

2018-20

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 2. Abstract
 3. Event 1: - ATP Bengaluru Open
 4. Event 2: - Cult Pro Boxing
- Event Conclusion

Introduction: -

Sporting events world over are becoming bigger and better in terms of their size and reach. The same can be seen when it comes to sporting events conducted in Bengaluru, especially when it comes to cricket and football. But these are just two sports in a world of many. When it comes to the city of Bengaluru, the entire country knows and recognises its sporting culture. But it is still some way off some of its global counterparts like London, Melbourne, Johannesburg, Paris and Los Angeles. Those cities heavily emphasise on fan engagement within a sport and that has led to them being wonderful sporting cities in terms of culture and heritage.

Abstract: -

In this report we detail our experience and the information based off interacting with fans attending sporting events in the city. We focussed on sporting events of sports that are extremely popular on a global scale but not a lot in Bengaluru or even in the rest of India (i.e., not cricket or football) to get an idea as to why that is the case. Our focus was to pay more attention to the fans' aspect and perspective.

ATP Bengaluru Open: - Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA), Cubbon Park, Bengaluru. 16th and 17th November 2018.

We attended South East Asia's biggest ATP event in November. But based on our experience it felt like anything but the biggest. More than half the stadium was empty. The marketing and advertising for the event was very poor. Considering that it was such a high profile and International sporting event in a city renowned for its sporting culture, not a lot was done by the ATP or the KSLTA to promote the tournament or more importantly the sport. We managed to observe the event and also interact with fellow fans/spectators and get their opinion on the event. The key areas we focussed on were: - ticketing, security, ambience & atmosphere, fan engagement and food, beverages & entertainment.

- 1. Ticketing:** - Tickets were available both online and at the venue. The pricing of the tickets was very reasonable. The tickets prices ranged from Rs 100 to Rs 500 depending on the seating and the hospitality. There was just one ticketing booth and this caused the area to become very crowded. Overall though, not a lot to complain about.
- 2. Security:** - Security was limited to just checking whether the spectators had their tickets on them or not. There was no screening or checking of baggage. People could carry their bags etc right inside. After the match, during the post-match presentation, spectators ran onto the court and there was no security whatsoever to do anything. People could even move from stand to stand by jumping over the wicket fences. This meant that a few people who had purchased the cheapest available tickets then jumped and sneaked into the more expensively priced seats. Security, especially at an International event like an ATP tournament has to be top priority, and it didn't look like it.
- 3. Ambience & Atmosphere:** - The facilities were subpar. The atmosphere was very disruptive, because there weren't any stewards and a lack of organisation meant that chaos ensued in the crowd. In a sport like tennis, where the players' concentration is of utmost importance, this was truly shocking. The atmosphere during the matches was quite good. The support displayed by the fans was great to see and you could see the players acknowledging it.

4. **Fan engagement:** - The fan engagement was probably the worst we had ever experienced. There was no fan engagement at all. And it wasn't because there was a lack of resources, interest or time. It genuinely felt like the organisers did not keep the fans' experience in mind at all.
5. **Food & Entertainment:** - There wasn't anything available really. There was one food stall outside, but it had nowhere near enough for all the people in attendance. If somebody wanted something to eat or drink, they would have to walk to a place outside the stadium to a little stall that was about 15 minutes away. In terms of entertainment, there wasn't anything right through the tournament apart from one performance by an Indian music group at the start of the final.

Based on what we gathered from the fans present and based on our experience, we'd say that if this were a national level tennis tournament, it could be considered a success, and a good one at that. But this was an ATP event, the biggest in South East Asia at that, and it was lacklustre at best. The fans' experience wasn't even thought about by the organisers. The potential for fan engagement and experience seems immense. Just based on our visit we noticed several areas of improvement, so it is rather disappointing that the organisers didn't recognise and/or act on it.

Cult Pro Boxing Event: - Koramangala Indoor Stadium, Koramangala, Bengaluru. 9th December 2018

We, i.e., I (Arjun), Meghan Ankola, Anwar Sayeed and Rohit Mukherjee attended a boxing event in Koramangala, Bengaluru on the 9th of December. We noticed that most in the audience were first time attendees with respect to boxing. The general consensus was that for a non- cricket/football/kabaddi the way the event was organised and managed wasn't too bad. We managed to speak and interact with quite a few of the attendees to get an understanding and an idea of how they felt about the event as a whole, along with a few key areas that we identified. Just like we did at the Bengaluru Open, the areas we focussed on were: - ticketing, security, ambience & atmosphere, fan engagement and food, beverages & entertainment. The thoughts below are based on a combination of our views and our interactions with the fans.

1. **Ticketing-** The tickets were definitely on the more expensive side (about Rs 500/-). Both Online and Offline mode available. Online Tickets needed to be shown at the kiosk to get hard copy. Chaos and different queues for getting tickets. Online tickets should have been directly scanned at the gate and allowed to enter. This would have created less confusion and mess at the entries. Also, there were no details about the actual itinerary on fight night available while booking tickets. All that was mentioned was the cost of the tickets.
2. **Security-** No strict security as such was found. In fact, it was borderline non-existent. Spectators were not checked and were allowed to enter with belongings without scanning. This might breach security issues. The security was (somehow) even more lax once the fights got underway. There were people from the stands running onto the area meant for the coaches, right next to the ring. There were more than a 100 people at the event (excluding the fighters, their teams, the organisers, the food and beverages operators etc) and the lack of security was baffling.
3. **Ambience & Atmosphere-** Overall, not a very pleasant ambience. Seats were not cleaned properly. LED score and timing boards were placed at the bottom right next to the ring, whereas it should have been placed higher. The lighting and ventilation could have been better. As far as the atmosphere was concerned, it was electric. The organisers were

proactive and encouraged the fans to chant and cheer. Considering that it wasn't a cricket/football/kabaddi event, the atmosphere and energy inside the indoor stadium was great.

4. **Fan engagement-** Spectators should have been given with posters of the participants to cheer for them. As mentioned before, there were quite a few first timers. They should have been given with details of the participants to have more information about them. This was also a brilliant opportunity to promote the sport of boxing, and also a great chance to promote Cult.Fit (the organisers). There could have been a few simple fan engagement activities pre and post-match. There wasn't even a big enough seating area outside the arena where people could sit and relax prior to the fights starting. Fan engagement is arguably the area that the event organisers need to work on the most.
5. **Food & Entertainment-** Few food stalls. Food prices weren't mentioned. A person would have to approach the stall and ask for the price and other details. Either a price board should have been put or a menu should have been given prior to the entry for the participants to know the prices of the Food and Beverages. The quality of food was pretty good and even in terms of hygiene, it was good. The organisers also used this opportunity to promote a healthy lifestyle by selling healthy food and beverages. There was food being served during the fights, which was good. But the food cart would run out before it could reach halfway up the stands. The food cart operator would go to refill and start again from the first row, and again run out by the time he reached halfway up the stands. This isn't a serious issue and a little common sense would have come in clutch. In terms of entertainment, well there was none.

Overall though, we think that the event was a relative success. From an organiser's point of view, they achieved their basic goals i.e., get in decent number of viewers. From a fan's perspective, it was an enjoyable evening out.

Sure, there are areas that need some working on, but this event was an example of how the sporting events in the city are evolving. There is still some way to go though, in terms of keeping the fans in mind.

Conclusion: -

So, our major takeaway from attending the two events and by speaking to the fans at the events, it was clear to us that there was a severe lack of fan engagement in the sporting events in Bengaluru when it comes to sports apart from cricket/football. The potential though, seems a lot. If the organisers work a little harder and pay a little more attention to the fans, that would be a start. The organisers don't even have to look far for some inspiration. Just look at the premier sports and the premier sporting events held in India like the Indian Premier League, the Indian Super League, the Pro Kabaddi League to name a few. These brands have found significant traction in India and a main reason is because of their conscious effort to connect with and involve the fans. There is a responsibility on the organisers part to change the current fan engagement landscape in the city. Being sports management students ourselves, we will be working hard to ensure that happens as well and do our best to contribute. We have recognised a very elementary and basic problem, now it is time to be a part of the solution and take the sporting culture forward.