

**An exploration of protocol, the multifaceted definition
and management of protocol at major international sports
events**

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Figure 1 - FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019 Trophy Winners Ceremony ¹

Abstract

This case study aims to introduce and investigate Protocol as a Functional Area at International Sports Events. It explores the definition of the word 'protocol', breaking down the meaning in both sporting and non-sporting, event and non-event contexts. It focuses particularly on the multiple layers of protocol that exist at Major International Sports Events, from Diplomatic Protocol to Rights-Holders of the Event prescribed Protocol, and on how stakeholders specific to each event can also influence procedures. In the case of conflict it examines which protocol and customs take priority.

It explores and discusses whether challenges faced by those who set protocol and the Organising Committees and their Functional Areas tasked to deliver it can be mitigated against. It also examines whether there are parts of the Protocol Functional Areas responsibility that remain unwritten and which, if written, would assist Organising Committees in easing and justifying challenges currently faced. It also discusses whether the position and timeline of incorporation of the Protocol Functional Area team into the Local Organising Committee could be more effective. It examines whether single-sport events can learn anything from multi-sport events and provides considerations for future events in the Gulf and MENA region.

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Introduction to Protocol

Definitions of Protocol

Protocol in a Major International Sports Event setting is a widely recognised key functional area.

‘Because sports events are functionally-based organizations, the organizing committee divides itself into divisions, departments, and/or FAs (Functional Areas) by key function.’ ‘The FAs form the basis of the departments or committee structures where most operational-level decisions are made.’²

In the Routledge Handbook of Sports Event Management, Parent identifies Protocol as one of the key areas.² Protocol is not limited to Major International Sports Events; it also encompasses national sports events, international non-sport events and general event settings.

The word protocol is also used in a wide range of settings outside of events. The Cambridge English definition leans towards a definition we recognise in an event setting:

“the system of rules and acceptable behaviour used at official ceremonies and occasions’ or

‘a formal international agreement.”³

They further describe it as,

‘the system of rules and acceptable behaviour that people or organizations should follow in official situations.’³ This is also reflected in the American definition.

Whilst this reflects our interpretation of protocol in an International Sports event setting, it also identifies with the definition of protocol in other event settings such as State, Royal or Military events. The English definition also refers to protocol as a system of rules in settings including scientific experiments, medical and technology settings. In a sport setting the term can also be referenced when talking about Anti-Doping procedures.

Synonyms for protocol reflect our event-setting definition and can help us better understand its application:

“Etiquette, conventions, formalities, customs, rules of conduct, procedure, ritual, code of behaviour, accepted behaviour, conventionalities, propriety, proprieties, one's Ps and Qs, decorum, manners, courtesies, civilities, good form, the done thing.”⁴

Protocol at Major International Sports Events

‘Protocol in our context can be defined as the set of (usually unwritten) rules, procedures, and guidelines dictating proper/generally accepted behaviours (i.e. norms) for dealing with state/diplomatic affairs and individuals for all matters associated with the major sports event.’⁵ But as the title of this paper implies,

protocol is multifaceted and also encompasses more symbolic traditions and rituals specific to an International Sports Event or a Nation.

Hobsbawn and Ranger reflect that 'created or invented rituals and traditions serve several purposes: they may establish or symbolize legitimate relations of authority; or particular institutions; or they may be used to inculcate a certain set of beliefs systems and conventions of behaviour.'⁶ It becomes clearer that Protocol could be identified as diplomatic or symbolic.

Hosting a Major International Sports Event involves interpreting and managing National, Diplomatic and Event Rights-Holder prescribed protocol.

National Protocol in an event setting could be defined as the set of guidelines around how society in that nation operates - for example how individuals address one another or the specifics around a nation's flag design and how it is displayed.

Diplomatic Protocol could be regarded as a set of rules relating to international relations and the accepted courtesy between states, so undue offence does not occur when figures from different states meet. In an event setting it also exists to protect the activities and visits of high-profile state figures of a Nation. For example, procedures put in place when the Emir of Qatar visits an event will vary between state organised events in Qatar and events he is invited to by other states.

It could be likened to what Chatty describes as 'Elaborate protocol' which...

“is probably best associated with the world’s royal families (e.g. royal weddings, coronations, royal funerals). Protocol is therefore often related to kingship, power, and authority.”⁷

Sports event Rights-Holders’ protocol can be a multi-layered picture itself, perhaps better understood when divided into diplomatic and symbolic etiquette. For the Olympics, Olympic protocol is defined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) who is the Event Rights-Holder or Event Administrative Body. However...

“Despite the IOC’s significance, international high-performance sport is also shaped by people and policies from outside the Olympic Movement. International Federations (IFs), National Federations, and other non-governmental bodies are powerful stakeholders in the international sport system.”⁸

As the Olympics plays host to a wide range of sports, the International Federations of these sports will also have established protocol which must be considered. In the instance of a multi-sport event, the protocol established by the Rights-Holder of the Event will supersede the International Federations.

However, the International Federation’s protocol is not completely disregarded, it is purely at the discretion of the Event Rights-Holder. ‘In the case of the Olympics, the rights and obligations of each federation are defined in the Olympic Charter, which awards the IF the exclusive right to govern the specific sport.’⁸

The protocol of the Host National Federation can also be considered. It is purely a hierarchy and falls after the Administrative Body and International Federation. This structure is also reflected in Continental Games and other multi-sport Championships such as the Asian Games, European Championships and other multi-sport events that host a variety of nations with a commonality - for example the Commonwealth Games.

For a single sport International Championships, the Event Rights-Holder or Administrative Body of the event will set out their protocol. This could be the International Federation - for example World Athletics (previously the IAAF) - or a private entity such as Super League Triathlon or the International Swimming League who host international events independent from the respective International Federations. With a number of other stakeholders often involved with events, additional protocol may have to be considered.

Protocol Functional Area

Let's return to the identification of Protocol as a key Functional Area in the first paragraph of this introduction. It is the responsibility of this Functional Area to manage the multiple layers of protocol introduced above at their respective International Sports Event.

Due to the multifaceted nature of protocol, from the diplomatic elements set by different Governments/Nations and the Event Rights-Holders, to the symbolic

elements whose traditions give the Event or Nation its identity, the Protocol Functional Area is a fundamental one. Parent and Smith-Swan collate comments from Antonson and Judas highlighting that...

“Protocol is a mysterious FA for most people, yet a fundamental one for a major sports event. Protocol helps build and maintain relationships with key event dignitaries (both sport and non-sport). Protocol weaves through all aspects of an event: the order of importance; who is permitted access and where they sit; how they will be greeted; who can interact with them; and even sometimes what languages to offer.”⁹

This case study aims to explore and offer a greater understanding of”

- what protocol is and why it is important within International Sports events
- What defines it and how it is managed and delivered by the Organising Committee Protocol Functional Area
- Best practice for events in the future such as the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

Why is Protocol Important

Diplomatic and National Protocol

“Protocol is crucial in bringing the world together on equal standards in peace and solidarity.”¹⁰

This is particularly true if we are referencing Diplomatic and National Protocol and the elements of this that the Event Rights-Holder’s Protocol identifies as event critical.

“Protocol is the only credible answer to the increasing demand of correctly managing international events in which authorities and dignitaries are present. The application of some specific rules and internationally recognized procedures in fact protects officials and their role, reducing the risk of mistakes and misunderstandings.”¹⁰

Protocol sets the standards and guidelines for important people to understand why something is being done in a particular way by the most senior regarded stakeholder so as not to be offended by it. It is the acknowledgment of the hierarchical standing of all present and gives the justification for actions that might otherwise be deemed as offensive.

“If protocol is not followed, mayhem or even international incidents can occur.”⁵

An example of this was seen during the London 2012 Olympics, at one of the Women’s Football matches...

“As the North Korean players were being introduced before the match against Colombia, South Korean flags were mistakenly displayed in the video package. The squad walked off and could only be persuaded to return when the teams were announced again with each player’s face displayed next to the North Korean flag, delaying kick-off by about an hour.” ¹¹



Figure 2. - London 2012 Olympics incorrect flag shown on screen.¹²

It is well documented that relations between North and South Korea are tense following the 1950-53 Korean conflict and the countries technically remaining at war. The BBC article quotes North Korea's coach Sin Ui Gun,

"Our team was not going to participate unless the problem was solved properly." ¹¹

This example demonstrates the fall-out that can occur if protocol mishaps occur.

Protocol Functional Area

Focusing now on the Protocol Functional Area, its existence is important not only to ensure protocol is followed at events, for the reason described above, but it falls with the Protocol Team to also ensure the safe transportation and facilitation of the authorities and dignitaries present at events.

As already introduced, protocol at International Sports Events is multifaceted and as a result the importance of protocol has many sides.

Values and continuity

“Protocol is crucial in correctly communicating the Olympic values and spirit.”¹⁰

This is not unique to the Olympics; it holds true for any reoccurring events that look to uphold traditions and rituals that represent the values and foundations that that event was born from.

“The respect of a definite set of rules, that is the Olympic protocol, preserves the power of these rituals and gives a sense of continuity to these traditions.”¹⁰

These rituals make the event identifiable and instantly relatable, often giving an event, such as the Olympics, its prestige. For example:

“Elements of the Olympic protocol are epitomized in the opening ceremony, which is probably the most powerful vehicle for the IOC to promote the image and preserve the magic of the Olympic Games.”¹⁰

Following protocol not only brings continuity between the holding of different editions of events in different years by different organising committees, but also brings continuity to different sports and venues that make up a multi-sport event and different venues that make up a single-sport event. For example, protocol around medal ceremonies, no matter the sport of an Olympic Games, are synonymous with the Olympic standards.

In the case of multiple venues hosting parts of an event, the hanging of the flag belonging to the federation governing the competition or pre-match elements make it identifiable as part of the whole event. Example of such include multiple stadiums in a host country for the FIFA World Cup, such as when it comes to Qatar in 2022, and equally multiple stadiums in multiple countries for tournaments that span several months. Protocol is essential as this can be managed on the ground by teams within the same organising committee or multiple organising committees, particularly in the instance of tournaments spanning several months.

The UEFA Euro2020, due to be held in 2021, is a fantastic example of a major event usually hosted across multiple stadiums by one host nation, but which for the first time will span multiple stadiums in multiple nations (twelve to be exact).

The protocol guidelines will be essential for ensuring a 'one event' identity, not just in the symbolic elements but in the diplomatic protocol set out by UEFA, the Rights-Holders of the event. It is also essential here to ensure Heads of States of the different nations experience equal standards at each host city by each Local Organising Committee.

It is important to note it is not necessarily just the protocol function that brings continuity elements to a Games, Championships or Tournament. Other functional areas such as branding, accreditation and sports presentation also add to the inclusive, being part of one whole, feeling - although because this could be termed protocol by its definition of a set of rules, these responsibilities do not fall within the protocol function and do not exist to build and maintain relationships between important stakeholder figures.

Who Sets the Standards of Protocol?

Sport Events Rights-Holder Protocol

In the introduction we identified the variety of different protocol that needs to be considered at International Sports Events and identified that hosting an Event can be a delicate balance of National, Diplomatic and Sports Event Rights-Holder prescribed protocol.

Parent and Smith-Swan discuss protocol...

“it is important to understand and accept that the IOC and IFs trump global, national, and local politics.” ¹³

They continue to advise that:

“At a sports event, the president of the rights-holding organization (e.g. the IPC for the Paralympic Games) is the most important person attending, and takes priority over a political head of state. For example, for the Olympic Games, the IOC president is more important than the president of France.” ¹⁴

The International Olympic Committee highlight the significance of their protocol in their Olympic Charter:

1. Throughout the period of the Olympic Games, the IOC Executive Board alone has the authority to determine the protocol applicable at all sites and venues placed under the responsibility of the OCOG.
2. At all Olympic functions and events during the Olympic Games, the members, Honorary President, honorary members and honour members of the IOC in their order of seniority, the President, Honorary President and Vice-Presidents leading, take precedence followed by the members of the OCOG, the Presidents of the IFs and the Presidents of the NOCs.
3. The OCOG, the IFs, the NOCs and all other persons accredited at the Olympic Games, in any capacity whatsoever, shall comply with the IOC Protocol Guide and other protocol-related requirements set forth in the Olympic Host Contract, and all other instructions of the IOC Executive Board, in respect of all matters subject to this Rule. ¹⁵

This evidences that it is the Rights-Holder of the event that sets the highest level of protocol. This is not limited to organisations over multi-sport events but includes those over single-sport events, which could be an International Federation or Private Body hosting the event.

Senior figures, Royalty and Government, from a wide range of countries attend sports events:

“We see protocol in how delegations and VIPs are treated when they arrive in the host region, how they are formally welcomed, how they are treated during ceremonies (e.g. opening, closing, victory ceremonies), how VIPs are addressed, who gets to speak, who speaks first, what can be said to declare a Games open, who sits where and besides whom, which flags are to be used/displayed, and how to display them.”⁵

It is important that the Sport Events Rights-Holder Protocol is recognised:

“It is established to bring the world together on equal standards in peace and solidarity”, to bring harmony, build and maintain relationships. ¹⁰ ‘National and State protocol is not dismissed but, in case of conflict, Olympic protocol [if the Olympic Games is used as an example] ...takes priority.’¹⁰

How symbolic protocol is established

The symbolic Protocol that the Sports Event Rights-Holder prescribes varies depending on what the Rights-Holder deems essential formalities and rituals to them. This can vary with the size and prestige of an event. In football for example it could just be the national anthem and flags at the start of a match. The Olympics is held in high regard because of its values and historic value - as a result the IOC details protocol around the use of the Olympic Flag, Olympic Flame, Opening, Closing and Victory ceremonies which exist to symbolise these values.

How do these standards of Protocol come about? Referring again to the Olympics:

“The gradual assimilation of their ceremonial elements over the years shaped the Olympic protocol as we know it today.”¹⁰

Focusing on the Olympics, Lattipongpon’s study on *The Origins of the Olympic Games’ Opening and Closing Ceremonies: Artistic Creativity and Communication*¹⁶ is perfectly surmised by Miliccia:

“Not all editions of the Olympic Games equally contributed to its development, though; the most significant period for the introduction of these ceremonial features dates back to the first half of the 20th century. Antwerp 1920, for example, saw for the very first time the Olympic flag with the five rings being raised during its opening ceremony; Paris 1924 is remembered for establishing the ritual of raising the next host country flag, as a symbolic handover, during its closing ceremony. Amsterdam 1928 is often evoked for the first fire lit in a stadium’s cauldron but, also, for the ‘Greece first, host nation last’ protocol innovation for the athletes’ parade. While Los

Angeles 1932 went down in history for introducing the raising of the medal winners' flags during the victory ceremony, the idea of a torch relay saw the light on the occasion of the Berlin 1936 Games, where a lit torch was carried from Olympia, Greece, to the newly built Olympia stadion. After this fruitful period of two decades, nothing substantially changed until the Olympic Games of Melbourne 1956, where the athletes marched together during the closing ceremony as a symbol of global unity – previously they used to enter the stadium in alphabetical order by country – and the Games of Rome 1960, where the official Olympic anthem was first played.”¹⁰

We can see from this brief historical overview that many Olympic rituals that have become identifiable traditions are now protected by Olympic Protocol to ensure they feature in every edition of the event, to keep it iconic and true to its values no matter the Local Organising Committee.

Similarly, National and State Protocol is naturally established by the respective Nation or State and is often deep-rooted deep in the history of the nation or set by the appointed team managing state affairs around what they deem critical, for example, to ensure the security of Heads of State.

“In the Middle East few studies exist which examine the study of royal rituals – invented and derived.”⁷

Given this, there is an opportunity for protocol in Qatar to be researched and documented further.

Communicating Protocol Standards

We have identified the different types of protocol that can exist at International Sports Events, their importance, how these are set by a variety of external bodies and how they have come into existence. Local Organising Committees are expected to deliver this protocol, so how do they understand what protocol is set for the event they are organising?

Sports Event Right Holders can communicate these standards to the Organising Committees as early as the bidding stage. For example, the IOC have a Bidding Document, Olympic Charter and Technical Document that details protocol requirements and the International Federations such as World Athletics have a protocol section in their Technical Guidance.

Sports Event Rights-Holders tend to have an incumbent team to manage the application of their protocol guidelines by organising committees and communicate any unwritten information and other requirements.

Organising Committees, particularly the Protocol Functional Area, must also liaise with other stakeholders of the event to understand what other protocol comes into play. This could extend to host city governments who are providing funding to make the event happen and the state with high profile guests attending.

Challenges Faced by Rights-Holders of Events

Rights-Holder Protocol can be understood by organising committees before they even bid for an event and agreements can form part of the awarding of a bid. However, often the Local Organising Committee team that are brought in to manage and deliver Protocol requirements may not have been part of the bid team so may not immediately understand the origins of the protocol laid out by Rights-Holders.

The difficult task for a Rights-Holders incumbent team is to articulate the protocol requirements to new organising committees each time a new organising committee takes the reigns of an event. Each edition of an event can take place in different country, with different language barriers and with a different organising committee at the reigns. Different countries uphold National and Diplomatic protocols to different extents. Some countries require more education than others by Rights-Holders that the Rights-Holder protocol takes priority over the protocol of the nation.

Miliccia reflects:

“One of the biggest challenges of the protocol team in the lead-up to the event is educating the future domestic and international guests about the Olympic protocol peculiarity and potential discordance with the host country protocol. During the Olympic Games in fact, national and state protocol is not dismissed but, in case of conflict, Olympic protocol takes priority.”¹⁰

This challenge starts with the Event Rights-Holders staff, in this example the IOC, firstly educating the Local Organising Committee and Protocol Team. Some countries struggle more to understand that:

“At a sports event, the president of the rights holding organization (e.g. the IPC for the Paralympic Games) is the most important person attending, and takes priority over a political head of state. For example, for the Olympic Games, the IOC president is more important than the president of France.” ¹⁴

Politicians and governments who are stakeholders in major international sport events, particularly those who have not hosted international sports events previously during their time in post, may find it difficult to grasp that the Event Rights-Holder's protocol is held in higher regard. It can be difficult for the Rights-Holders of the Event to educate host countries to understand that by hosting an international sports event they are inviting the world, and their wide-ranging customs, to their country, and the Rights-Holders Protocol is partly there to promote equality between nations.

The incumbent team may also have their own frustrations in the time they can allocate to communicating Protocol alongside other responsibilities.

What is protocol at international sports events

In the introduction, we defined Protocol as a set of rules. A number of rules and guidelines are laid out by Rights-Holders of an event for a Local Organising

Committee to deliver to - for example ranging from competition guidelines to accommodation requirements. In an international event setting, only some of these rules and guidelines, usually those specifically relating to symbolic or diplomatic affairs, are deemed to be protocol.

“There is a level of protocol delivered from the time someone in the Olympic Family (the Olympic protocol umbrella term used to describe the people who require and are entitled to protocol assistance – usually those individuals, groups, and organizations who are the Rights-Holders of the event and core partners like the sport federations and government representatives) arrives until they physically leave the city of the event.”¹⁴

This is not limited to the Olympics but runs true for all International Sports Events and the ‘Games’ or ‘Federation Family’.

Venue Protocol

So what does protocol commonly encompass? Miliccia describes venue protocol activities at the London 2012 Olympics:

‘At competition venues, they mainly encompass the correct application of the Olympic protocol such as ensuring the accurate display of flags; the management of all areas dedicated to the Olympic Family, namely drop-off points, lounges and tribunes; the provision of various services including meet and greet, hospitality, seating management, and flag support for victory ceremonies. Totally different

operations mark the non-competition venues. At the Olympic village, for example, they mainly include the organization of both protocol tours (for dignitaries) and Team Welcome Ceremonies (for athletes and officials). At the airport, they simply consist of appropriate meet and greet services and smooth arrival and departure operations. Compared to other protocol-heavy working environments (i.e. the diplomatic world), I would probably say that more emphasis is here given to the operational aspects of the protocol officer role compared with its political nuances – that are still very much present.’¹⁰

‘It is primarily through the ceremonies that the Olympiad must distinguish itself from a mere series of world championships.’¹⁶

“Many elements of the Olympic protocol are epitomized in the opening ceremony, which is probably the most powerful vehicle for the IOC to promote the image and preserve the magic of the Olympic Games.”¹⁰

Olympic Games opening ceremonies are well known for the creative splendour, (you might even say it is protocol for them to be so) and this is often shaped by the Local Organising Committee to be symbolic of their culture. However, built into the ceremonies are prescribed protocol elements that are symbolic specifically of the values of the Olympic Games. This inclusion of protocol elements in opening ceremonies is replicated in many International Sports Events, although the level of protocol tends not to be as extensive, and often the ceremonies tend to be centred around this protocol only and do not feature the splendour of an Olympic Opening Ceremony.

Looking specifically at the Olympic Opening Ceremony:

“Rule 55 of the Olympic Charter specifies some of the protocol that has to be followed during the ceremonies and the words used by the head of state of the host country to open the Games. The other main points of the opening ceremony are:

- The entrance of the host country head of state
- The national anthem of the host country
- The parade by the participants
- The symbolic release of doves
- The opening of the Games by the host country head of state
- The Olympic anthem, played as the Olympic flag is brought into the stadium and hoisted
- The Olympic oath taken by an athlete
- The Olympic oath taken by an official
- The Olympic oath taken by a coach
- The final leg of the Olympic torch relay and the lighting of the cauldron
- The artistic programme”¹⁷

Other symbolic protocol elements that tend to be found commonly at International Sports Events include Closing Ceremonies and the management of flags; hanging in venues and for medal ceremonies. It is essential that the correct flag designs are sourced for the nations competing, as there can be different versions of country flags and confusion over state flags. It is also critical a sufficient number of flags are ordered for display in venues, often including the Athlete Village

at multi-sport events, and for medal ceremonies - for example could all medallists be from the same country? It is also essential that flags are displayed with the correct orientation, particularly if flags are displayed in vertical orientation. Flags are not simply rotated, most are rotated and flipped, however there are some flags that change more considerably when displayed vertically. This can often be missed as it might just be the orientation of a five-point star on a flag, which if flipped incorrectly will be wrong.

At the Birmingham 2018 World Athletics Indoor Championships the venue and medal ceremony flags were hung vertically. In the case of the medal ceremony flags, these could be viewed from both sides when raised during the national anthems; however the correct orientation had to be achieved facing the athletes on the podium.

Protocol Client Experiences

A significant proportion of Protocol at International Sports Events is to:

“design, develop, and agree client journeys, hospitality services, seating arrangements, transportation, and security plans with all major stakeholders.”¹⁰

In the case of the London 2012 Olympics this will have included liaison with stakeholders...

“...such as Buckingham Palace, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Metropolitan Police, and the International Olympic Committee.”¹⁰

This is an enormous body of work; hospitality spaces can be vast and exact requirements may not be known until closer to the event. A lot of elements are agreed in principle early on and evolve as the event approaches.

“Besides having key stakeholders as partners of the event or fostering partnerships in event-related activities such as a torch relay, stakeholder partnerships can be built through constant communication and information sharing, such as through sponsor conferences or dignitary general assemblies and meetings.”¹⁴

As a result, a number of additional events take place that fall with the Protocol Functional Area to deliver. For these events, the entire responsibility of the event might fall with a Protocol Manager, different to the Protocol activities in sports stadiums where interdependency on other functional areas is key.

It is important to note the extent of protocol and protocol functional area responsibilities and expected standard of delivery, for example of Federation Family Hospitality, which varies enormously event to event, with some single sport events potentially with greater demands than multi-sport events.

Analysis of Protocol Technical Guidance for Major International Sports Events

Single-Sport Protocol Guidance

World Athletics (previously the IAAF) publish their Protocol Matters for each of their World Athletics Series Competitions in a Technical Regulations document.¹⁸

These regulations are communicated and monitored by World Athletics' Head of Protocol, alongside the other VIP & Protocol requirements the Head of Protocol and World Athletics set out.

The World Athletics Protocol Matters are focused on the Opening Ceremony, Medal Ceremonies and Closing Ceremony. The Medal Ceremonies information is quite specific and ensures a standard of delivery at each edition of the event. The Opening Ceremony details the required protocol elements and associated running order. Finally, for the Closing Ceremony protocol element is detailed, and World Athletics must have the opportunity to comment on the remaining content.¹⁸

Further protocol agreement may be agreed in host city contracts; however, the Protocol section of the Technical Regulations doesn't accurately reflect the abundance of responsibilities of the Protocol Functional Area. In fact, often the responsibilities of the elements detailed in the Technical Regulations are delivered

by the Sports Presentation Team. Congress and Council meeting Technical Regulations are published. However, could limiting the detail of the Protocol Matters section in the Competition Technical Regulations lead to naivety from an Organising Committee to the degree of responsibility for a Protocol Functional Area?

Multi-Sport Protocol Guidance

Looking at the IOC's Protocol Guidance, this is considerably more established and documented - perhaps due to the number of traditions it works to uphold to maintain its prestige.

The IOC's 2016 Candidate Procedure and Questionnaire and 2020 Host City Contract for the Games reference the Olympic Charter and the IOC Protocol Guide and Technical Manual for Protocol matters.^{19 20}

The Olympic Charter details the importance of Protocol, as discussed in 'Who Sets the Standards of Protocol' section above. It details the following sections:

- Olympic Identity & Accreditation Card
- Use of the Olympic Flag
- Use of the Olympic Flame
- Opening and Closing Ceremonies
- Victory, Medal and diploma ceremonies and the awarding of medals.
- Roll of honour

- IOC-Authority of last resort. ²¹

The IOC Protocol Guide expands on these areas providing extensive detail around Opening, Closing and Victory Ceremonies, because of the additional layers of protocol and standards they bring to these event elements. ²²

This does not make the World Athletics Protocol incorrect; it may simply be a case that they have less prescribed protocol. It could however be viewed as not comprehensive enough if there are details which World Athletics insist on which are missing from the guidance.

The IOC Protocol Guide is extensive and includes matters that will be applicable to other functional areas more so than the Protocol Functional Area. However, what the IOC Protocol Guide does document well is protocol around flag hanging, as well as information around IOC Member and Olympic Family Protocol. ²² This written detail helps the protocol team clearly understand the Rights-Holders' levels of expectation. The IOC Guide also includes details on seating protocol - this detail helps the Protocol Functional Area understand the IOC's prescribed diplomatic protocol and provides clear guidance that can be shared with other stakeholders, so they understand the procedures put in place by the IOC to protect all attending officials. ²²

This level of detail isn't included in the World Athletics Protocol Matters - however a level of expectation around these areas exists from World Athletics.

What isn't documented is the expected standard and size of client journeys and the hospitality services expected to be delivered by the Protocol Functional Area. This seems to be common across both the IOC and World Athletics. Instead of being prescribed it is likely planned and proposed by the Local Organising Committee for the Event Rights-Holders' approval. However this leaves much more room for manouvre and late changes and could be a purposeful decision.

Primary research – An analysis of protocol at a single-sport international sports event

On speaking to Lucy Crickmore who was the Head of VIP, Protocol & Congress at the London 2017 World Athletics and Para-Athletics Championships and is also a Major Events Consultant at UK Sport, we can learn from her on-the-ground experience of managing stakeholder relations and protocol. She described how the Protocol Functional Area at London 2017 did not have the responsibility of what might usually be regarded as Protocol elements, flags, medal ceremonies, opening and closing ceremonies. These responsibilities fell with the Medal Ceremonies Manager and Sport Presentation Team. As highlighted on the analysis of the World Athletics Technical Guidelines, these are actually the areas focused on in the protocol chapter.

The responsibilities of the London 2017 Protocol team fell more with VIP and Federation Family Operations and Invitations, Official Meetings, Functions, Congress and Observer Programmes as depicted in Figure 3.

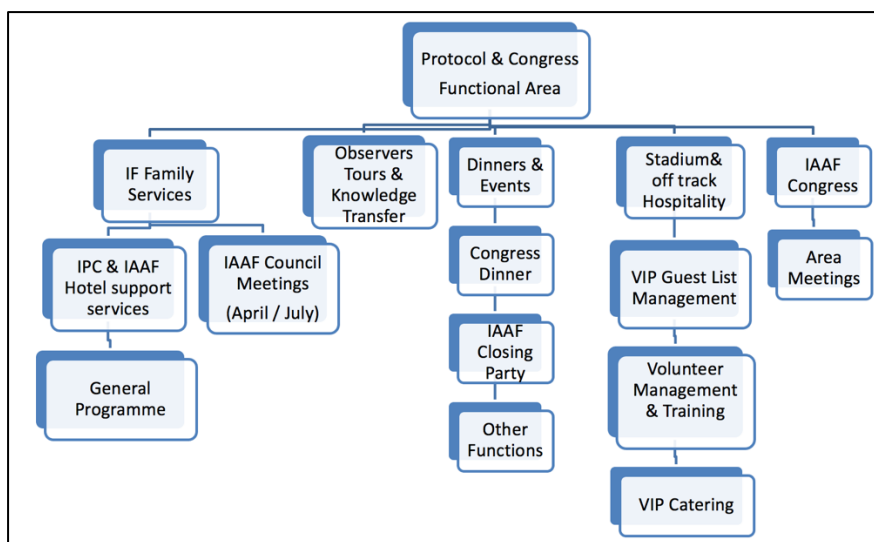


Figure 3. - Responsibilities of the Protocol & Congress Functional Area for London 2017

Focusing on the World Athletics Championships, the requirements of the responsibilities around the Congress and Official Council Meetings were laid out in guidelines. However, guidance for other areas, which you could argue were the main responsibility of the Protocol Functional Area, tended to be shared via conversations, meetings and emails.

Similarly Host City and Stakeholder protocol was discussed and agreed via conversations, meetings and emails with the London 2017 Board and a representative from City of London. Fortunately, Lucy's role at UK Sport meant she was partly involved with these conversations before she took on the roll as Head of Protocol, VIP and Congress. As a result, she had an element of knowledge of what

had been promised to host city stakeholders. This is not always the case at other events.

Other stakeholder conversations included commercial agreements; these were often led by the commercial teams. The Protocol Functional Area were not always engaged actively in these conversations, so it was important for the Protocol Functional Area to actively communicate what was possible to the commercial team before undeliverable promises were made.

All stakeholders had previous experiences of engaging with previous Major International Sports Events. Federation Family and Federation Sponsors had previous experiences of World Athletics Championships and Commercial and Local Event Partners had experiences of other Major International Sports Events. Previous experiences lead to degrees of expectations.

On discussing how progress was reported to World Athletics and other stakeholders, shared online documents, regular calls, emails and meetings were the main methods described. This included communication of what World Athletics and Stakeholders deemed as key protocol requirements.

From these conversations, requirements and responsibilities were confirmed, and project plans and key milestone tracking documents developed. This was followed by regular monitoring and evaluation of these documents, establishing working groups consisting of key functional areas with interdependencies, regular presentations and updates sent to the IAAF and of course IPC whose Championships took place a couple of weeks before. Although regular monitoring

and communication here was effective, starting a lot of elements from a blank sheet of paper meant it required all parties to be engaged at the beginning to ensure all crucial elements were captured. However, this is likely the cause of many of the challenges experienced.

On comparing the documentation from the IOC for the Olympic Games, this is much more comprehensive and leaves less room for information to be missed. A lot of the work from London 2017 has been taken by World Athletics as good practice to be utilised for future organisations.

The IAAF's first comprehensive Observer Programme was also introduced at London 2017 to give future hosts the opportunity to gain a transfer of knowledge. This project was in fact championed by the Protocol Functional Area, but the purpose of the programme was to transfer knowledge across the entire event picture. It did reflect World Athletics actively engaging future hosts to better knowledge-share event requirements.

A clear understanding of deliverables, milestones and a top-level project plan allowed Crickmore to establish clarity on the number of roles required and the split of responsibilities in the Protocol Team, with a mixture of open and targeted recruitment. A senior assistant was brought on seven months before the Championships, a further assistant four months before and a Congress Manager one month prior. Four additional delivery staff started at championship time.

The Protocol Team fed into the wider event picture through engaging in key operational planning meetings which took place, regularly engaging all key leads

from all Functional Areas. As the event approached these progressed into readiness meetings. These all-functional-area-encompassing meetings are much more achievable at single-sport championships where organising committees are a little smaller. Meetings and closer collaboration with interdependent Functional Areas is more common at multi-sport events due to large numbers but these meetings are also key at single-sport events to have focused working groups. It is essential work is done early on to understand critical interdependencies. Crickmore reflected that key functional area interdependencies included:

- Volunteer and Workforce - Protocol Volunteer, Training, Rostering and Deployment.
- Catering, Cleaning and Waste – Federation Family and VIP hospitality catering needs at the stadium and other venues hosting protocol related events
- Security - ensuring the safety of high-profile guests and the general security of the hospitality spaces
- Transport - efficient transportation of federation family to functions and the competition venue
- Commercial - ensuring promises to stakeholders are deliverable and understood
- Ticketing and Accreditation - ensuring admittance of guests into the stadium perimeter and necessary spaces.

Crickmore highlighted the challenges the Protocol Team faced to meet protocol requirements included budget, the International Federation implementing changes late in planning stages, ambiguous and inconsistent guidelines, others

(functional areas and stakeholders) failing to meet deadlines and external pressure from stakeholders with unrealistic expectations.

How protocol is managed at single-sport, single-venue vs multi-sport, multi-venue international sports events

Protocol responsibilities at International Sports Events are often managed by the Protocol Functional Area. Figure 4 below shows the organising committee structure for London 2017, where Protocol was positioned within the Operations Team.

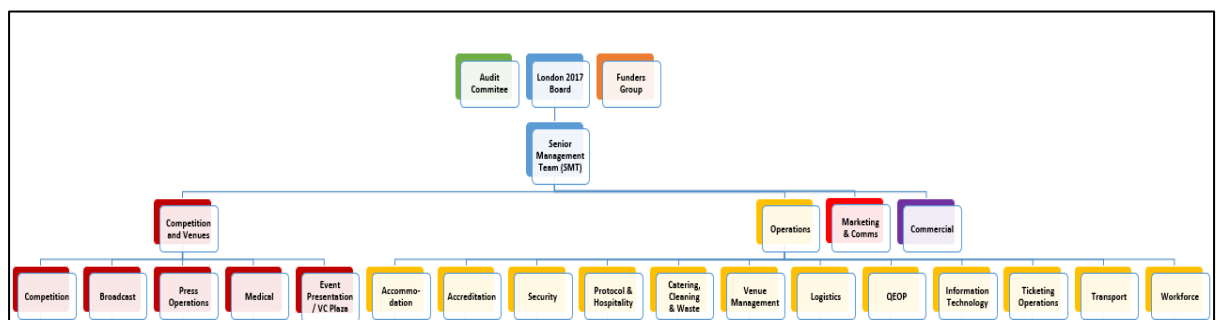


Figure 4. - Organising Committee Structure for London 2017 World Athletics & Para-Athletics Championships.

Protocol Functional Area Team

As noted above in the research with Crickmore, at some events, not all elements of protocol may be managed by the Protocol Team. For London 2017 the responsibility of the Medal Ceremonies fell to a Medal Ceremonies Manager who

formed part of the Sport Presentation Team, who were also responsible for the Opening and Closing Ceremony elements.

Protocol Teams at single-sport events tend to be smaller than those brought in to facilitate multi-sport events and as a result the protocol responsibilities may be shared with other functional areas who will ultimately be delivering it during the live event. For smaller events Protocol staff may also share other responsibilities, for example at the Birmingham 2018 World Athletics Indoor Championships, one of the Protocol Managers also managed the planning and delivery of the Medal Ceremonies.

It can be approached in multiple ways, so long as Functional Area Teams are substantial enough to manage allocated protocol responsibilities. Figure 5 displays the Protocol team recruited for London 2017, where, as Crickmore described, duties included protocol responsibilities at other non-stadia venues, because although London 2017 was a single stadia event, there were one-off road events, Council Meetings and a Congress that required attention by the protocol team at other locations.

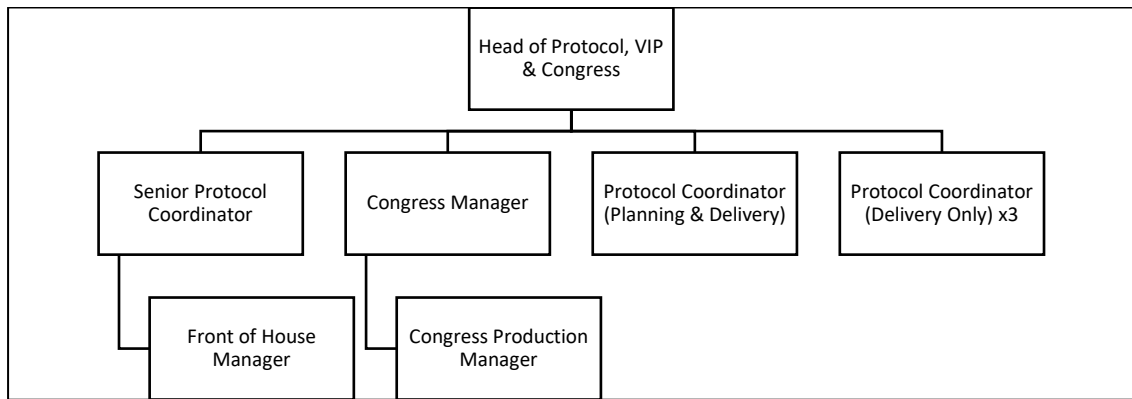


Figure 5. - Protocol Functional Area staff structure for London 2017

It is important to note that some single-sport events have organising committee structures more similar to a multi-sport events due to the multiple competition venues and the requirement to have a Protocol Manager at multiple venues.

For these events Organising Committees start as central organising teams with a small number of representatives for each Functional Area making global plans across all venues. Rapid growth takes place in the final planning stages as delivery staff are recruited to manage the delivery in their allocated venue. As highlighted in the 'Importance of Protocol' section, this management style aligns protocol and other processes at multiple venues to ensure a part-of-one-event feeling.

Figure 6 displays a typically larger Protocol team for a multi-sport, multi-competition venue events. It features more senior managing staff, where they will independently manage protocol at their venue during the event. This structure also reflects how the different type of responsibilities of the Protocol Functional Area can be split across the team.

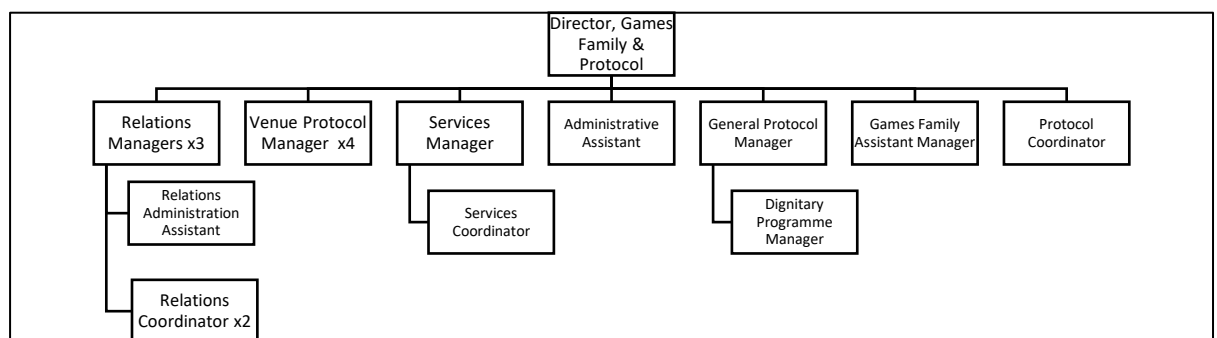


Figure 6. - Protocol Functional Area staff structure for a multi-sport event.

At multi-sport/multi-venue events, on occasions the initial responsibilities of protocol can sit with an International Relationships Team. For example at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games the Corporate Strategy and Partner Relations (CSPR) division managed the stakeholder relationships and as delivery approached took on responsibility of venue protocol.²³

Interdependencies

Figure 7 displays an example of how protocol is incorporated into a venue delivery team during event delivery. In a multi-sport, multi-competition venue event this would be replicated at each venue. Each function displayed here will have evolved from a central organising team at different rates as the event approaches.

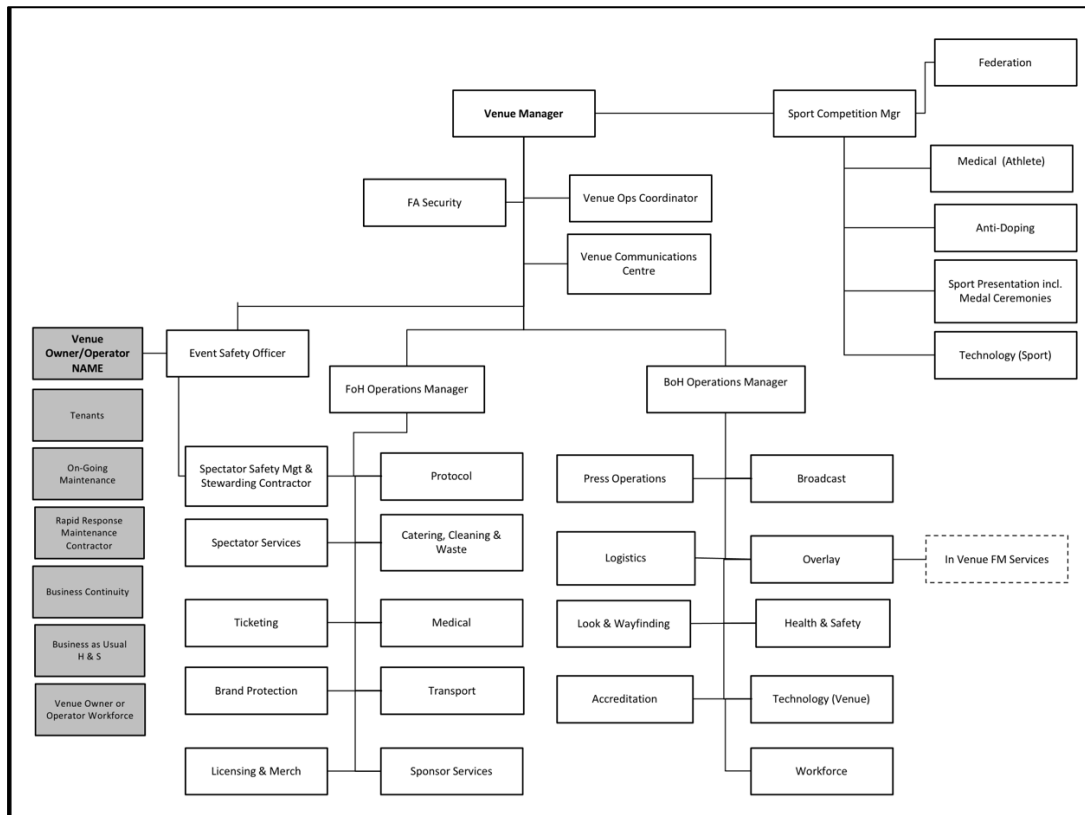


Figure 7.- Protocol Functional Area in a venue staff structure for a multi-sport event

All International Sports Event organising committees have key inter-functional-area-dependencies to be able to deliver their responsibilities. 'The protocol manager must establish relationships with all of the other Functional Areas in a venue so that they can get things done in a timely manner and appear to be solving problems and handling requests in a seamless fashion.'¹³

All protocol elements require collaboration with other functional areas to achieve effective delivery within the standards of the event. Crickmore highlighted some key functional areas in the primary research above. In addition to these areas, this commonly includes Overlay to assist with flag installation and CAD plans of

spaces, Logistics for furniture and fittings for hospitality services, Brand for look and feel of spaces, invitations and gifts and Sport Presentation to deliver the Opening, Closing and Victory Ceremony protocol elements. A lot of this collaboration is finding synergetic solutions to the required deliverables in the venue/s of the event in question.

Other functional areas also have interdependencies on protocol. For example, media may look for support from Protocol if they have a request to interview a Games Family member.

For multi-sport and multi-competition venue events there is a greater element of interdependence between Functional Areas as all areas are working to achieve consistency in their responsibilities across all venues. Interdependency is key for the ability to scale up closer to event time.

Some of the event time Protocol staff will not be involved in any of the planning - they will simply be handed operations plans to run with. Protocol Venue Managers may never actually engage with the branding lead because this has already been arranged prior to their onboarding.

It is important to note the extent of responsibilities of the Protocol Functional Area can vary enormously event to event, not only from prescribed protocol but related budget whether they can outsource some responsibilities. For example,

smaller events with smaller budgets make pack gift bags on site; however larger events with larger gift bag requirements may have the budget to out-source this.

Challenges Faced by Organising Committees

Technical Guidance

From the research analysed above we grow to understand that Protocol around rituals such as Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Victory Ceremonies and Flag requirements are clearly documented in Protocol Technical Regulations. There is also documentation with the guidelines for the General Meetings, the organisation of which tends to fall with the Protocol Team. However, our research into World Athletics Championship Protocol Technical Specifications highlights that there are events where a significant number of elements that are managed by the Protocol Teams are not consistently set out in Protocol Technical Manuals, despite a specific standard of delivery being expected by the Sports Event Rights-Holders - for example the hospitality provision for Federation Family.

On occasions these details and agreements are documented elsewhere in the early stages of event planning such as the Host City Contract but with the later onboarding of the Protocol Team, it is not necessarily shared effectively with those delivering the service. A lot of agreements are made at the bidding stage of an event with the Sports Event Rights-Holders and Stakeholders, which are brought onboard

to ensure the successful bid and delivery of an event. It often falls with the protocol team to deliver on these agreements, within the restrictions placed on them such as space and budget, despite not making the initial agreements.

Stakeholder Expectations

Even when expectations and allocations are detailed in the event Rights-Holder's protocol technical manuals, Parent and Smith-Swan highlight in their protocol chapter that:

“politicians who attend events often ignore or refuse to acknowledge these guidelines”²⁴ and organisations will...

“always want to send more, and sometimes they just show up with extra people, hoping they can persuade someone in accreditation or protocol to admit these individuals to the venues”¹⁴ despite the Event Rights-Holder's Protocol. They go on to say that despite:

“The copious amounts of information communicated to educate and remind politicians of this protocol, they still expect to be treated with priority and exception over anyone else. It is not uncommon to watch the entourage of a politician enter an event and attempt to have everyone in the party accommodated despite the presence of a sport dignitary that would take precedence. It is the single most challenging part of the protocol manager's job on-site at an event.”^{13 14}

These challenges can be faced by the Protocol team in the planning stages and delivery stages, with difficult decisions of who to accommodate.

“Stakeholders view their contributions based on ROI”²⁵ (return on investment)...

“...they want their needs, wants, and desires to be accommodated, responded to, and met.”⁹

Fall-out can also occur as a result of different people having different access to different venue spaces and experiences at previous events. “Government partner experience will differ from Games to Games, depending upon the number of parties involved and how these parties interact with each other.”²⁶

Organising Committees of events in the Gulf and MENA region will be required to work closely with Event Rights-Holders staff to understand the protocols they set out and how this fits with requests from local administration and political leaders.

The Skills of a Protocol Manager and Team

“Sometimes protocol trumps everything – however, decisions made on the ground, on the run, may not always comply with written or unwritten protocol. Often the people who are on the front line – not the person who made the promise – are in the unenviable position of having to mitigate or resolve an issue or situation.”⁹

“It is not uncommon for an edict to be delivered from an executive to “just make it happen”.⁹

A Protocol Manager can be faced with having to make decisions in the moment that may contradict both values and protocol.

Onboarding of new protocol staff can happen only weeks before the delivery of the event. Event-time staff members will not have had exposure to the challenges faced and reasons for particular decisions during the planning stages. This is a particular challenge for multi-venue and multi-sport events where the Venue Protocol Managers may join the organising committee only couple of months before event delivery but are the client-facing, main point of contact for all protocol matters at their venue. The Protocol Team involved with the planning have the challenge of balancing the inevitable increasing workload as they approach the event with onboarding new staff to ensure efficient delivery.

“The interpersonal skills required to handle all of the requests, questions, and comments that stakeholders present is nothing short of being a master at one’s craft. Not only does the manager have to handle the stakeholders, they also need to substantiate and explain the decisions they made to other managers and executives.”⁹

Protocol Functional Area difficulties are not always recognised by other Functional Areas and Local Organising Committee Senior Management - for example, why particular transport is required for particular guests. As highlighted in the primary research, interdependency between functional areas is crucial to achieving deliverables and collaborative work is essential to finding synergetic solutions. Symbolic protocol elements, often of particular importance to the Rights-

Holder of the event, as they epitomise their values and origins, may seem an unnecessary expense to other Functional Areas tasked with the delivery. For example a creative agency may be brought in to deliver an opening ceremony and it falls with the Protocol Functional Area to build relationships with these functional areas and agencies to ensure protocol elements are achieved.

Decisions and requirements can be justified and hopefully understood by those engaged in the planning. However the public are often not as understanding, for example, of why a large number of tickets is allocated to Federation Family, yet they see unoccupied seats if the Family choose not to attend a session.

As reflected in the primary research, Organising Committees can often experience frustrations with Event Rights-Holders when they make last-minute changes. Last minute changes and requests could be as a result of the Rights-Holders' incumbent team managing the Protocol agenda, splitting their responsibility across other areas and may not be able give the necessary focus to Protocol delivery requirements.

Discussion

Definition of Protocol

In breaking down the definition of protocol and the multifaceted definition and management of protocol in a Major International Sports Event setting, we identify that the broad application and cross-over of the word Protocol can lead to initial confusion. Could it be better defined that the Protocol Functional Area manages Diplomatic and Symbolic protocol features, an area that tends to encompass elements that require traditional continuity and are of significant importance to key stakeholders engaged with the event?

Protocol Guidance

We see that challenges faced by Rights-Holders of events and Local Organising Committees are often caused due to a lack of concise communication of expected standards. Much of the symbolic, specifically visible protocol, that gives the event its traditional identity is detailed; however protocol guidelines don't tend to encompass everything the Protocol Functional Area is expected to deliver. It may be detailed in other documentation, yet it has become evident that a large amount of protocol remains unwritten. This is particularly true of parts such as protocol provision for Federation Family, despite a significant level of expectation existing from Event Rights-Holders and a high chance of conflict occurring with other stakeholders' expectations. This brings challenges when the Protocol Team who are left to interpret, plan and deliver protocol may not have access to all the information or be privy to early on conversations. Although Sports Event Rights-Holders have incumbent teams to manage the application of their protocol guidelines and communicate any unwritten information, it relies on the competency of this team to

ensure everything is understood by the Organising Committee Protocol Functional Area and to not mandate last-minute changes if details are not prescribed. Often those working for the Sports Event Rights-Holder may have other responsibilities, particularly at smaller events where Rights-Holder teams are smaller so may not have the capacity to apply the correct timely level of detail required to the Protocol Functional Areas plans.

As we have discovered in this paper, challenges and changes often present themselves close to event delivery for both the Event Rights-Holder and the Protocol Functional Area, alongside challenges from other stakeholders. Could this be mitigated against by ensuring all areas of protocol expectations are more comprehensively documented in Protocol Technical Manuals; and by ensuring that subsequent agreements are detailed in Protocol Specific Memorandum of Understandings (MOU), as early as the bidding stages, and not just lost in meeting minutes and other documents? With Rights-Holders recognising the importance of protocol and their investment in communicating, it clearly will mean they get the result they want.

The IOC Protocol Manual is much more extensive than the Protocol Manual we reviewed by World Athletics. It sets a good standard for other Events Rights-Holders to aspire their Protocol Guidance to compliment. However, as even the IOC Protocol guide concludes at the end of their guidance,

“The indications and recommendations given in this guide provide Organising Committees with further information in addition to the contractual obligations they are obliged to fulfil, in order to promote a better understanding of Olympic protocol. This document is not intended to resolve every possible issue, or to answer all the specific questions that might arise from any given situation, such as sporting, cultural, or political circumstances, or other circumstances that are specific to the host country. The International Olympic Committee urges all the representatives of the various constituent part of the Olympic Movement to keep in contact, so as to ensure that the system continues to work coherently.”²²

More comprehensive guidelines and a Protocol-Specific MOU would assist the Rights-Holders with consistent communication, no matter their other responsibility demands. It would also assist with the onboarding of Protocol Functional Area staff, particularly those solely brought on for delivery purposes.

Staff Recruitment

There is an argument that onboarding Protocol Functional Area staff earlier could also mitigate against potential challenges faced by the Organising Committee Protocol Team. However this is often out of the Functional Area's control so it is critical that the Organising Committee recognise the importance of the Protocol Functional Area...

“...early enough in the process to ensure all stakeholders are appropriately engaged and that their expectations can be tempered as early as possible in the process. Many of these conversations are highly sensitive, involving political figures, and ensuring people are able to “save face” and can be seen to be part of a win will go a long way in ensuring broader cooperation on other issues that may be pain points for the OCOG.” ²⁷

This isn’t limited to the Olympic Games but applicable to all Major International Sports Events. Organising Committees need to ensure the timely onboarding of Protocol staff and necessary engagement in conversations with stakeholders, to ensure protocol is accurately delivered and to avoid undeliverable promises.

Position in Organising Committee Structure

Due to the significance of multiple stakeholder relationship management, is it correct that the Protocol Functional Area features under Operations in an Organising Committee Structure? Should it be more closely related to Governance alongside being established earlier in the formation of the organising committee? At some Major International Sports Events we see the recruitment of Relationship Managers that sit outside of Operations but feed into the Protocol Functional Area. Could smaller events learn from this, and if they are unable to recruit Relationship Managers, incorporate the Protocol Functional Area in more discussions, to lead to greater stakeholder cooperation towards Protocol delivery?

“The protocol manager must establish relationships with all of the other Functional Areas in a venue so that they can get things done in a timely manner and appear to be solving problems and handling requests in a seamless fashion.” ¹³

During this study we have highlighted the importance of interdependency between other functional areas. In multi-sport landscapes, other functions experience the same late onboarding of venue delivery staff, so it becomes critical that these staff are experienced and well-versed in Protocol politics and building relationships with other functional areas. Often staff may not come in with significant previous experience, so this is where clear documented guidance, collaborative working at all levels and forums to build working relationships are crucial.

Summary

‘Research by Parent *et al.*²⁶ examined the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, examining other Olympic stakeholders including host governments’ coordination issues within and between themselves, as well as strategies used to mitigate them. They found five context-based issues and 11 other types of issues:

- Context based issues: time, geography, funding, other resources, and the political situation of the host region or country
- Other issues: planning, operational, structure, accountability and authority, power, legal, activation and leveraging, knowledge management, legal, turnover, relationships, and social issues

To mitigate these issues, Parent *et al.* suggested the following eight strategies: flexibility, formalized agreements, strategic planning, structural frameworks, communication processes, decision-making frames, engagement, and HRM procedures/principles.²⁸

This compliments our findings and discussion points above. It is not only applicable to the work completed by the Protocol Functional Area but can be relatable event-wide across a number of the Functional Areas required to deliver a Major International Sports Event.

Miliccia perfectly summarises that “protocol is a matter of respect, and to me, an understated form of art too.”¹⁰

Recommendations and Good Practice

The Summer Olympics and FIFA World Cup stand out as the two leading international sports events in the world. With Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022, there are many protocol standards that FIFA will bring with them that may not compliment National Protocol in Qatar.

It is essential that Local Organising Committees and Host Nations respect and acknowledge the importance of the Rights Holding Body’s Protocol and recognise it is not there to cause conflict against National Protocol but a means to bring harmony, equality and respect between all nations present.

As discussed above, often protocol guidance may not encompass everything that is expected by the Rights-Holders and Stakeholders to be delivered by the Local Organising Committee. Rights-Holders of an Event and Local Organising Committees should consider establishing Memorandums of Understanding, if expectations from the Event Rights-Holder are not prescribed in Technical Regulations or a Protocol Guide but are communicated as critical policy that must be delivered on. Rights-Holders of Events could also explore expanding on their Protocol Guidance documents.

There is scope for further research into the protocol guidance of a wider range of Major International Sports Events. There is also value in additional research into the protocol guidance around non-sports International Events particularly in the Gulf and MENA region where organising committees may already have exposure to requests from Event Rights-Holders, Local Administration and Political Leaders.

Members of the Local Organising Committee handling Protocol and International Relations, in most circumstances members of the Protocol Functional Area, should be brought onboard early enough to engage with conversations and agreements made around protocol with the Event Rights-Holders and other Stakeholders to ensure there is no conflict of interest and what is promised is deliverable.

With this in mind, due to the negotiation and relationship handling that falls with the Protocol Functional Area, the placement of the functional area should be

carefully considered in an organising committee. Often it simply falls under Operations and while there is an element of operational delivery, there is also a significant involvement with the governance of the event. This is often reflected in multi-sport/multi-venue event structures where the protocol responsibilities are split between International Relationship teams and Protocol teams and it is essential these functions work collaboratively together. Single-sport/single-venue events should consider the placement and engagement of the Protocol Team if it simply features in the operations structure.

Observer Programmes exist to educate future host cities on the intricacies of hosting Major International Sports Events. These programmes are especially critical if nations are hosting an International Sports Event for the first time and may not have previously experienced the necessary protocol that might be followed. It is key the necessary staff are engaged with these programmes, which directly links to the timely recruitment of staff who will be engaged with the delivery aspects, so they comprehend the necessary levels of planning and delivery.

As Qatar heads towards the 2022 FIFA World Cup™ further research could be undertaken to understand and develop the protocol of Qatar and how the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has managed the implementation of the nation's protocol as well as that of FIFA as the Event Rights-Holder. This will help support further studies and knowledge transfer should Qatar look to hold future major sports events such as the Asian Games or the summer Olympics.

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Teaching Notes

This case study introduces the functional area of protocol within the setting of a major sporting event. It discusses and explores the significant factors, considerations and challenges a local organising committee and host nation should be aware of when bidding, planning and staging a major sporting event.

As well as introducing the concept of protocol it is hoped that this case study will support the development of a national protocol for events as well as knowledge and understanding of the protocol functional area within a major sporting event and practical lessons learnt from organisers of other major sporting events.

Overview and learning objectives

The following learning objectives are linked to the case study:

1. Explain what protocol is, who develops and sets the guidance.
2. To understand the unique challenges and complexities around protocol within major sporting events.
3. Explore and recognise the cross functional area communication needed by the protocol FA.
4. To recognise the unique challenges the Protocol Functional Area comes across as well as learn from previous events on understanding best practice.

5. Understand what single sport single venue and multi-sport multi-venue can add to the complexities of the Functional Area
6. Explore the opportunities for Qatar to set its Protocol for major sporting events to support Events Rights-Holders and future major sporting events in the region.

Questions

1. Complete a SWOT analysis of the importance of good protocol for a major sporting event of your choice
2. Research and find examples of times protocol hasn't been followed at a major sporting event and explain what the impact of this was
3. Detail the other functional areas Protocol need to work alongside and list the requirements from each of those Functional Areas
4. Within Qatar, list the stakeholders a local organising committee should liaise with to ensure national protocol standards are met
5. Write an event-focused definition for protocol.

Protocol is a multi-layered and complicated functional area within a major sporting event, often having to balance and manage a number of complicated areas such as hospitality, sponsorship and medal ceremonies, to name a few. Whilst events right-holders set the protocol guidelines and standards for events, this can often be

challenging for host nations to accept and deliver as guidance can often be unclear or requests can come in at the last minute.

Background and Further Reading

To further support this case study, it is recommended that students access the following texts to understand and develop knowledge of the wider challenges associated with the subject of Protocol in the setting of a major international sporting event.

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Case Study Answers & Themes

1. Complete a SWOT Analysis of the importance of good protocol for a major sporting event of your choice?

Responses will depend on the event used by students. Key themes are listed below

Strengths

- Good organisation and hosting of delegates/ invited guests
- Shows understanding of needs and Rights-Holder protocol
- Can exceed expectations and lead to future events
- Strong communication needed between each Functional Area at the event
- An understanding of both symbolic and diplomatic protocol elements.

Weaknesses

- If something goes wrong, how does it reflect on the event/organisation
- Possible bad press and managing the situation.

Opportunities

- Good organisation could lead to the hosting of future events
- Possibility for the setting of future protocol for the region to follow
- Learning for other events.

Threats

- Clear objectives and expectations not explained in advance of the event and last-minute challenges between stakeholders
- Embarrassment caused by failing to meet a set standard
- Budget issues with possible misunderstanding of the requirements of protocol.

2. Research and find examples of times protocol hasn't been followed at a major sporting event or diplomatic visit. And what the impact of this was?

- London 2017 – wrong flag shown on screen
- Queen Elizabeth and Donald Trump's visit to Buckingham Palace and not following the rules.

3. Detail the other functional areas Protocol need to work alongside and list the requirements from each of those Functional Areas.

- Accommodation – ensuring hotel rooms for guests on the correct nights
- Accreditation – the right level of access for the guest, e.g. they could be presenting medals or making a speech and need to access the field of play
- Catering, Cleaning, Waste (CCW) – Catering for VIP areas, along with staff to clear the space and remove waste post event. Allocation of hospitality space and suites to ensure fair across stakeholders and no duplication

- Ceremonies – If an opening/ closing ceremony someone from national government to make a speech or present medals and trophies.
- Branding – possible need for sponsor and event branding within event areas from hospitality, hotels, conferences
- Overlay – If any additional infrastructure is needed across protocol events and areas of responsibility
- Ticketing – stakeholders may purchase additional tickets, ensure these are allocate with seats available
- Volunteers – trained and knowledgeable workforce suitable for the protocol managed areas
- Workforce – where required the correct level of paid staff or contractors to support the management of areas overseen by FA.
- Security – Dot plans and arrangements for high level protected persons attending the event
- Transport – Working out the Allocation of cars and or drivers for guests depending on who they are. Parking requirements and Vehicle permits if coming in own vehicles
- Venue Operations – Ensuring the plans are overlaid together to be in sync, that timings pre public opening work for the wider venue team and any tours are factored in
- Commercial – sponsor seating and hospitality arrangements are covered to meet contract requirements and please partners of the event. As well as being hosted by LOC staff where required. If any special arrangements have been

put in to place ensuring these are shared with the Protocol FA to be acted upon

4. Within Qatar list the stakeholders a local organising committee should liaise with to ensure national protocol standards are met.

- State of Qatar Government
- Shura Council
- Central Municipal Council
- Ministry of Culture and Sports
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Municipalities of Qatar (or area where event is held)
- Government Communications Office
- The Qatar Foundation
- Qatar Olympic Committee
- Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy
- Events Rights-Holder
- Commercial Sponsors

5. Write an event-focused definition for protocol.

Themes and wording within this answer.

- Multi-dimensional and broad Functional area
- Complicated and challenging
- Delivering the event right holder needs along with the host and LOC and local area protocol
- Setting and meeting set standards and guidelines
- Stakeholder Management and managing relationships
- Organisation and Communication
- Understanding of both symbolic and diplomatic protocol elements.