

## Sports leagues set to resume without knowing COVID-19's erratic path, randomness and chronic effects

Professional athletes don't have the luxury of waiting for the outcomes of longitudinal studies of coronavirus patients. Sports are trying to restart next month. And the people who place the highest value on their hearts, lungs and physical conditioning will have to live with uncertainty.

They appear to have a lowered risk of serious disease simply because of the demands of their jobs: being young and keeping in fantastic shape... But even the ones spared by the acute stage of illness won't be sure what to expect next.

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We asked 17 cardiologists, epidemiologists, physicians and infectious disease experts how they would respond.

They say they can't guess the long-term effects of a disease that's only six months old because there hasn't been a long term. They're encouraged by the low risk the virus poses to professional athletes in the short term. But they're troubled by the severe complications that appear to strike at random... Their most pressing concerns for professional athletes include prolonged fatigue, shortness of breath and chest pain, blood clots, lung scarring and, in the worst-case scenario, heart inflammation triggering a cardiac arrest.

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"I'm less worried they'll end up on a ventilator or die," [epidemiologist Neel Gandhi] said. "But I am worried they may not be able to play at the level they usually do—if they are able to play at all."

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