



COVID-19 Health Protocols in BRI Liga 1: A Case Report

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ABSTRAK

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) telah mengubah aktivitas kehidupan sehari-hari termasuk olahraga. Acara olahraga biasanya mengumpulkan banyak orang di tempat olahraga yang dapat menjadi penularan penyakit. Acara olahraga dibatalkan dan dihentikan karena pandemi begitu pula sepak bola. Atlet profesional, tim, pemangku kepentingan, dan bangsa di seluruh dunia berusaha untuk memulai kembali kompetisi sepak bola dengan protokol kesehatan COVID-19 yang ketat. Kompetisi sepak bola Indonesia yang dikenal dengan nama BRI Liga 1 menggelar kompetisi dengan protokol kesehatan COVID-19 yang ketat di masa pandemi. Semua orang yang terlibat dalam kompetisi harus melakukan vaksinasi lengkap, mengikuti sistem gelembung, menggunakan masker wajah, menggunakan pembersih tangan, menjaga jarak, dan menjalani rangkaian tes COVID-19. Sebanyak 18 tim, 900 subjek diamati selama 25 Agustus 2021 hingga 3 Oktober 2021. Enam ribu tiga ratus tes PCR dan 5.400 tes antigen dilakukan selama periode observasi. Protokol kesehatan digunakan untuk mencegah penularan dan kluster akibat persaingan. Semua atlet dan ofisial tim mematuhi protokol kesehatan COVID-19 dengan tidak adanya kasus COVID-19 pada saat observasi. Kompetisi sepak bola bisa diselenggarakan di era pandemi dengan menerapkan protokol kesehatan yang ketat dan bisa menjadi percontohan cabang olahraga lainnya.

ABSTRACT

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic had changed daily life activities including sport. Sport event usually gathered many people in sport venue that can became disease transmission. Sport events were cancelled and stop because of pandemic so did soccer. Professional athletes, teams, stakeholders, and nation worldwide were trying to restart the soccer competition in strict COVID-19 health protocols. Indonesian soccer competition known as BRI Liga 1 held a competition in strict COVID-19 health protocols during pandemic era. All people involved in competition should had fully vaccinated, follow bubble system, use face mask, use hand sanitizer, maintain distancing, and undergo COVID-19 test series. As many as 18 teams, 900 subjects were observed during 25 August 2021 to 3 October 2021. Six thousands and three hundreds PCR test and 5,400 antigen test undertaken during observation period. Health protocols used to prevent transmission and cluster caused by the competition. All athletes and team officials obey the COVID-19 health protocols resulted by no COVID-19 case in the time of observation. Soccer competition can be held in pandemic era using strict health protocols and can be a pilot to other sports.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its onset, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has spread around the globe (Tovar, 2021). The disease transmitted by droplet and direct contact with someone infected (Jin et al., 2020). Transmission of COVID-19 can be prevented and controlled by COVID-19 health protocols (Chu et al., 2020; Lotfi et al., 2020). Health protocols namely distancing, face mask using, hand washing, staying at home and not gathering believed to be keys to fight the pandemic (Ludvigsen & Hayton, 2020; Wong et al., 2020; Yeo, 2020). Many regions had implemented physical distancing and lockdowns to prevent the spread of the disease (United Nations, 2020). Sport events was an event when people gathered and increasing risk of transmission. The transmission during sport events had happened in youth sports

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(Biese et al., 2021), baseball (Murray et al., 2020), rugby (Jones et al., 2021), indoor sport (Dougherty et al., 2021), and soccer (Karki et al., 2020; Teran et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2021). In order to prevent COVID-19 transmission in athletes and others involved, most major sporting events at international, regional and national levels have been cancelled or postponed (United Nations, 2020).

Major soccer leagues had stop the competition because of the pandemic (Link & Anzer, 2022; Skinner & Smith, 2021). Many aspects involved and ruined with this stoppage (Andreato et al., 2020; Ayoub et al., 2020). Sports field of work involved many resources, stakeholders, venues, spectators, and teams that decreasing economy growth around the globe (Parrish & Lam, 2021; Ruyhley & Li, 2020; Tan & Lee, 2020). Economy and athlete wellbeing were decreasing in the time of pandemic. Sport events gathered people and a high risk transmission however in other hand the stoppage of sport events ruin many aspect of people's life (Dwyer et al., 2020; Gomez & Mironov, 2021). A safe mechanism should be made to close this gap, a safe health protocols in soccer and other sports that can be implemented in the time of pandemic (Castagna et al., 2020; Chiampas & Ibiebele, 2021; Mataruna-Dos-santos et al., 2021). The governments tried to restart the competition using COVID-19 health protocols and without spectators (Klosok, 2020; Lines, 2020; Wood, 2020). Governments and stakeholders were putting plans in place to restart competition that brought together large numbers of people in crowded settings. Only the coordinated implementation of all public health and social protocols will bring transmission down (WHO, 2021). Indonesian soccer competition known as BRI Liga 1, also affected and just restarted the competition in 27 August 2021 (Liga Indonesia Baru, 2021). Held soccer competition is challenging and risky for disease transmission in the time of pandemic. Strict health protocols needed to prevent case and cluster that might arise from the competition.

2. METHOD

This case report based on direct observation of COVID-19 health protocols and COVID-19 test in BRI Liga 1 soccer players and officials. Data regarding soccer players and officials obtained from PT. Liga Indonesia Baru (LIB) while COVID-19 test data obtained from Fastlab laboratories. Indonesian soccer competition known as BRI liga 1 is the highest level of soccer competition in Indonesia. The organization of the competition held by PT. LIB. The competition use home and away match in a bubble system, winning team gain 3 points, tie match score 1 point and losing team gain 0 point. Team with highest points will be the winner of competition and represent Indonesia in Asian Championship. Three teams with lowest point will be degraded to Liga 2. Subjects are teams involved in competition namely players and officials. There are 18 teams participated, and every team consist of 35 players and 15 officials. Result of COVID-19 test during competition are very important regarding the competition starts with no COVID-19 case. There is no COVID-19 case in the beginning of the competition. All subjects in a good health condition guided by each team physician and all subjects had negative result of COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test by licensed COVID-19 laboratories. Only health subject with negative PCR test can enter the competition.

Observation took place in Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Bandung from 25 August to 3 October 2021. Health protocols plan for the competition as follows: healthy, negative PCR test in the beginning of competition, undergo bubble system, undergo serial COVID-19 PCR and antigen tests, use peduli lindungi health application, maintain social distancing, maintain hygiene, and use face mask. All health protocols supervised by BRI Liga 1 COVID-19 task force physician (*dokter Satgas protokol kesehatan COVID-19*). Two check-list are used in this observation. First, COVID-19 health protocols check list to observe teams, residential places, and venue as mentioned above. Second, COVID-19 test result check list to determine the COVID-19 status of the subjects. The expected outcome is no COVID-19 case or cluster during the observation period.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Eighteen soccer teams observed with total of 900 subjects comprised of athletes and officials. All subjects are male with the youngest subject was 18 years old while the oldest was 57 years old. In the period of 25 August to 3 October 2021, each subject has tested for 7 times PCR and 6 times antigen so a total number of 6,300 PCR tests and 5,400 antigen test had performed. The COVID-19 laboratory staff came to the residential places and the match venues to take the samples. The result was negative 6,300 PCR tests and negative 5,400 antigen test. This showed there was no COVID-19 case in the time of observation. Starting of the competition, subjects must be tested for PCR a day before match. According to the match fixture, the interval period was 3-5 days to perform PCR test. All subjects should tested negative

for PCR two days before arrival in the city where competition take place (Satuan Tugas Penanganan COVID-19, 2021; Schumacher et al., 2021). The competition held in the city of Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Bandung (Liga Indonesia Baru, 2021). Negative result of PCR test had been used globally to start competition (Meyer et al., 2021; Rico-González et al., 2021). Research showed any recurrent infection after negative result of PCR test so serial PCR tests was recommended (Azam et al., 2020; Sule & Oluwayelu, 2020). All subjects underwent bubble system, live in a closed environment, the mobility only from the residential place to the match venue. Subjects were prohibited to go out or accepting guest in the residential place. Before entering bubble system, a system that isolate players and officials in tight location to limit the contact with others personnel outside the bubble (Massey et al., 2021; Salazar & Katz, 2021), all subjects underwent antigen test. Subject with negative result can enter bubble, while doubt result would be retested with antigen and confirmed with PCR test. This system ensure the health protocols, even the hotel's facilities, hotel's staff, and teams meal was under strict health protocols (Nishino et al., 2022; Spinicci et al., 2021).

Discussion

Competition period, serial PCR test used in this competition can be a standard in sport competition combined with strict health protocols (Brito de Souza et al., 2021; Gouveia & Pereira, 2021). A study in bubble system of basketball season showed there was a positive case during the season, the positive cases was isolated and none of the cases transmitted to other bubble members (Mack et al., 2021; Salazar & Katz, 2021). Health application known as peduli lindungi were prepared in residential places and match venues that examine vaccination status and COVID-19 test results. Standing digital thermometers, automatic hand sanitizers, and COVID-19 health protocol posters also prepared in all residential places area and match venues area. All subjects always maintain physical distancing in the residential place and match venue unless they are practicing or playing. Distancing play major role in preventing COVID-19 transmission. All players and officials should maintain physical distance except for the competing players (Federation Internationale de Gymnastique, 2021; Lim & Pranata, 2020; Rink et al., 2020). There were several things to be concerned during match regarding fair play in soccer competition namely pre match ceremony, goal celebration, and post match ceremony. In the time of pandemic, there was no salutation, hand greetings, and no high five among players and staff. Match photograph of teams and referees taken with distancing protocols. Goal celebration should be done individually, no contact with another team members and staff. In the end of match still no physical contact and no jersey exchange among players (AFC, 2021; UEFA, 2020). Referees guard actively inside the field if any physical contact happened during pre match ceremony, goal celebration, and post match ceremony. The COVID-19 task force physicians guard actively outside the field if any distancing violation happened from players, officials, and dignitaries in the tribune. All subjects always wearing face mask when they are out side the room unless they are eating or drinking. Competitive sports require high oxygen intake and will be lacked if using fask mask, so the use of face mask during play in the match was not recommended (Mataruna-Dos-santos et al., 2021; Wicaksono & Nurfianti, 2021). In the match venue, all subjects always used face mask, unless the subject was in training, playing, or drinking. Several subjects did not wear mask properly, in this case the COVID-19 task force physician came up to the subjects directly to remind and fix the face mask wearing (Satuan Tugas Penanganan COVID-19, 2021; Toresdahl & Asif, 2020).

Several subjects also wore double-masking improperly, they were pairing surgical mask with surgical mask. In this case the COVID-19 task force physician came up to the subjects directly to educate the proper way of double-masking, pairing surgical mask with cloth mask (CDC, 2021; Toresdahl & Asif, 2020). The COVID-19 task force physicians always guard the subjects nearby during the match to unsure the fask mask using adherence. Study in basketball tournament in Indianapolis showed that only 73.9 % spectators used the face mask correctly (Vest et al., 2021) while study in football match in Tokyo showed more than 90 % spectators used face mask properly (Murakami et al., 2021). Competition was held without spectators to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission. Several research showed that the absence of spectator can have different result on the teams (Sedeaud et al., 2021; Tilp & Thaller, 2020). A research had recommended games with spectators (Dergaa et al., 2021) while many of others recommended the opposite way (Karki et al., 2020; Sasser et al., 2022; Schreiber et al., 2022). All subjects always do strict COVID-19 health protocols in bubble system and in the match venue. Face mask using and physical distancing were the most protocol had been violated however the violation directly had been solved. There was no COVID-19 case during the observation period.

4. CONCLUSION

There was no COVID-19 case developed during the soccer competition. All athletes and officials involved can maintain their fitness and health and perform strict health protocols. This report prove that sport competition can be held in COVID-19 pandemic era in strict health protocols. The hard work of everyone involved in the research may give encourage and spirit to all athletes and people in implementing COVID-19 health protocols. Strict health protocols used in BRI Liga 1 can be a great example and consideration to other competitive sports.

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