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“People want to know what’s next. It’s OK to not have the answers. It’s OK to not know what’s next. What’s not OK is not caring what’s next”
ANDREW McCUTCHEEN OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL’S PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES, ON JACKIE ROBINSON DAY

SPORT

CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

HKTA CALLS FOR BETTER PROTECTION

As tennis coaches return to work, body wants government to spare sports from future lockdowns

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Some 700 tennis coaches can return to work tomorrow after the government relaxed Covid-19 restrictions for recreational facilities, but many are still without a livelihood and hoping for stronger policies to protect the sports industry from future shutdowns.

Certain outdoor facilities, including private clubs, were able to open on Friday and all tennis courts managed by the Leisure and Culture Services Department can resume operations tomorrow, with a limit of four people on a court.

Hong Kong Tennis Association President Philip Mok Kwanyat said about 700 tennis coaches can go back to earning a living, but for the likes of fencing coach Wong Tsan and others involved in indoor sports, the wait goes on.

“Our Association welcomes this decision and is thankful that the government has acknowledged the importance of sports to the general public as well as industry stakeholders such as coaches,” said the HKTA in a Facebook post. “We urge everyone not to let their guards down in the battle against the epidemic and strictly observe the regulations set by the government.

“We will continue to lobby the government to refine its policies such that if there are further outbreaks of positive cases, the decision to maintain the operation of each activity can be evaluated based on its own safety merit.

“Up to now, tennis facilities across Hong Kong have been closed for a total of 18 weeks and future uncertainty looms.”

Sports facilities across Hong Kong shut down earlier this year as the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world but reopened after the number of new cases fell to single digit figures, allowing coaches in many sports to return to work.

However, a third wave of infections starting in July forced the government to close down sports facilities again. Many coaches are struggling to recover and are unable to make ends meet, despite an initial subsidy of HK\$7,500 derived from the government’s anti-epidemic fund.

Wong, a former Hong Kong fencer who runs his own academy, said he would back a campaign to lobby the government, having twice shut his training centre and main source of income.

“I hope in coming weeks, they will allow some indoor sports to reopen,” Wong said. “Even under a two-person limit.

“For the coaches it is important. Not only for the coaches but also for the sport and for the kids.

“I have many parents coming to me saying their kids only sit at home playing and eating without any physical exercise.

“I don’t know how Hong Kong can open restaurants but does not allow training centres to open,” said Wong.

“I have many parents coming to me saying their kids only sit at home playing and eating without any physical exercise”
FENCING COACH WONG TSAN