

Q&A

Sporting CP Digital Brand Manager Mafalda Monteiro talks social media & creativity during COVID-19

May 26, 2020



blinkfire
analytics

Blinkfire's team is lucky enough to work with Sporting CP. The team has seen some of soccer's biggest stars get their start in Lisbon — Cristiano Ronaldo, Bruno Fernandes, and Luís Figo to name a few. Across social media, the team does an outstanding job with digital assets, such as player of the match, game preview, and birthday posts, however, things have changed quite a bit since March 11 due to the pandemic.

During the last two and a half months we've seen teams, just like Sporting CP, step out of busy, hectic schedules filled with game days and regular season play to navigate the new sports landscape — no live sports, but plenty of innovating around content, creativity, and ultimately, a return to the pitch, except with no fans.

Sporting CP's Digital Brand Manager Mafalda J. Monteiro joined us for a Q&A, where we focused on their new social strategy, adapting to the evolving sports ecosystem, and continuing to create content that drives conversations and fan experiences. Take a read through — Mafalda brought pure GOLD to the interview!



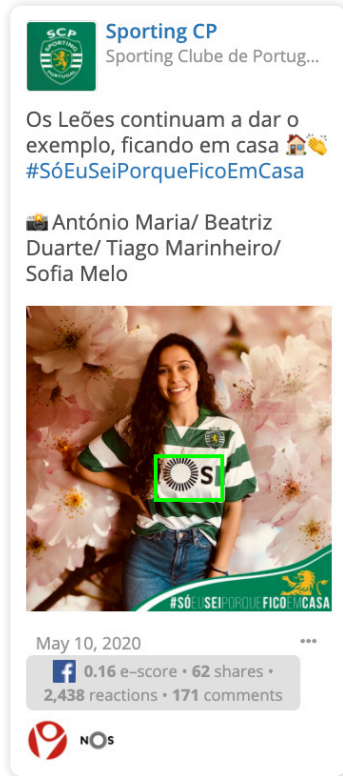
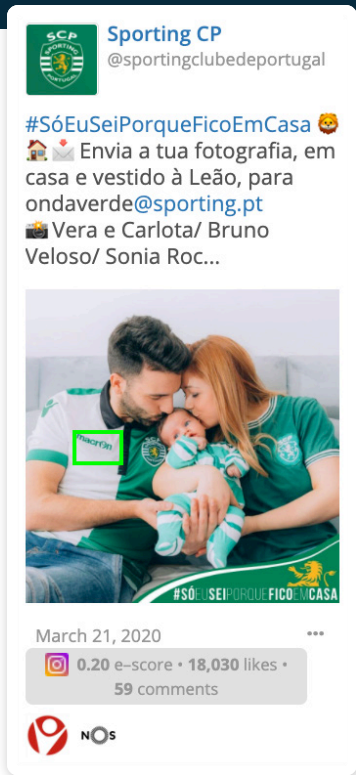
When sports paused more than two months ago due to COVID-19 (can't believe it's been that long), how did you and your team pivot in terms of strategy, content, etc.?

Unbelievably, yes, it has been more than two months! In mid-March, we realized we had to adapt our strategy within a week in order to get through this strange period. Up until then, our content was fully focused on our weekend matches, daily training, and the Club's day-to-day life. Our website also played an important role, as our social media posts often redirected our followers to purchase tickets.

I now like to say that we have adopted a social media first strategy. There is no better time than the present to inform, engage, and interact with our fans through our social platforms. We also wanted to make sure that our Club was first in the fight against Covid-19, so social responsibility became an important point we integrated into our strategy.

There is no doubt that organizations like Sporting CP play a big role when it comes to social responsibility, and the Covid-19 outbreak was extremely important for us to leverage our social media channels and show how social media can be done right. It is where content has to be, and it has to come directly from our biggest assets – our athletes.

We started by creating this campaign: #SóEuSeiPorqueFicoEmCasa. Strictly translated it means "Only I know why I'm staying home." It's a play on our supporters' chant at our stadium, which says the exact opposite, "Only I know why I didn't stay home." Once we launched this campaign, our content was focused on this message.



The confinement started a few days before the game, so it never happened. As a team, we played a Connect4 game against SC Vitória. During the span of three hours, our Twitter account generated as much engagement as a real football match. I think that was the turning point for us. We saw we could create content even though we had no football.

Side Note: The Blinkfire team did a quick search in our platform. The Connect4 game versus SC Vitória saw Sporting CP's average engagement per post on Twitter increase 8%, compared to 12 game days from January 1 – March 11, 2020. Also, the friendly competition, in lieu of a real matchup, generated the fourth most game-day engagements on Twitter (out of a possible 28 games). Such a wonderful combo of creativity and teamwork between Sporting CP and SC Vitória!



Did you talk to colleagues at other clubs about how they were handling the situation? Did you share any ideas?

We follow other clubs who we consider the gold standard in the industry. We like to constantly benchmark our content. In this case, content changed from one day to the next. There was no real time to benchmark with other clubs, so, yes, we did reach out to a few colleagues, namely at Barcelona and Flamengo. Everyone had a tough time adapting. Engagement levels fell drastically, as we all know that Game-Day generates the most interactions on social media. What we learned from our colleagues was there was one focus for the next few months: creating empathy with and for our followers.

As you and the team started down this new normal, what were your focal points for social? And were they different than if the season hadn't been postponed?

Our social media focus has always been to deliver the best and most exclusive content possible. We like to think that our platforms close the gap between the club and its fans. As mentioned, we focused on the word "empathy". With that serving as a base, we created content in order to fit our new path. For example, Sporting CP was supposed to play SC Vitória in March.

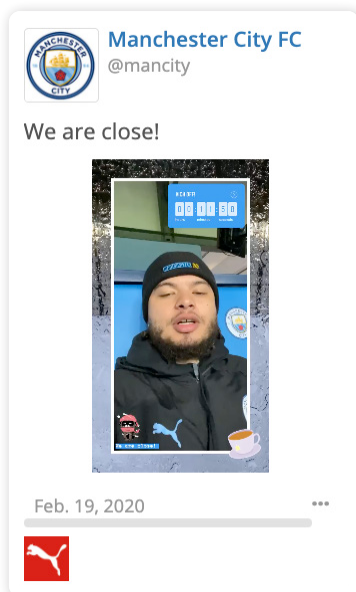
We also understood that we needed to maintain our sponsorship exposure, while continuing to be creative. Our social platforms were now seen as a substitute (although not a perfect one) for stadium visibility. We now have training plans, quizzes, games, esports games, and more...I have realized that, yes, our focal point is still the same (engaging fans), but we have just adapted in how we deliver our messaging while including social responsibility as a core in our communication.

Has your day-to-day changed during this time? If so, how?

Of course, my day-to-day has changed. Not so much when it comes to being in contact with the team, as we are constantly exchanging ideas. But for some reason, it feels like being at home we have more time to plan. We have more time to stop and think about what to do next. Because of this, ideas become more consolidated, and I honestly feel that productivity has improved.

Sporting CP created a new series of content during this time: Takeover posts where players and other athletes take over Sporting CP's social account for the day. Can you talk about the creative process for this series?

Takeovers are something that we have wanted to do for a while. We see 433 do it a lot and clubs like Manchester City have their match day takeovers with influencers. We just never found the ideal moment to go ahead with the idea. We'd done it a few times with influencers, but in order to do it well, we had to do it with our athletes — the ones who our fans are eager to see and learn more about.

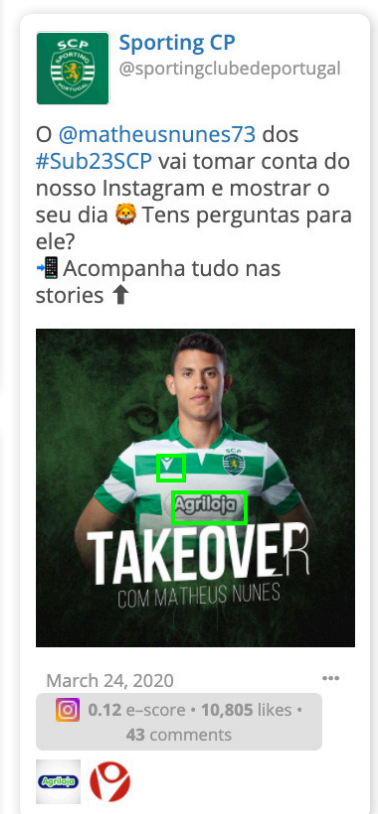


We didn't know our takeover series would be so successful. We planned to only do it for a week but found our fans loved it. Our Instagram Stories quickly started to receive feedback and responses on other social networks too, such as Twitter. Athletes really enjoyed doing them as well. Our commercial department saw great potential in our Takeovers giving further visibility to a few brand partners. We had something good going on, and we didn't want to stop.

The football department and our modalities department

are in full control when it comes to choosing the athlete as long as the athlete feels comfortable in sharing his/her day. They share everything; from their breakfast, to their pets, to their training at home — they sing or even play a bit of PlayStation too. This content fits perfectly in generating empathy with our fans and keeping them connected to our Club, through social media first.

We have done 26 Takeovers so far. Some of them have more than 1 million views. The series will be reduced as soon as football restarts, but it might be something we will want to keep doing going forward.



What has the reception been like for fans? What Blinkfire data are you using that is most important to tell the Takeover series story?

The reception has been more positive than we expected. As I said, the Takeovers reach other social networks, as fans share some of this content on Twitter, for example. Fans also get to know a few athletes who they didn't know as much.

Blinkfire has been our go-to tool when it comes to analyzing all of this. Using Blinkfire we get a deeper understanding of how much of an impact Instagram Stories have and how beneficial they've been to our sponsors. It's because of Blinkfire that we keep our partners informed and one of the reasons why it has been so easy to continue our Takeovers – they are that engaging.

Who's been the most popular athlete to "Takeover" Sporting CP's social accounts?

The most popular takeover was in April, with Luís Maximiano. He is our starting Goalkeeper and grew up in our Academy. Our fans identify with him, as he is a true Sportinguista! His Takeover had a total of 2 million views.

Most sponsors are missing the action since sports are on hold. What is the team's strategy to incorporate them into social media posts – and how has that worked?

Giving visibility to our sponsors became top priority when football and other sports stopped. Sponsors lost stadium visibility and that meant that we had to be able to at least try to compensate them during this time. Together, with our commercial department, we have done our best to fit various sponsors with the right type of social media content.

During our Takeovers, athletes keep training at home, so why not integrate our beverage sponsor (Super Bock) or our gym sponsor (Holmes Place)? Players have to eat breakfast, so why not send a few products over for them to use during the Takeover?

Sporting CP
Sporting Clube de Portug...

Não, não é mentira. O #MuralhaMax vai passar o dia convosco no nosso Instagram! 😊

Acompanha tudo bit.ly/2YpRXAr

April 1, 2020

0.07 e-score • 22 shares • 1,146 reactions • 36 comments

NOS

Sporting CP
@sportingclubedeportugal

O @luismaximiano81 mantém a forma em casa 🍌 #SóEuSeiPorqueFicoEmCasa Acompanha o Takeover nos stories 📺

April 1, 2020

0.15 e-score • 13,739 likes • 38 comments

NOS

Sporting CP
@sportingclubedeportugal

@erickmendonca8 @superbock

May 15, 2020

SUPER BOCK

Sporting CP
@sportingclubedeportugal

Sabes em que minuto foi este goloço da @raquelfernandez07? 🌟🕒

#QualOMinutoSCP | #FutFemSCP Em parceria com @tagheuer

May 9, 2020

0.05 e-score • 4,922 likes • 32 comments

TAG HEUER

It's been the perfect fit. We mix product placement with our Stories, linking to our partners' websites and generating traffic. Beyond our Takeovers, we try our best to create branded content. We created other series such as "In What Minute Did This Goal Happen?" and integrated our Time Sponsor (Tag Heuer). The best part of social media is the variety of content that can be generated in order to fit sponsor needs.

What have you learned during this time, and will you implement these learnings going forward?

The most challenging part has really been to integrate departments in order to achieve one outcome. We are physically far away from each other, and in the beginning it took a while to integrate these new processes. However, the lockdown really has proven to be a learning experience for everyone. Sporting CP must function as a whole, and it makes no sense generating amazing content and being highly creative if the Club doesn't benefit from brand awareness or if a brand receives no exposure. We will definitely bring these learnings with us when we go back to normal.

What's been your favorite piece of Sporting CP content or series during the lockdown? What about from other teams and/or players?

The team is a big fan of Manchester United's podcasts. It brings their fans together; they reminisce about amazing moments and I would love to be able to put together something along those lines. Besides this, although I am biased, I think Sporting CP is up there with our Takeovers and our Connect4 match. I think that it really did come together well in such challenging times.



Blinkfire Analytics is the leading business intelligence & marketing analytics platform to evaluate sports, media, and entertainment sponsorships across social media, digital, and Advanced TV. Using artificial intelligence, machine learning, and proprietary computer vision technology, Blinkfire Analytics measures media value and impact – allowing rights holders, players, influencers, agents, and brands to better engage their fans and sponsors across multiple platforms. Many of the world's top teams and leagues rely on Blinkfire Analytics' real-time, always-on platform for sports and entertainment sponsorship evaluation to quantify engagement and sponsorship dollars.

To learn more about Blinkfire Analytics, email at info@blinkfire.com or visit www.blinkfire.com.

