

# SportBusiness<sup>INTL.</sup>

JUVENTUS GROWS  
ITS INTERNATIONAL  
MEMBERSHIP BY 44%

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HOW THE NBA  
PACKAGES MEDIA  
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## The international issue

HOW BAYERN MUNICH'S NEW YORK OFFICE HELPED TO SECURE 15 NEW PARTNERS

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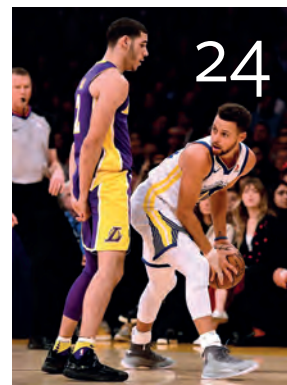
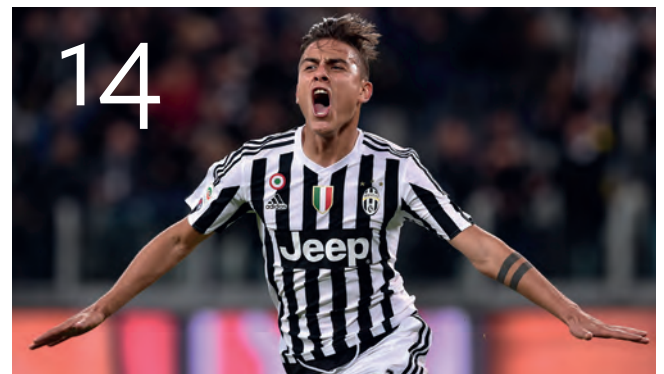
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# Snapshot

Off-field and left-field stats, stories and soundbites from the world of sport

## CLIPPERS FIND MATCH

The Los Angeles Clippers have signed a shirt patch sponsorship deal with female-friendly dating app Bumble. That the Clippers have the largest female leadership team in the NBA is understood to have been a big selling point and both sides referred to the partnership as one that was designed to advance gender equality. Women make the first move on Bumble, upending the dynamics of most matchmaking apps. The Clippers aren't the first NBA team to strike such a partnership: the Atlanta Hawks hosted a 'Swipe Right Night' in partnership with Tinder. EPL club Manchester United were rumoured to be in sleeve sponsorship talks with Tinder but the story was denied and later thought to have been a publicity stunt. ○

## F1 FACES THE MUSIC

Formula 1 appears to have heeded the advice of Tim Crow's column in last month's *SportBusiness International* and recorded a new theme tune. Bryan Tyler, composer for *Iron Man 3* and the *Fast and Furious* franchise, was pictured conducting the London Philharmonic as they recorded the new track in early March. The piece is believed to have been commissioned to accompany coverage on OTT platform F1 TV. UK fans might argue the sport already has a theme tune, so closely is it associated in the country with Fleetwood Mac's 'The Chain', as several different broadcasters have used the song's instrumental opening to introduce their coverage of the series. ○

## NUMBER CRUNCHER

# 15

The number of new partners Bundesliga side Bayern Munich has signed in the United States as a result of opening an office in New York.

(Page 8)

## TWEET OF THE MONTH



**Mark Dreyer** @DreyerChina

It's taken global sports media folk a while to realize this, but they've finally figured out that mentioning the band EXO in just about any context can make their social media numbers go through the roof. #EXO\_Olympics

6:28 AM - 25 FEB 2018 16K 10K



*SportBusiness International's* Asia correspondent Mark Dreyer identified the IOC's simple approach to increasing digital engagement in Asia with this tweet about Korean pop group EXO's appearance at the closing ceremony of the Pyeongchang Olympics. Dreyer proved his own hypothesis that any mention of the boy band on social media sends engagement numbers through the roof when his post proceeded to go viral. At the time of going to press it had been retweeted over 16,000 times. ○



**GOOD MONTH:**  
BUNDESLIGA

Virtual perimeter advertising has been approved for use in the Bundesliga. A system developed by tech company Supponor and agency Lagardère Sports will allow advertising space to be multiplied through the creation of broadcast-standard virtual overlays of the physical perimeter boards. It's a breakthrough for a technology which has been reported as imminent for the last 15 years. And its great news for rights-holders looking to boost their sponsorship inventory. ○



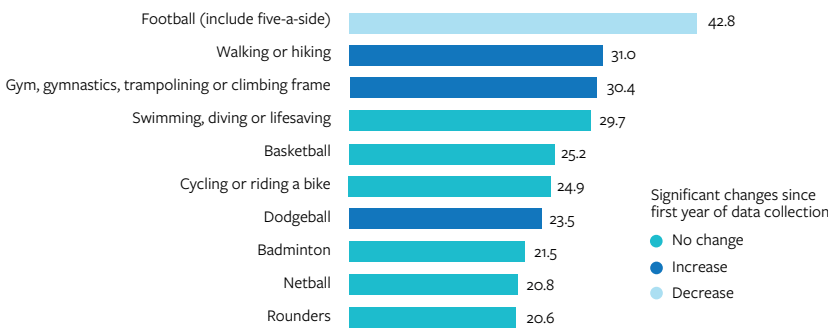
**BAD MONTH:**  
LESPTS

Hong Kong broadcaster LeSports HK is expected to cease operations after an application by its creditors. The company's Chinese parent became a symbol of the Chinese sports economy's overreach when it acquired a host of marquee sports rights at inflated fees and then ran into cash-flow problems for expanding too quickly. MP & Silva and Media Partners & Silva have submitted an application to liquidate Hong Kong Sports Industrial Development, which was formerly known as LeTV Sports Culture Develop (Hong Kong). ○

## ENGLISH SPORT PARTICIPATION (AGE 11-15)

A UK government survey (Taking Part Survey: England Child Report, 2016/17) has unsurprisingly revealed football was the most popular sport outside of school for 11-15 year-old children in England. Of those surveyed, 42.8 per cent had played in the four weeks prior to interview. However, this is significant decrease from 50.0 per cent in 2010/11. Over the same time period, there was an increase in the proportion of 11-15-year-olds participating in dodgeball, athletics, gymnastics and walking or hiking. A significantly higher proportion of boys (96.0 per cent) had participated in sport than girls (91.8 per cent). Participation rates for both sexes were similar in 2016/17 to 2008/09. [O](#)

Proportion of children aged 11-15 years who had participated in individual sport activities in school lessons and/or outside of school in the last four weeks, 2016/17



Source: Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport



### BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Ben Cronin, Editor

**When it comes to creating a global footprint, many of Europe and the world's major rights-holders appear to be in agreement: there's no substitute for having a physical presence in the United States, the world's largest sports market.**

LaLiga opened an office in New York in 2015. Barcelona set up an operation in the same city in 2016. Bayern Munich credits its US bureau with securing 15 new partners since it moved into its Madison Avenue address (see page 8), while it's an open secret that Fifa would prefer to take the 2026 World Cup to North America as the event looks to bounce back from a sequence of controversial and commercially underwhelming hosts.

This month, the SportBusiness Group adds its name to this list as it opens a new office in Miami, Florida. Like the rights-holders namechecked above, the purpose of our expansion is to reach new audiences in America and observe the world's most innovative sports market from close quarters.

Similar to our London operation, our team based in the Miami office will focus on offering in-depth intelligence, analysis and data to clients across the Americas and will aim to further the cross-pollination of ideas between the European and American sports sectors.

To mark the occasion, there is an international theme to this issue as we look at the different approaches employed by rights-holders as they try to establish themselves in new markets and secure new commercial partnerships abroad.

Our interview with the management team of Harris Blitzer Sport and Entertainment, the owners of the Philadelphia 76ers and New Jersey Devils (pages 38-41) shows how teams in the US major leagues are increasingly sharing and borrowing ideas from the leading sides in the English Premier League – as HBSE have done with their sister club Crystal Palace. The group also acknowledges its admiration for the commercial flair of the current leaders of the EPL, Manchester City.

Meanwhile, the story of US sports merchandising firm Fanatics' expansion into Europe and Asia (page 64), shows how Manchester City and other European teams are reciprocating by duplicating the fast-fashion retail model that has proven so successful in the company's work with American teams and leagues.

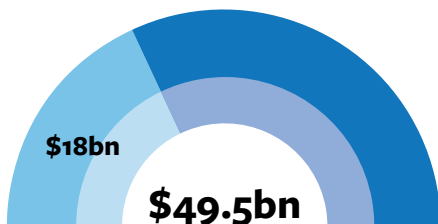
We think the SportBusiness Group's pedigree in reporting on the European football market, in particular, will be invaluable to major US rights holders and emerging franchises like the latest expansion teams in Major League Soccer.

With boots on the ground in America, we are now further along in our ambition to be the first truly global intelligence and data service for the sports industry. [O](#)

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## US MEDIA-RIGHTS MARKET IN NUMBERS

SportBusiness Group produced a series of infographics to mark the opening of its US office. The one below shows the US sports-rights market represents over a third of the global value of the worldwide media rights market.



= value of worldwide sports media rights market



Source: SportBusiness, TVSM Global Report 2017

### QUOTES OF THE MONTH

*“We’re very comfortable telling the NFL story...the MLS story. Now we’re writing the story for esports.”*

JENNIFER FERRON, CMO, KRAFT SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT (PAGE 50)

*“We came here to come to our fans and that is what people really appreciate.”*

RUDOLF VIDAL, US MANAGING DIRECTOR, BAYERN MUNICH (PAGE 8)

## Offices abroad

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### COMING TO AMERICA | HOW BAYERN MUNICH'S NEW YORK OFFICE HELPED TO SECURE 15 NEW PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ Bayern's US fanbase has grown from 13m to 27m since office opened
- ▶ Club has entered into a youth development programme with MLS side FC Dallas
- ▶ Investment in office now covered by the revenues it generates



(Sebastian Widmann/Getty Images)



*“We have someone working on fan services and he is literally available seven days a week. Whenever a president of a fan club wants to do something for their club, we are there to help them.”*

**RUDOLF VIDAL**, PRESIDENT (AMERICAS), BAYERN MUNICH

BY **BOB WILLIAMS**

**W**hen Bayern Munich opened an office in the United States in July 2014, the objectives handed to the staff in New York City were clear: grow the fanbase, build the brand and look for mutually-beneficial partnerships.

Before opening the NYC office, Bayern had 13 million fans in the US; it now has 27 million. In 2014 Bayern had just eight fan clubs spread across America; now it has 136 in 39 states.

The office – led by Rudolf Vidal, a former Bayern youth team goalkeeper – has grown from three to seven full-time employees. Their roles include business development, media and marketing, digital and social, fan services, PR/communications and merchandising.

Bayern has secured 15 partnerships (covering both sponsors and “institutional relationships”) in the States – most recently a youth development programme with Major League Soccer franchise FC Dallas – and bolstered the relationship between the Bundesliga and Fox Sports, its US broadcast partner.

Bayern’s achievements in the US have resulted in Vidal, the club’s president of the Americas, fielding numerous phone calls from other European soccer clubs who want to know more about the Germans’ strategy to crack the American market.

Vidal, who was recently awarded a contract extension up until 2020, spoke at length to *SportBusiness International* to explain just how Bayern have done it.

### **Focusing on the fans**

After bringing in Jörg Wacker as head of internationalization and strategy in 2013, Bayern made a conscious decision to push into the US and China.

Following analysis on the club’s global presence from research company Nielsen, it was decided that these two markets had the biggest potential to grow. While the US was not the biggest foreign market for Bayern, the ever-growing interest in soccer in recent years and the sports industry-minded market

was the driver to invest in the country.

Bayern’s immediate policy after setting up their office in Manhattan was to increase the fanbase, confident that commercial opportunities would then follow.

“Whenever you have a fanbase, you create a demand – a demand for merchandising products, for companies that want to be aligned with the sport,” says Vidal. “This is a long-term approach and this is the right strategy for us and we’ve been pretty successful so far.”

In order to increase the fanbase, Bayern set up the necessary media infrastructure to directly communicate with US supporters: a specific US website, Twitter and Facebook pages and an online merchandise store.

As important as Bayern’s digital presence is in the States, being physically in the country is vital, too: not only as a signal of intent but so that Bayern staff are better able to engage with their American fans and learn more about them.

The office has a staff member to solely focus on fan services. This means US-based Bayern supporters can contact the club via email, telephone and social media in local or close to local time, eliminating the six-plus hour time difference to Munich.

The employee is also a point of contact when fans want to purchase tickets in Munich, have general queries and want to host events that may need club support – for example providing raffle prizes. The staff member also helps organise fan events and connects the club’s content strategy to the different segments of fans: hardcore, casuals, new.

“We came here to come to our fans and that is what people really appreciate,” Vidal adds. “We literally go to the fan clubs – we just came back from Atlanta and Washington DC where there are 300-400 people and they really appreciated it.

“We have someone working on fan services and he is literally available seven days a week. Whenever a president of a fan club wants to do something for their club, we are there to help them.

“All members of fan clubs are registered so we are able to communicate with them on a constant basis and they get something from

us on a weekly basis and sometimes more often.”

This includes email newsletters that contain the latest news and local activities around fixtures.

“We want to learn from fans what they like, what products they like, what they think we should do when the team is coming, what other initiatives can we do,” Vidal adds.

“This is part of the reason why we created a fan roadshow so we can go to our fans. We bring our mascot, we bring trophies and we bring our media partners to cover the event and we use the content to spread the word to other fans.

“And there is even a friendly battle between fan groups as to who has done more [local fan activities] and it is great to see this engagement.”

### **Utilising the power of social media**

When it came to creating Bayern’s US Twitter and Facebook accounts, it was essential that the digital staff roles be filled by American employees to better engage with their US fans in real time.

The Twitter account is especially popular. It has 133,000 followers and regularly creates global media headlines with its witty content.

“You have to have someone who understands the tone of voice and how the people here consume social media and are engaged. In Germany we have a different way to communicate than here, but in Germany we have an older demographic than the US.”

The team’s German social channels are fairly traditional: news-oriented, based around updates from the team. But the tone is entirely different in the US, where they are driven more by popular culture and user-generated content.

The US Twitter strategy serves two purposes: to give fans all the relevant updates and news around the team with a ‘US voice’; and to make FC Bayern a part of the US sports and media landscape and conversation.

“We also use Twitter as a way to communicate with people to literally find a bar and engage with other people to put them together and help them with any benefits they

Continued from previous page...

*“You have to have someone who understands the tone of voice and how the people here consume social media and are engaged. In Germany we have a different way to communicate than here, but in Germany we have an older demographic than the US.”*

**RUDOLF VIDAL**

need to get going,” adds Vidal. “We can help as we know exactly where the fan clubs are.”

#### **Growing the US office slowly but surely**

Running an office from midtown Manhattan is an expensive enterprise. So Bayern began slowly with a small core staff before expanding and moving to their current location on Madison Avenue in August 2016.

“There were literally three of us in 2014 but now we have 10 people in the NYC office [seven full-time employees plus interns]. This is a decent development for the situation,” says Vidal.

Having seen the NYC office cover its own costs and more – principally through healthy US merchandising sales – Vidal and his team hired a digital content manager to focus on the Latin American market.

Through research, including a Fan Survey conducted last August, Bayern established they had a large, young fan base in Latin America that has a big appetite for the club and its content.

“After we set up in New York we could see so many connections to Latin America and we saw a necessity to start in that market,” says Vidal. “We started the same way we did here, by building a digital presence.

“We have people in the most markets who can help us [in Latin America] - discovering fans, interacting, engaging, then looking for potential opportunities with our existing partners to do more and bringing our assets to those markets as well.”

#### **Securing sponsors and partners**

The New York office has been involved in six global sponsorship agreements so far: with Beats By Dre, Goodyear, Procter and Gamble, EA Sports, Apple Music and recently OXiGEN.

The deals with EA Sports and OXiGEN deals were led by the US office, which took a varying share of the workload of the other deals from the club’s Munich HQ.

The offer to sponsors is clear. “They ideally help us here and we can help

them in Germany and China [where Bayern have a big presence via their media reach and partner family],” says Vidal.

In order to better reach fans, the club also signed media deals with Fox Sports, Univision, Goal.com and Yahoo. Bayern provide these media outlets with exclusive content and invite them to cover club events in the States.

“We work on a constant media exchange to get our content from Munich and distribute it in the market,” says Vidal.

Bayern also have what they call “institutional partnerships”, most notably with Columbia University in New York. In return for helping develop the college’s Sports Management Master of Science programme, the students have classes where they “develop things for us – like specific marketing activations, such as social media optimization”. Columbia students also intern at the Bayern US office.

Bayern’s main commercial shareholders – Audi, Adidas and Allianz – have also benefited from the club’s presence in the States.

In 2014, for example, Bayern played the ‘Audi Football Summit’ in New York. This was led by Audi’s German HQ, which involved Audi of America to organize local events and bring customers and guests to the event.

It was Audi of America’s first contact with soccer as an engagement platform and with Soccer United Marketing, Major League Soccer’s marketing arm.

Audi of America realized the potential of soccer in their target groups and the growing platform of the MLS and became partner of the MLS in 2015. Audi has since become a partner of five MLS teams and holds the naming rights to DC United’s new stadium.

#### **Establishing youth soccer partnerships**

Bayern have a deep relationship with Global Premier Soccer, which runs Bayern’s entire grassroots programme starting from the age of eight in the US.

The aim of these academies is two-fold: 1) extending Bayern’s footprint across the



Bayern legend Paul Breitner at the Audi Soccer Pick-Up Game in New York, 2014 (Neilson Barnard/Getty Images)

States; 2) helping grow soccer in the US by offering access to the club’s curriculum, helping both players and coaches alike.

If local children become Bayern supporters from a young age that is considered a bonus.

“We are now working with 90,000 kids in 22 states, 101 clubs, with 6,000 coaches,” says Vidal. “The academies help us to tell the kids about the Bayern brand – we bring coaches over from Munich.

“People want to know more about how Germans develop their talent - there is a constant exchange between GPS and



our coaches where we tell the kids our curriculum and our philosophy.”

Following on from the GPS deal, Bayern recently announced a partnership with MLS side FC Dallas, which is centred on elite player development for now. Vidal admits a partnership with an MLS club was intended from the beginning of the NYC operation.

“We got in touch with the Hunt family [the FC Dallas owners] from the very beginning and we finally agreed on the partnership last year and we worked a year on it – how we would work together – before it was announced,” says Vidal.

“[There] are so many opportunities to build on this. Anything else that comes from

it would be additional. The more you know each other, the more you can create and generate – for example Bayern could grow as a fanbase in the Dallas area and that in itself could lead to other opportunities.”

#### **Locking in when Bayern tour the States**

Since 2014, the year Bayern set up the NYC office, the club have alternated between touring the US and China while playing friendlies in the International Champions Cup.

In 2016 on their ‘Audi Summer Tour’, Bayern played in Chicago, Charlotte and East Rutherford, New Jersey, against AC Milan, Inter Milan and Real Madrid

respectively. The club are due to return for a brief two-game tour this summer.

Having a presence in the States is invaluable to the club’s staff in Munich to ensure the most is made of these trips.

Initiatives organised by the Bayern US office include Xabi Alonso and Arturo Vidal taking on 40 local children in a soccer match at Sinatra Park in New Jersey, PR appearances with various American athletes and ringing the bell of the New York Stock Exchange.

“When Bayern come over we use the momentum to do everything we do – marketing, media, PR and playing in front of the biggest crowd we can get,” says Vidal. ○

# Sponsorship & marketing

THE MOST POPULAR NEWS STORIES ON SPORTS SPONSORSHIP INSIDER



## DEAL OF THE MONTH MATTHEW GLENDINNING

Global logistics company DHL has renewed its sponsorship of the Formula One motor-racing championship at a moderate uplift. Industry experts estimate DHL paid between \$25m (€20m) and \$28m per year under the previous deal, from 2013 to 2017.

### What does DHL get that it didn't get last time?

DHL will become the first official partner of the F1 eSports Series, a race simulation competition culminating in a final hosted at a grand prix in 2018. It will also benefit from new Liberty Media-created assets around fan festivals in F1's core and growth markets and the introduction of new digital broadcast formats. DHL will retain its position as the official logistics partner and will also continue to present the DHL Fastest Lap Award and the DHL Fastest Pit Stop Award.

### What does the renewal say about Formula One under Liberty Media?

Liberty Media, which bought Formula One for \$4.6bn in September 2016, is looking to double its sponsorship revenue from central partners from uplifts on renewals and a wider partner platform. The target for the most expensive packages is thought to be around \$50m per year but this is unlikely to be met in the current cycle of renewals. Along with DHL, it is understood that Emirates will renew as the Official Airline in 2018. Its previous deal, from 2013 to 2017, was thought to be worth around \$36m per year.

### Has any deal reached the \$50m-per-year mark?

Beer brand Heineken is the highest-paying Formula One partner based on what experts believe is a \$37m-per-year package, signed in June 2016. The package includes exclusive rights to digital and social media content, which are crucial to Heineken's activation strategy. The package also includes title sponsorship rights for GPs in China, Italy and Mexico and a significant presence at six other races.

### Is there a spread of values among the six central partners?

Central partners show a range of rights values, from Heineken at the top to whisky brand Johnnie Walker at the bottom, reflecting the inconsistency of assets across the sponsorship packages. ○



#### 1. F1'S RENAULT IN INNOVATIVE LALIGA TIE-UP

Formula One motor-racing team Renault has entered into a wide-ranging partnership with LaLiga, the organising body of the top two divisions of Spanish football. The deal covers the 2018 F1 season and grants LaLiga exposure on Renault's cars, as well as on the overalls of drivers Nico Hülkenberg and Carlos Sainz, who is Spanish.

#### 2. ARSENAL SEALS EMIRATES SHIRT SPONSORSHIP RENEWAL

English Premier League football club Arsenal has renewed its shirt sponsorship deal with Dubai-based airline Emirates for five years, until the end of the 2023-24 season. The *Evening Standard* newspaper said the agreement is worth a total of more than £200m (€226m/\$281m). Emirates' branding will continue to feature on the front of Arsenal's shirt and training kit. Emirates was already committed to a naming-rights deal for Arsenal's stadium through to 2028 under an extension signed in 2012.

#### 3. CITY BANKS ON US-FACING BARCLAYS PARTNERSHIP

English Premier League football club Manchester City has signed a US-focused partnership with Barclays bank. Under the regional partnership, Barclays will be the club's official banking and credit card tour partner. The length of the agreement was not disclosed but the partnership will begin with City's pre-season tour of the US this summer, with Barclays' logo featuring on the back of the team's shirt. Barclays branding will also be on interview backdrops during the pre-season campaign.

#### 4. F1'S FERRARI EXTENDS ICONIC PHILIP MORRIS DEAL

US cigarette and tobacco company Philip Morris International has pledged to work with Ferrari to promote smoke-free products after confirming an extension of its long-running partnership with the Formula One motor-racing team until 2021. The partnership, which began in the mid-1980s, remains one of the most unusual in sport, with advertising laws having blocked the company from displaying its Marlboro brand at a race since 2007. However, Ferrari has retained Marlboro's red and white colours in its team livery.

#### 5. BAYERN ON BOARD WITH QATAR AIRWAYS AGREEMENT

German Bundesliga football club Bayern Munich has agreed a deal for Qatar Airways to become its new sleeve sponsor from next season. The five-year deal runs until the end of the 2022-23 season and names Qatar Airways as a platinum partner of the club. Qatar Airways operates Doha's Hamad International Airport, an existing partner of Bayern and the club's current sleeve sponsor for domestic fixtures. Qatar Airways will replace German airline Lufthansa as a platinum partner. ○

UK FOOTBALL SPONSORSHIP DATA FROM  
SPORTS SPONSORSHIP INSIDER



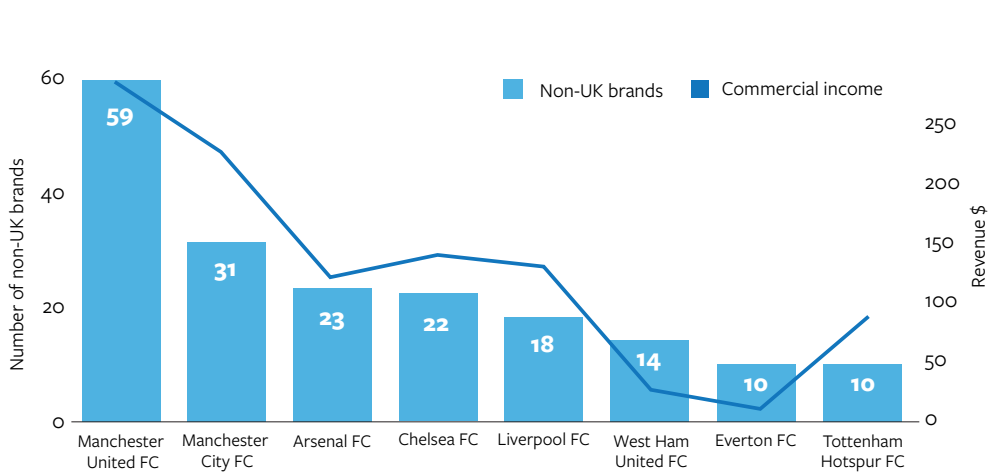
**Manchester United sponsors, by country of origin**



The importance of international brands to Manchester United's commercial revenue of £275.5m (\$384.5m/€311.2m) in 2017 cannot be overstated. The team leans heavily on two massive deals with international brands, Adidas and Chevrolet. This graphic shows the number of brands that sponsor the team in different regions around the world.

Source: Deals Tracker

**Premier League clubs: number of non-UK partners against total revenue**



United has almost 60 international brands as partners, and more regional deals (21) than any other Premier League club. Four other clubs share 36 regional deals: Manchester City (15), Arsenal (12) Chelsea (4), Liverpool (3) and Tottenham (2). Of the rest, Everton and West Brom have one each.

Source: Deals Tracker

To subscribe to *Sports Sponsorship Insider* or Deals Tracker call Tom McMullen on +44 (0) 20 7265 4223 or email [tom.mcmullen@sportbusiness.com](mailto:tom.mcmullen@sportbusiness.com)

## JUVENTUS | THE OLD LADY AIMS TO DRIVE COMMERCIAL REVENUE TO BROADCAST LEVELS WITH GLOBAL OUTLOOK

- ▶ Juventus learns from US sports, and the worlds of fashion, cinema and art
- ▶ New brand identity created to communicate Juve's evolution into a global brand
- ▶ Asia and US the key target markets for commercial growth



Valerio Pennicino/Getty Images

Sports  
Sponsorship  
INSIDER

This is an abridged version of an in-depth sponsorship case study that first appeared in sister publication *Sports Sponsorship Insider*. The publication speaks to the people who make the decisions at the world's largest rights-holders to provide actionable information for subscribers. For more insight, ideas and strategies from the people that shape the business of global sport sponsorship, visit [sportbusiness.com/sponsorship-insider](http://sportbusiness.com/sponsorship-insider).

JUVENTUS  
JJ

BY FRANK DUNNE

Being different means not just looking to the football industry for benchmarks but being open to ideas from the world of fashion, cinema, art. It means importing concepts of entertainment from US sport. Demolishing a stadium built as recently as 1990 and replacing it with a smaller one. And gambling with 121 years of heritage – successful heritage – by creating a whole new brand identity.

The numbers say it is working. Profits last season rose by 939 per cent, operating income by 234 per cent and total revenues by 45 per cent. Juventus claims to have 334m ‘followers’ around the world, an increasingly large proportion of whom are in Asia. In 2017 Juve was fourth among European clubs for growth in global fan numbers, behind Real Madrid, Barcelona and Bayern Munich. The number of Juventus club members outside Italy increased by 44 per cent last season.

In the 2017 Deloitte Football Money League, based on the 2015-16 season, the club was the 10th richest in Europe. But the report highlighted the challenge facing Juventus if it wishes to scale that table. With 57 per cent of income coming from media rights, only 30 per cent from commercial revenues and just 13 per cent from matchday, the club needs to find a greater equilibrium between its revenue streams.

As Giorgio Ricci, the club’s chief revenue officer and head of global partnerships, puts it: “The ambition [for commercial revenues] is to arrive at a level similar to that from TV rights income. The day we arrive at a commercial income level in line with what we earn from TV rights, including those from Uefa competitions, we will have done a good job.” In the 2016-17 season, income from media rights, including Uefa competitions, hit €232.8m (\$289m).

That job is well under way. Over the last six seasons, commercial revenues have jumped 110 per cent. Sponsorship revenues rose 40 per cent in just the last two seasons. The club now has over 40 sponsors or partners covering 38 product categories.

#### Life beyond football

In Italy, Juve’s benchmarks are clubs like Milan, Inter, Roma and Napoli. In Europe, they are those around it in the Deloitte table. But to understand how best to reposition itself, Juventus has also looked beyond football, to the big US sports leagues and to



#### JUVENTUS IN NUMBERS, 2016-17

# €562.7m

Total revenues

# €74.7m

Sponsorship and advertising  
revenue

# €42.6m

Profit

# 41,000

Shirts sold

# 98%

Stadium occupancy

# €4m

Record match takings

the worlds of fashion, music and art. As a consequence, other top European clubs are now coming to study the Juve model.

An evening home game at Juve’s Allianz Stadium would make this pretty evident. “We have transformed our stadium with lots of US-style entertainment – lights, music, pre-match and half-time shows. It creates a sense of an event,” Ricci explains.

“Ten minutes before kick-off, we have the whole stadium in darkness and have laser effects. This is something that once you would only find in American sports arenas. We have managed to bring that into the stadium with surprising results. It’s appreciated both by the fans and by companies who can use those moments of entertainment to help promote their brand. We have even managed to involve fans in the away end of the stadium.

“It’s the kind of thing that you don’t see in Italy and very little even at a wider European level. Since we started, pretty much all the other top European clubs, those we consider our benchmarks, have come to look at it.”

Ricci believes that this openness to new ways of thinking is helping the club to build partnerships with sponsors that might not otherwise have been possible. He points to the deal the club agreed in September with Mars-owned confectionery brand M&M’s as an example.

“This isn’t the classic company looking for visibility. It’s a company that was looking for a new kind of content. They produced a video involving our players with their characters within a few weeks of agreeing the deal. We are studying various forms of activation. It’s a good example of a new, dynamic kind of agreement, of Juventus interacting with the world of entertainment.”

He says the way M&M’s have created flagship stores in many of the major cities of the world, like London and New York, where they create a fun experience that goes well beyond merely buying chocolate, is also an inspiration for the club.

This notion of Juventus belonging to a world beyond football underwrote much of the way the club went about presenting its new logo with a major event in January 2017. As Ricci explains: “When we launched our new brand identity, the kind of people we invited to that event...they were from the world of music, cinema, fashion. Very few from the world of football. We wanted something that would communicate a message beyond the world of football.

“It’s about drawing inspiration from

Continued from previous page...

*“It’s about drawing inspiration from different sources. Not just communicating the idea of football but the idea that Juventus can offer much more in terms of areas of interest, of points of contact. Trying to tap into different realities is a constant in our work.”*

**GIORGIO RICCI**, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER AND HEAD OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS, JUVENTUS



Home fans filling the Allianz Stadium (Gabriele Maltint/Getty Images)

different sources. Not just communicating the idea of football but the idea that Juventus can offer much more in terms of areas of interest, of points of contact. Trying to tap into different realities is a constant in our work.”

#### **New logo**

Perhaps the most striking example of embracing the shock of the new was the club’s decision to create a new brand identity. Unveiled in January 2017, it became operational in July.

Conventional wisdom at a hugely successful club would have been: if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Instead, the club started with a blank sheet of paper and came up with a brand that, it says, represents “the very essence of Juventus: the distinctive stripes of the playing jersey, the Scudetto – the symbol

*“You can’t go and explain to someone like Pepsi that football is better than an American sport. You have to position yourself in the right place, a few rungs down, illustrating the possible advantages in terms of a return on investment.”*

of victory – and the iconic J for Juventus”.

Ricci says that the change was one more step in a process that began three or four years ago, from the awareness that the club now has a position of leadership in European

football and a high profile across the other continents. This growth had to be supported by strategies that were coherent with something that was more than dominance in Italy. The club, under its chairman Andrea Agnelli, started to look at everything which could help support this new positioning.

“The new logo was one of a series of initiatives which were part of this step in our growth. To find another way to present Juventus to the world, a way of saying that Juventus was becoming something different to what it had been. From a commercial point of view, we see it as a message to the outside world, to the fans, to the world of communications, that we were expanding our horizons.”

He said the new image had a positive effect on sales of the lines of products. From initial data on items with the new logo, sales over



a similar timeframe were much stronger than in the past. This, however, has been less marked with traditional products like the team shirt or other Adidas-branded products, which are less likely to be influenced by a change of logo, he added.

### New markets: Asia

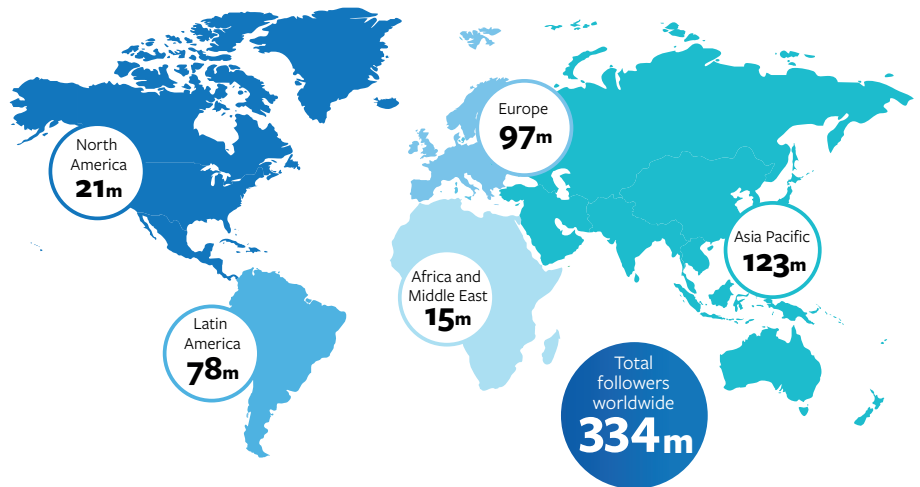
Juventus has identified Asia as its main strategic growth market. One aspect of its strategy there is knowing exactly what to put into the market in terms of merchandising and being prepared to bring in outside expertise to help identify that. In June 2016, the club signed a long-term licensing deal with the IMG agency to develop consumer-friendly products including apparel, accessories, automotive products, stationery, toys, food and beverages. The deal covers China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand. The idea is to understand each market well enough to create products which stand out.

This idea of responding dynamically to international markets extends to the kind of deals being agreed with sponsors. It is not just about providing marks and letting partners get on with it. In its deal with coffee maker Segafredo, for example, the club and company have worked together to create spaces in the US and Asia where Juventus fans can get together, eat and drink and watch video footage of the team. An experience, not just a product or service.

Ricci points to the deal signed in September with cruise line company Costa Cruises as another example of how the club is expanding its reach in Asia with new types of deals. Costa is an Italian company but the deal is with its Chinese division and targeted at the Chinese market. Again, the deal is about offering experiences, rather than merely branding; about positioning Juventus as something closer to an entertainment franchise than a football club.

“You’re talking about one million

## JUVENTUS 2017: A GLOBAL FOLLOWING



Source: Nielsen Sports, Juventus

passengers a year that for the next three years that will come into contact with our brand, through Juventus-branded entertainment, a soccer school, quizzes, games for kids”, he says. “This is important because it gets the brand known not just as a football team but as something which provides fun and entertainment.”

He points out that this kind of reinvention of the club identity is easier outside Italy. “To change the position of Juventus in the heads of Italian fans is very difficult. It’s much easier to do it on the other side of the world. To present Juve as something new to a Chinese fan you find much lower barriers.”

Costa became the club’s fourth Chinese partner after deals with water company Ganten, online betting company F66.com, and tyre company Linglong Tires. “This is growth that until a few years ago was unthinkable,” Ricci says. “To attract investment from the Chinese market, not just for local sponsorships but for global sponsorships. It

is something typical of a small number of big clubs that have a certain profile.”

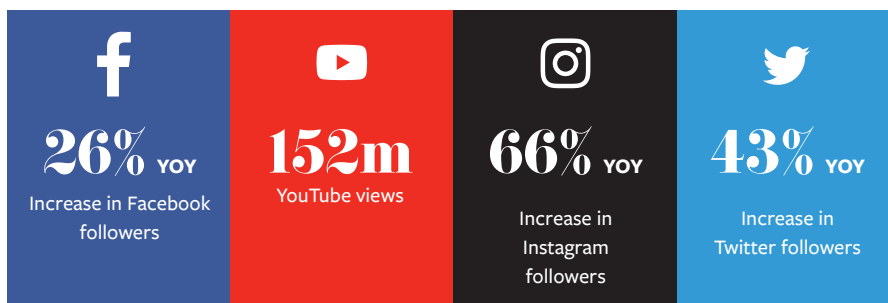
### New markets: the US

Juventus’s thinking about how to break the States is informed by the knowledge that football is not one of the top four sports in the country. It is growing rapidly in terms of participation, especially among girls. But on media platforms it doesn’t generate the kind of audiences the NFL or NBA can, so inevitably the sponsor dollars largely go elsewhere.

“You can’t approach the US market expecting to convince a big American corporation to invest in football rather than American football or basketball,” Ricci says. “You can’t go and explain to someone like Pepsi that football is better than an American sport. You have to position yourself in the right place, a few rungs down, illustrating the possible advantages in terms of a return on investment.”

This limits the kinds of deals that can be struck. “You can forget about doing deals on a regional level. It’s unlikely that a US company will ever invest in a European club just to communicate with the US market. They might do it on a global basis. But it’s virtually impossible that they will do it on a domestic level.”

This article is an abridged version of one published by Sports Sponsorship Insider, our sister publication. SSI subscribers read two similarly in-depth investigations of rights-holder sponsorship strategies each month.



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## SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BRIDGE GAP TO PREMIER LEAGUE

Digital and social media consultant **Richard Clarke** says LaLiga's OTT move, and the Bundesliga's fanatical drive for social media engagement, all come down to the pursuit of the Premier League

**T**he announcement that LaLiga will launch an OTT platform in August should come as no surprise. It is merely another weapon with which to take on the might of the Premier League.

Even though we were all sniffing the air for signs of fragility when the latter's tri-yearly TV rights auction failed to deliver the same astounding returns as it did the last time around, the evidence suggests this was a market correction and a levelling off of total spend rather than an augury of decline.

If one of the FANG platforms (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, or Google) should return to dip a furtive toe in the water by buying the league's two remaining rights packages, it will more than likely spark a round of over-confident predictions for 2021.

The Premier League is also counting on international rights representing a greater percentage of its overall revenues in the future. However this is an area where LaLiga is also focusing resources to provide it with some competition.

Javier Tebas, LaLiga president, has suggested that once the league has completed its domestic and international sales, it expects global media rights revenue to be €2.3bn per season (\$2.83bn), of which about €1bn per season would come from territories beyond Spanish borders.

In recent years, LaLiga and the Bundesliga have implemented concerted efforts to push their products overseas, opening offices all over the world, rebranding and revitalising their digital and social media output.

Each has a new slogan too. The Spaniards go for "It's not football, it's LaLiga" while the Germans plump for the more philosophical "Football as it is meant to be".

LaLiga boasts impressive metrics for social media reach. It added 20.8m followers across all platforms in the 2016/17 season, which compared well against its top clubs, the two most followed in the world: Real Madrid (39m) and Barcelona (31m), plus Atlético Madrid 2.9m.

LaLiga ended the season with just under 100m followers on all platforms globally. For

reference, the Premier League added 12.1m in the same time frame, for an overall reach of 66m.

But although these follower numbers catch the eye of chief executives and sponsors they are often dismissed as "vanity metrics" by the digital community.

They assert that engagement is the only meaningful yardstick because you can follow any number of social media accounts but pay little attention to most as you scroll through the feed on your phone. Metrics based on measurable activity – likes, shares, comments, depth of consumption etc – have far greater validity as they are logical precursors of a transaction.

I'm not saying that LaLiga isn't concentrating on engagement. But I am

***"It is all about engagement for the [Bundesliga]. They have developed their own index, the article performance score, which dives deep into engagement metrics"***

saying that the Bundesliga concentrates on nothing else. Their reach figures in the same period were solid enough: 4.9m added in the 2016/17 season – compared to Bayern's 10m and Dortmund's 3.9m – for a total of around 25m. And the only platform upon which they had more followers than LaLiga was significant: Chinese giant Sina Weibo.

But as I said, it is all about engagement for the Germans. They have developed their own index, the article performance score, which dives deep into engagement metrics, analysing reach in relation to factors such as when users exit a page, how far they scroll, social sharing and video views.

That is why their total social shares may be a tenth of the Premier League and half of

LaLiga but their engagement-per-thousand users is much better. In February it was three times the Premier League and double that of LaLiga. For them, gathering together a passionate community is much more important than reaching a vast number of indifferent 'fans'.

The Bundesliga approach also differs from LaLiga in its plans for OTT. It is not on the agenda at present and, anyway, remains impossible under current contractual arrangements.

But buried in the detail of the four-year, €4.6bn deal with Sky and Eurosport that launched this year, there was a small but perhaps significant move. Amazon secured a portion of the digital audio rights, the first time they had bought any kind of major football content.

Of course, the German league may well have to work harder purely due to historical and cultural issues. There are slightly more Spanish speakers than English speakers, 442m to 378m. Both figures dwarf the 78m who speak German.

England's football has always gone around the world while Spain also have the world's two undisputed star clubs and they are fully prepared to use them.

The pre-season El Clásico in Miami last summer persuaded 67,000 fans to pay between \$240 to \$4,500 per ticket, plus \$45 to \$60 parking. Another 37,000 paid \$20 just to watch the teams training the night before.

LaLiga has also talked seriously about staging competitive games overseas as soon as next season. Kick-offs have been re-arranged for Asia in the last few years.

It is always going to take a blend of physical and emotional tent-pole moments to capitalise on the constant drip of content. One secret of social media is talking to many but making it appear like you talk to the individual.

Crossing cultures, time-zones and languages makes this doubly difficult. But LaLiga and Bundesliga must take on the task in their pursuit of the Premier League. [O](#)

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# Media

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## DEAL OF THE MONTH

by Robin Jellis

**Telco BT extended its deal for MotoGP rights in the UK and Ireland.**

### When did BT first buy MotoGP rights?

MotoGP was one of the first properties BT acquired after deciding to launch a sports broadcasting operation in the UK. At the time – May 2013 – it wrested the rights from public-service broadcaster the BBC and has since exploited them fully on pay-television. This was a step change for Dorna Sports, MotoGP's commercial rights-holder. But the BBC's coverage had been criticised by fans and motorsports experts for a lack of programming outside race coverage, putting races on its red button service instead of its main channels, and not having coverage consistently on the same channel.

### Will the new deal be similar to the current?

The new deal will be shorter: it will run for three years, from 2019 to 2021. BT's original deal was for five years, from 2014 to 2018. The fee BT will pay will also be considerably higher in the new agreement – about 140 per cent more.

### Why was BT prepared to pay the increase?

BT was willing to pay much more to retain the rights as it has found the sport to have a dedicated fanbase, many of whom have taken up a BT subscription since the telco's deal began. One insider said BT had added about 100,000 subscribers as a result of its acquisition.

### Why will the new deal be shorter?

Mainly because Dorna preferred not to lock itself into a long-term agreement in order to keep its options open. When BT first acquired MotoGP rights it wanted a deal long enough to judge the success of the property on its platform. This was not necessary in the new cycle, so BT was happy to agree to a shorter-term deal.

### Who else holds rights in the UK & Ireland?

Commercial broadcaster Channel 5 holds free-to-air highlights rights in a two-year sublicensing deal with BT, covering 2017 and 2018. Highlights in 2014, 2015 and 2016 were shown by rival commercial broadcaster ITV under rolling one-year sublicensing deals with BT. Under its new deal, BT will continue to sell on highlights to free-to-air broadcasters. [O](#)

*To access more analysis like this, subscribe to TV Sports Markets.*



### 1. BEIN SNAPS UP MENA SERIE A RIGHTS

BeIN Media Group has acquired rights to Serie A, the top division of Italian club football, in the Middle East and North Africa. The agreement with the IMG agency will be worth about €105m (\$130m) per season over three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. BeIN will offer coverage in Arabic and English. The deal was agreed with the IMG agency which, along with Italian public-service broadcaster Rai, holds international rights to the league.

### 2. LALIGATV TO GO OTT, TEBAS CONFIRMS

LaLiga, the organisation that oversees the top two divisions of Spanish football, will convert its LaLigaTV service into an OTT platform in August, with the new product set to offer sports content aside from football, according to president Javier Tebas. The platform will be free to use but will require registration to access. The platform will fall under the wing of the LaLiga4Sports initiative, which involves Spain's 64 sports federations and the Spanish Paralympic Committee.

### 3. AMAZON EYES UP PREMIER LEAGUE 'SUPER PACK'

Tech company Amazon is considering bidding for a 'super pack' of rights to football's English Premier League. According to the Digiday website, striking such a deal would enable the league to test the water for the possible launch of its own OTT service. The league is reportedly considering combining its two remaining packages of domestic live rights into a single package, which would consist of 40 live matches per season, near-live rights to all 380 games per season and clip rights.

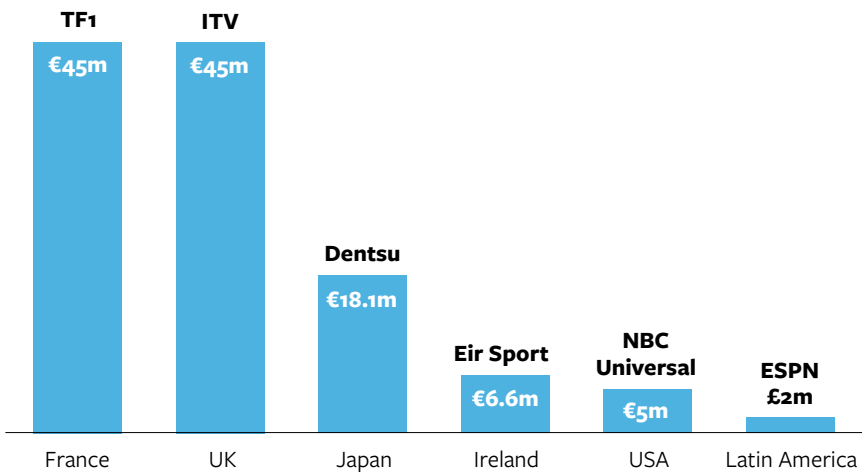
### 4. F1 CONFIRMS OTT SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE LAUNCH

Formula One has confirmed it will launch a new OTT subscription service. F1 TV will provide commercial-free live streams of each race, qualifying and practice session with multi-language commentary, starting with English, French, German and Spanish. The platform will offer exclusive access to all 20 on-board driver cameras. At launch, F1 TV will appear in more than 20 markets, including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary and much of Latin America.

### 5. DAZN BUILDS JAPAN POSITION WITH SOFTBANK DEAL

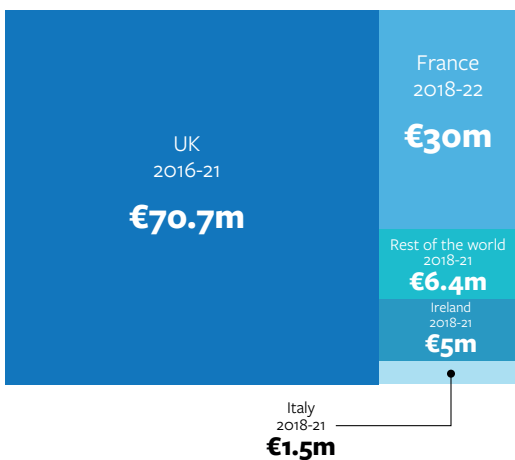
DAZN, the OTT service operated by digital sports media company Perform, has boosted its position in Japan by taking over a rival service operated by telco SoftBank. The rights portfolio held by SportsNavi Live will now fall under the wing of DAZN, which launched in Japan in August 2016. Through the deal, DAZN has secured more English Premier League and LaLiga football matches, as well as coverage of the domestic Nippon Baseball League and B.League basketball competition. [O](#)

**Rugby Union's international aspirations**



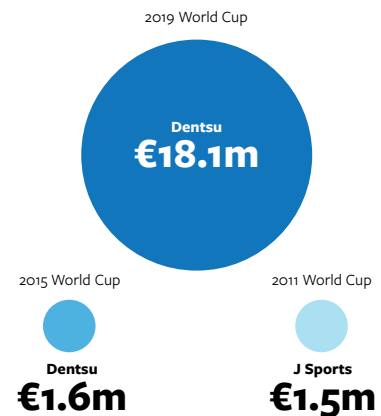
TV Sports Markets has produced a data report examining media deals for two of Rugby Union's largest properties, the Rugby World Cup and the Six Nations. The UK and France remain the two most lucrative markets for the Rugby World Cup despite issues with hosting the 2019 tournament in Japan, a poor time-zone for a European audience. World Rugby has secured a significant 420-per-cent fee increase in the USA.

**Six Nations media-rights income, 2018**



The media-rights value of the Six Nations is naturally driven by the competing nations; international sales make up only about six per cent of the global value in 2018. International rights, excluding Canada and the US, were sold to the Pitch International agency. The Six Nations Committee, the tournament organiser and commercial rights-holder, carved these rights out for the first time from 2018 onwards.

**2019 hosting boosts Japan revenue**



Japan has become an increasingly valuable market for the sport, with an upsurge in popularity since the award of hosting rights to the 2019 World Cup in the country, and the subsequent exploits of the national team at the 2015 tournament. The 2019 edition will see World Rugby's income from the country increase more than 10-fold.

# Media

## LOCAL FOCUS | FLEXIBLE APPROACH ALLOWS NBA TO DOUBLE INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS INCOME

- ▶ The NBA has more than doubled its international media-rights income since 2014
- ▶ The league adopted a pure market-by-market sales strategy in 2012
- ▶ Delivering content that is relevant to local audiences is fundamental



Memphis Grizzlies in action against the Chicago Bulls (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)



BY FRANK DUNNE

In 2014, the National Basketball Association earned about \$250m (€203m) from the sale of its media rights outside the US. This year, the figure will almost certainly smash through the \$500m barrier.

Of the four major US sports leagues, the NBA has the strongest claim to being a genuinely global property and global sports brand. The inherent sporting values of the league, which attracts the best players in the world, plus intangible factors such as being seen as cool by young men, underpin commercial value.

Inevitably, much of that value is concentrated in the US. According to the 2017 TVSM Global Report, the league earned \$2.7bn last year from national broadcast deals and a further \$868m from local deals. But the NBA's pure market-by-market international rights sales strategy, allied to the promotion of a direct-to-consumer OTT service, has also helped the league maximise the value of the property on a global level.

The main characteristics of the NBA's international rights strategy are:

- in-house: rights sales handled in-house, without agencies or consortium deals;
- local presence: local NBA offices, partnerships with local media companies, and targeted marketing campaigns;
- local content: providing content which is relevant locally, not just a uniform off-the-shelf product;
- market-by-market: a pure market-by-market approach, with every deal tailored to the specific market characteristics;
- negotiation: no formal tender process: deal structures emerge from negotiation;
- multi-layered: a precise logic for every package of rights, from live linear to digital/social clips;
- OTT: strong promotion of the league's own direct-to-consumer OTT service, NBA League Pass;
- flexibility: in everything, from the level of exclusivity to the number of partners to contract durations;
- development: being prepared to put reach over revenue in development markets.

NBA games and programming are now available in 215 territories in 50 languages. Last season, it was watched by more than one billion viewers.

Matthew Brabants, NBA senior vice president, global media distribution & business operations, tells *SportBusiness International*: "We are very focused

on delivering localised content to our international fans on the right platform at the right time. What we've found is that games and programming that are tailored for specific international audiences generate more engagement and help reach both casual and core fans."

He points to recent deals in Africa and India as examples of this. Kwesé Sports, the pay-television platform owned by telco Econet, distributes NBA content in English, French and Portuguese across sub-Saharan Africa on its online, mobile and satellite platforms. This season, the NBA and media group Sony began broadcasting nearly 100 live games in India with Hindi commentary.

"The feedback we've gotten from fans around the world is that they want compelling, localised content that is specific

*"The feedback we've gotten from fans around the world is they want compelling, localised content that is specific to their interests, and that they'll use any platform to find and engage with content that meets those criteria."*

**MATTHEW BRABANTS**, SVP GLOBAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION & BUSINESS OPERATIONS, NBA

to their interests, and that they'll use any platform to find and engage with content that meets those criteria," Brabants said. "Going forward we'll continue to find new ways to provide locally relevant content to our domestic and international fans."

The NBA has more than 1,400 employees across offices in 13 cities around the world: Beijing, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London, Madrid, Manila, Mexico City, Mumbai, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai, Taipei, and Toronto.

**Real market-by-market**

The phrase 'selling market-by-market' is widely used but can mean different things to different rights-holders. The common denominator is not selling media rights en bloc to an agency or to a broadcasting consortium. Beyond that, for many rights-holders, it means going into each territory

with the same ITT document, the same rights matrix, the same contract terms, the same duration, the same start and end time of every deal. Variables typically don't extend beyond the free-to-air/pay-TV split and carve-outs for digital exploitation.

There are two major exceptions to this model: Formula One motor racing and the NBA. Both work on building a bespoke solution for the precise characteristics of each market. Everything is up for negotiation.

For the NBA, this was not always the case. Until 2012, its distribution strategy outside the US was linked to its domestic deals. Sports broadcaster ESPN has long been one of the league's major domestic partners and had acquired international rights in two long-term deals: one for the ESPN channels in Europe, Africa and the Middle East; and one covering Asia-Pacific with ESPN Star Sports, the broadcaster's joint venture with Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

In the summer of 2012, when ESPN pulled out of the joint venture and announced it was closing its European operations the following year, the league embarked on a new strategy.

**Flexibility**

Flexibility informs every aspect of the NBA's approach. Unlike most rights-holders, the league does not tie itself to a cycle of selling its rights. This means it can choose to sell its rights when it wants and can take advantage of market conditions to secure the most valuable deal possible.

If a new entry player wants to launch an OTT channel in a specific market, the NBA can react quickly to meet their demand for premium content. If a top athlete or extraordinary talent emerges in a market where the NBA had not been historically relevant, the league will use that to try to build a long-term platform in the country.

If a market suddenly enters a moment of intense competition, the NBA can move in quickly to capitalise on that. The NBA's deal with streaming service Tencent in China is a good example of this. When the emergence of digital operators after the government's liberalising of the media industry broke open a sports-rights market which had previously been subject to the dominance of state broadcaster CCTV, there was a period of massive inflation in rights prices for premium sport. The NBA was able to exploit this.

In January 2015, the league agreed an exclusive digital rights deal with Tencent for five seasons, 2015-16 to 2019-20, worth \$100m per season, plus a share of future

Continued from previous page...



Golden State Warriors win the 2017 NBA Finals (Ezra Shaw/Getty Images)

advertising and commercial revenue estimated at \$200m across the five seasons. It was the first time that the size of the country's online audience had been reflected in a rights deal.

There are no set deal lengths but there are some underlying principles. The league is more amenable to doing longer deals with long-term broadcast partners, those who have delivered over a long period of time and with who the league has built trust. The general preference is for multi-year deals – three years or more – and if the offer is right, it will do so with the incumbent rights-holder.

The league believes in being loyal to those partners who not only deliver a good NBA broadcast experience but also promote the NBA brand. Sometimes it agrees short-term deals, for one or two years, if it needs more time to identify the right long-term partner or if a market is in an unusual state of flux.

The league does not have formal tenders. Having conducted its own detailed market research on each market, it talks to all potential partners. Talks are underpinned by one idea: listen to what partners need and build around that. The details of the deal, in terms of content, level of exclusivity and duration, evolve through this discussion.

The choice of whether to seek free-to-air coverage, pay-television coverage, or both, is market specific. The guiding principle is always to seek the maximum exposure but

that does not always mean doing a free-to-air deal. Because commercial broadcasters in many markets focus their investments one or two sports – such as top football – it is not always easy to secure the right kind of scheduling on free-to-air. Pay-television platforms, despite having a smaller audience base, can often provide better positioning and marketing, as well as higher revenues.

#### The matrix

The NBA comes to every market with a broad palette of content options. Like most



GSW point guard Stephen Curry (Harry How/Getty Images)

*“We use [social media] highlights as snack bites to drive appetite for the bigger meals – the live games”*

**MATTHEW BRABANTS**, SVP GLOBAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION & BUSINESS OPERATIONS, NBA

properties it can provide traditional rights packages for live, highlight and short-form coverage. Live rights are the bedrock of the coverage. Having 30 teams playing 82 regular-season games plus playoffs gives the league lots of options in how to package live rights. The league also looks to syndicate its highlights as widely as possible.

Alongside this, it has NBA TV, its own 24/7 channel which is licensed to third-party distributors on a global basis. It shows one live game per night during the regular-season, as well as press conferences, match highlights and archive footage.

The NBA League Pass is the league's direct-to-consumer product. It is available in every country outside the US and provides fans access to every NBA game on-demand on mobile, on tablet, or through a connected device.

The League Pass is the only way a fan can access all live content as well as highlights and interviews. European countries are the biggest users of the League Pass, with Germany top. Australia has also seen high take-up.

The NBA began evaluating its options for monetising digital rights around 2007, well before many other major rights-holders. By 2012, digital accounted for 15 per cent of revenues. This had risen to 30 per cent two years later.

The digital strategy is based on the localisation of nba.com, to which the NBA licenses rights to exploit in different countries.

It's both an effective way for the league to monetise the site and a guarantee that content will be well-tailored to the fans in that market and delivered in their local language.

Working with the strongest local digital companies provides economy of scale and the benefit of an audience that was already going to that company's website. The NBA sees its website as the 'go-to destination' for NBA fans who want the most complete picture.



Megastar LeBron James, of the Cleveland Cavaliers (Gregory Shamus/Getty Images)

### Short form

The exploitation of short-form content across multiple platforms started to become a central part of the NBA's global media-rights strategy around 2011. It is extremely important in Europe due to the time difference with the US. All NBA games are produced and edited for digital use, specifically with mobile consumption in mind.

The league uses the following NBA platforms to provide short-form content:

- nba.com and other official websites have video highlights for all games and events as well as news, blogs, extensive statistics and scores; up to 50 clips per day, ranging from 10 seconds to five minutes;
- the NBA League Pass, in addition to live games, has in-game highlights and archive footage;
- NBA Game Time, the official mobile app, offers video and editorial content produced for a specific country.

Short-form video content is also produced for the major social media platforms and

is tailored to the characteristics of each platform. Brabants says the NBA began working with the major social platforms very early on and was always looking to innovate. "Each one of these platforms is unique and impactful in its own way, and in how we engage with our fans around the world," he says.

#### The content includes:

**YouTube:** best plays, such as the Daily Top 10, and outstanding performances.

**Facebook:** largely a platform for off-the-court, behind-the-scenes content, as well as images and graphics.

**Twitter:** the platform for live events and breaking news, including score updates and in-game highlights. **Vine:** used exclusively during live events and shows videos of players pre- and post-game.

**Snapchat:** appeals to a younger demographic, used to show live events from beginning to end via photos and videos.

**Instagram:** used for in-game and post-game highlights.

Tumblr and Pinterest are also used for distributing NBA images: Tumblr for artistic photos and Pinterest for female-oriented content with a focus on apparel and fashion.

The NBA is the most successful US sports league by social media reach. In the last four years it has substantially increased its reach across all platforms. Subscribers to its YouTube channel rose from 5.6m to 8.7m, likes for its Facebook page rose from 23.1m to 35.1m and its Twitter following grew from 10.2m to 27.4m.

Brabants said: "We are fortunate to have a game that is perfectly suited for social media, which has helped us create one of the largest social media communities in the world with 1.4 billion likes and followers globally across all league, team and player platforms. As social platforms have evolved, we now have new ways to drive interest in our games in real-time. Instead of just telling fans what's happening in a game, we can now show them with a highlight on Instagram. We use these highlights as snack bites to drive appetite for the bigger meals – the live games." 

PEOPLE  
MAKE  
GLASGOW

## PROOF OF CONCEPT | EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS WILL SHOWCASE ALL OF GLASGOW'S EVENTS EXPERTISE

As the countdown to August's inaugural European Championships continues, Glasgow is preparing to welcome more than 4,000 top competitors in swimming and diving, cycling, golf, gymnastics, rowing and triathlon to a city whose profile in world sport continues to grow after the success of the transformational 2014 Commonwealth Games



Glasgow has a strong history of hosting track and tracktraxand field events

**G**lasgow is co-hosting the European Championships with Berlin – which will stage the track and field programme – in a move which many see as pointing the way toward the future of major sporting events.

The decision to host the European Championships is indicative of the city's appetite for sport; of the event culture which has helped drive its transformation since the 1970s and 80s; and of its willingness to think differently in embracing a new concept for European sport.

The willingness to challenge standard

thinking is also underscored by Glasgow's decision not to create an Organising Committee as a separate legal entity to deliver the event. Instead the work is being carried out by Glasgow City Council – with the input of experts in key areas – drawing on the vast experience accumulated over many years of delivering world-class events combined with the intimate knowledge of the local facilities and infrastructure.

“The fact is Glasgow is an events city, and what we are experiencing now is the culmination of a 30-year strategy,” explains Billy Garrett, Glasgow Life's Director of

Sport and Events.

“I believe we are uniquely strong in this area because of the commitment right across the entire city. That's not just from city and government, but the commercial and creative sectors as well.

“Events bring them together as one and that's reflected in the collegiate approach we take to consideration of and bidding for events to ensure that we identify what works within the city,” he says.

“We all come together to ensure an integrated and frictionless response which means that Glasgow is the easiest place to

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bring an event. That's down to the fact that we have people working on events day-in-day-out so while some cities may bid more financially, I don't feel they can compete with our approach and our capabilities."

With over £300m (€339m/\$417m) invested in facilities to host events which help deliver on clear visitor and legacy goals, it's not surprising that Garrett believes hosting events has played a major role in what he describes as Glasgow's 'urban renaissance'.

And it is not only a clutch of world-class facilities which makes the difference.

"The creation of a specialist events talent and skill base in the city is important to our ability to deliver. In fact, people who have come through our system are now working on events around the world," he said.

"Now we are in a position where we can consolidate all the benefits of our experience. The European Championships is the sort of event which would normally require a huge Organising Committee, but we are effectively delivering it ourselves. That is interesting for the future of major events in general," says Garrett.

"I think the European Championships will have a major impact because it is absolutely unique. It will enable us to develop closer links with the federations involved and I am sure that, given the commitment of the European Broadcast Union – which promises Olympic-level coverage – and major broadcasters across the country, it will provide a great platform for sports which often struggle for media profile.

"From Glasgow's perspective we are delighted to have an opportunity to create something so exciting."

The city's programme of investment in new facilities has continued and a new outdoor BMX track will be in use at the European Championships, making Glasgow uniquely able to host all four cycling disciplines to international standard within city limits.

#### Range

The range of Glasgow's hosting capabilities is demonstrated by the success of two very different events staged in the city in the last two years: last year's TOTAL BWF Badminton World Championships – which won fulsome praise from competitors and commentators alike for the standard of presentation at the Emirates Arena – and



the 2016 Homeless World Cup, a week-long festival of football featuring 65 teams from 51 countries.

And beyond this summer's multi-sports extravaganza and Cultural festival there is much to look forward to.

Next March the 7,000-seat Emirates Arena – also home to the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome – will be the venue for the 35th European Athletics Indoor Championships, three days of intense competition involving over 600 athletes from 50 nations.

Then, in December, the LEN European Short Course Swimming Championships come to town. The action takes place at the Tollcross International Swimming Centre, a venue with seating for up to 5,000, which hosted swimming at the Commonwealth Games, and was the stage for the International Paralympic Committee Swimming Championships in 2015.

The following year the city will host twelve teams from across America, Europe and Asia-Pacific as they compete in the men's World Curling Championships, where not only the title but qualifying points for the

2020 Beijing Winter Olympic Games are up for grabs.

Glasgow will also host four games in the co-hosted final phases of the 2020 Uefa European Football Championship while, intriguingly, the Pakistan men's hockey team has elected to play its 2019 FIH Hockey Pro League homes games in the city, where it can rely on state-of-the-art facilities coupled with passionate support from a large and engaged local community of Pakistani origin.

These events provide only a snapshot of the capabilities of a city where sport, from passionately supported domestic football to national and international events, are part of the way of life.

"Over the last 20 years Glasgow has demonstrated both its ambition and its capabilities," says Garrett.

"Events are in our DNA and I think that, with the European Championships, we are demonstrating we have developed a successful new model in terms of delivery. Our ambition is to be at the top of our game and to continue to build a programme of events which is the envy of every other city." [O](#)

# Digital

## TIME WELL SPENT | SPORT RESPONDS TO FACEBOOK ALGORITHM CHANGES

- ▶ Newsfeed changes are intended to 'make sure the time people spend on Facebook is time well spent'
- ▶ Brands and rights-holders may be expected to 'pay to play' for newsfeed visibility
- ▶ Micro-communities and more targeted interaction could be the future of social marketing



*“One reading of Zuckerberg’s announcement is that any video or image which is designed to be consumed passively – and, let’s face it, this is a lot of what’s out there – will be punished”*

**CHARLIE BEALL,**

SENIOR CONSULTANT, SEVEN LEAGUE

BY ADAM NELSON

**W**hen YouTube chief executive Susan Wojcicki recently told a Silicon Valley conference that rival tech giant Facebook should “get back to baby pictures”, it was probably intended more as a crowd-pleasing put-down than as sound business advice.

From its roots as a way for US college students to keep in touch, Facebook has grown into an all-encompassing content service. For many of a certain age, Facebook is a portal to the rest of the entire internet, serving as home page and news aggregator, social network and media platform. Its newsfeed serves up videos, photos and other updates not just from friends and family but brands and rights-holders.

Changes announced by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg earlier this year, however, seemed to take Wojcicki’s advice at face value. “We want to make sure the time people spend on Facebook is time well spent,” said Zuckerberg in a January statement, indicating a significant change in the way the newsfeed would operate. Though the inner workings of Facebook’s algorithm are a well-guarded secret, the previous version rewarded interaction, in the form of shares or likes, meaning the more popular a post became, the more likely it was to show up in a user’s feed.

The result of this was a weighting in favour of big brands with big social budgets producing easily consumed, if ultimately throwaway, content. Zuckerberg’s mission for 2018, he said, is to ensure ‘meaningful social interactions’ are prioritised over ‘relevant content’ – a bigger push for baby pictures, a reduction in viral videos.

The move is an attempt to counter accusations that social media platforms such as Facebook have fostered division rather than helping to bring people closer together – as Charlie Beall, senior consultant at digital sports consultancy Seven League, puts it: “There’s a growing view that social channels have become unhealthy and unpleasant places for users – with critics citing fake news, divisiveness, filter bubbles, addictive tech practices and mindless content as

contributors to an overall negative experience.

“Facebook is chiefly in the firing line and is taking the criticism seriously: its recent, proactive announcement that it will try to make time on its platform ‘time well spent’ is a case in point. One reading of Zuckerberg’s announcement is that any video or image which is designed to be consumed passively – and, let’s face it, this is a lot of what’s out there – will be punished. This means that for many sports bodies, a wholesale content-strategy redesign for Facebook may be necessary.”

While there exists another school of thought which believes that the majority of content shared by sports-related brands and rights-holders is already original and engaging enough that it could remain untouched by the newsfeed changes, the industry has nevertheless been put on alert by the developments.

“From a business perspective, a lot of the fallout from this has been that the newsfeed is dead, organic reach is dead, and that from now on it’s all about paid advertising on social for big brands,” says Luca Massaro, chief executive at digital sports marketing agency WePlay. “That’s not the case – though obviously it won’t hurt! But what will definitely happen is a change in social strategy. I think that would have happened without the Facebook changes.”

WePlay – which manages more than twenty Facebook pages for various brands across the sporting world, followed by over 60 million between them – employs three different kinds of content, Massaro explains.

“From a content strategy perspective, we start with what we call ‘cornerstone content’, the very best of what you’re putting out there,” he says. “Then you have ‘informative content’, which is all about making sure that you add value; and finally then there’s ‘hygiene content’ – the low-level stuff you post just to keep the account active and get engagements.”

It is this last kind of post – referred to as ‘low-viral content’ by Facebook – that is being targeted by the company and toward which Massaro says brands will have to change their strategy. “The newsfeed changes

are essentially trying to stop people from posting crap content,” he says. “It doesn’t add enough value for the user, all it does is just interrupts their experience and takes up their time.

“You have to look at the content that you’re creating. If it adds value to the experience, then Facebook will prioritise it in the newsfeed. If it doesn’t add value – and unfortunately most of the content that is put out on Facebook has very little value – it’s just there to collect clicks and views and engagement, rather than improve anyone’s experience.”

#### **Pay to play**

While WePlay recommends its clients start to think more seriously about setting aside an “amplification budget” – spending on promotion to ensure that content is prioritised in the algorithm – Massaro says that it is not all about money, but ensuring that the content you put on social media is good enough that when it is seen, it engages with and retains an audience.

“Unless you’re a superstar or an athlete or a musician and you put up content to an engaged organic community, then you need amplification budgets,” he says. “For brands and publishers today, ultimately they don’t have loyal dedicated followers. Even football clubs – how many brands in the world have followers from four-years-old right the way through to when a person dies? Not many. But football clubs are even struggling, because they’re just pushing commercial content.”

Sarah Swanson, who leads the NFL’s marketing operation in the UK, concurs that it has become increasingly difficult to engage fans through organic reach alone. The social media landscape, she says, is “ever changing”, with the NFL “always trying to figure out the best way to get the most eyeballs on our content. That’s very difficult to do”. Particularly in its international markets, the NFL has relied on Facebook

“More broadly, across social media, we spend a lot of time looking at what people respond to,” adds Swanson. “From a strategic standpoint we spend a lot of time thinking

Continued from previous page...

***“Unless you’re a superstar or an athlete or a musician and you put up content to an engaged organic community, then you need amplification budgets”***

**LUCA MASSARO**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, WEPLAY

about players and teams and local relevance. Ultimately fan growth is about giving somebody a reason to care about a sport, about a team, about a player. Social gives us our broadest platform to create reasons to care.”

The key for brands and rights-holders, Massaro says, is in precisely that: creating content that is about more than just generating revenue for themselves, and about which the fans can be passionate. For all that Facebook’s announced changes have caused some panic among those who depend on the platform for audience interaction, the newsfeed remains one of the social network’s most lucrative streams and, as Massaro points out, Facebook is not going to make a strategic shift that harms its own bottom line.

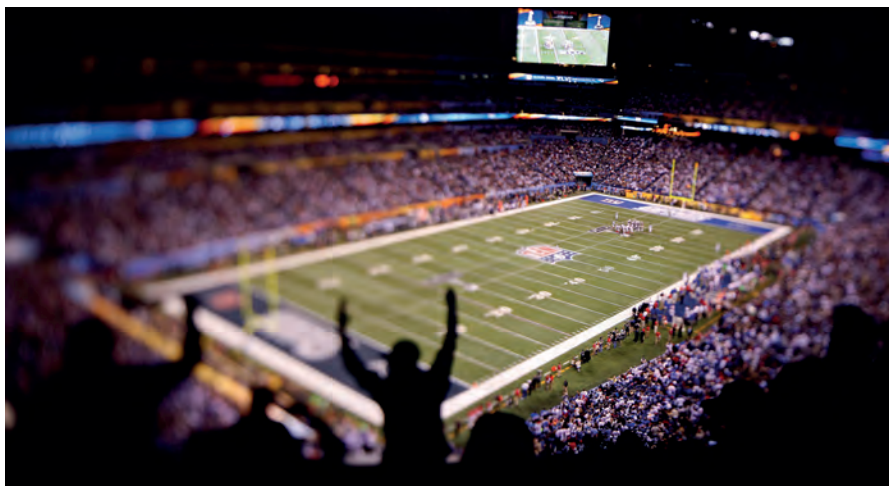
“You have to remember that Facebook is a business,” he says. “If you’re using their platform from a commercial perspective and Facebook isn’t commercially benefiting from you, if they look at your Facebook ad account, your business manager, and see that you’re not spending any money, then they are absolutely going to be making sure businesses that are cannibalising the timeline and not spending money are going to be some of the first to lose out.”

Beall agrees that while the move is about more than inflating Facebook’s revenues, “sports organisations, alongside other media, have gotten used to getting reach for ‘free’ on Facebook”, and says that the prioritising of friends and family could be a first step in “migrating brands away from this expectation. Could reach increasingly be ‘pay to play’? It’s not an outrageous thought.”

#### **Micro-communities**

For an organisation like the NFL, particularly as it targets new fans in growth markets such as the UK, such investment is likely to be worthwhile. But Swanson also believes a change in the type of interactions could reap rewards.

“The goal of everything that we do in this market is fan growth,” she explains. “Everything we do, from television to digital to our games and certainly social media is about fan growth. There’s two levels of fan growth – there’s growing the number of people who are engaged with



the sport, and then there’s deepening each fan’s engagement.” Social media, she says, has become one of the key drivers of the former, but Facebook’s shake-up is expected to encourage brands and rights-holders to focus more on the latter. The use of groups and Messenger bots, which will allow page operators to target specific sectors of the audience and individuals, rather than just pumping content out to the entire following, is likely to be one way in which brands and rights-holders navigate the newsfeed changes.

“What Facebook’s doing is very clever,” says Massaro. “It’s saying that there’s a macro place where you can talk to everyone, but if you put out crap content then we’re going to limit you. If you spend a bit of money, you can talk to everyone, you’ll appear in the main newsfeed. It’s also saying, there are other tools where you can create micro-communities, and they’re forcing brands and marketers to be a bit cleverer in their strategy. Rather than just pushing this onto Facebook and giving it to everyone, they’re saying: ‘segment’. Facebook is telling brands that a strategy should never be about reaching as many people as possible, it should be about reaching the most relevant people as possible.”

Swanson concurs, and says that the NFL’s use of groups, particularly in its international markets, has been something the organisation has been ramping up for a while.

“The newsfeed algorithm works in such a fashion that you don’t know what your fans will see, which is a constant challenge,” she says. “Groups are a bit different because that is all community-moderated and community-created content within that group. You ask to get in and you have to be accepted and it’s conversations within the page, so it is much better at fostering that sense of community.”

“We worked with Facebook to come up with the right solution for us. We’re certainly not alone in this – a lot of brands are going through the same kinds of conversations, global brands in particular, because it’s a challenge and you don’t want to compete against yourself in the algorithm.”

“I think with groups, it’s a great community for passionate fans. I also think it can be a resource for new fans to come and ask questions and grow the fanbase that way. I think there’s an opportunity for that to grow.”

Facebook will, inevitably, continue to evolve its product and, as Swanson points out, rights-holders will continue to find new ways to reach fans.

“If somebody’s really passionate about the NFL, then I hope that Facebook allows them to continue to follow that passion whatever the algorithm changes are,” she says. “I know there’s always going to be financial implications of that but, ultimately, I hope that it doesn’t hurt fandom.”





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## TRUSTING IN TECHNOLOGY | VOLLEYBALL'S LEADING SOLUTION FOR VIDEO REFERRALS

VAR's introduction to football has been far from smooth with delays and overuse causing frustration amongst fans and players alike. But, asks Data Project chief executive **Emilio Spirito**, how has volleyball managed to strike the right balance and what technology is being deployed by leagues to enhance the accuracy of officials' decisions?

Over the past decade, in-game technology has helped transform modern sport. Rights-holders of all sizes and across multiple sports have invested in cutting-edge solutions to improve their competitions across a number of key areas. Software is readily available to inform in-game strategy, track player performance and enhance fan experiences in and out of the stadium.

However, as the use of these technologies grows, the need to strike the right balance between their usage and the raw experience of sporting action has come under the spotlight. This is particularly true for officiating technology designed to improve the accuracy of split-second decisions.

At the highest level of professional sport, the price paid by teams and athletes when refereeing and umpiring mistakes go against them meant it was inevitable that technology would be introduced. These innovations go hand-in-hand with increased dependency, with fans across rugby, cricket and most recently football growing frustrated by officials' excessive use of the systems, believing that they slow down the action and hinder the in-game experience.

In-game technology should be like the referees operating it: a supporting act to the main event. Helpful, but never the headline.

This has been far from true in football where the recent introduction of Video Assistant Referees to English cup competitions has attracted scathing reviews from critics. Although it hasn't deterred the system being introduced for this year's Fifa World Cup, this criticism has dominated the aftermath to several high-profile fixtures including Liverpool's FA Cup fourth-round loss to West Bromwich Albion.

VAR technology was relied upon three times in the first half alone, including a near four-minute delay between Liverpool's Mohamed Salah being fouled and referee



Video Check in action at the CEV Champions League Final Four

Craig Pawson awarding a penalty.

Sport is one of very few forms of entertainment which is truly consumed in real-time and the technology used in and around the game must support, not hinder, this fact.

### VideoCheck

One sport where rights-holders have managed to strike the right balance is volleyball. Acting with a fraction of the resources of their counterparts in other sports, volleyball leagues and federations across the world have invested in state-of-the-art technology that both ensures the accuracy of umpire decisions and enhances the live fan experience.

Enter VideoCheck, the leading solution in world volleyball for detecting fouls and line calls. Developed in partnership with the Italian Lega Pallavolo Serie A by Data Project, the global leader in volleyball technology and part of Genius Sports, VideoCheck is relied upon by leagues and federations all over the world.

Unlike similar systems in volleyball, tennis and cricket which are based on virtual renders or dependent on broadcast cameras,

VideoCheck operates in complete autonomy and for the sole purpose of reviewing decisions. Using slow-motion replays with up to 180 frames per second, rights-holders can provide their referees and officials with 14, 17 or 19 cameras positioned around the court, verifying everything from service line faults to net touches.

For fans, the system's ease of integration helps augment both the in-stadium and broadcasting experience. This makes it possible to integrate both video referrals and slow-motion replays into scoreboards, in-stadium screens and TV broadcast. Rights-holders can also use this unique engagement opportunity where everyone in and out of the stadium is fixated on the screens to create lucrative sponsorship opportunities.

Last year, VideoCheck was successfully used across the majority of international events and competitions, including the CEV Champions League Final Four.

"From the beginning, we were focused on creating a simple machine, which could be operated by a referee without proof informatics or video knowledge", said Fabrizio Rossini, vice-president of Lega Pallavolo Serie A and project manager of VideoCheck since its first prototype in 2012.

"It had to be affordable, easily transported in a wheeled flight-case, and with a simple broadcast interface to display the real output of the cameras both to TV spectators and live audiences through giant screens at the venues. With Data Project we succeeded in creating a perfect mix of those ideas. The final result is a masterpiece of technology for sport, I'm very proud of it."

Sports can often be unwilling to look beyond their own when implementing new ideas. However, when it comes to using technology, sports operating on smaller budgets are often the most innovative and in terms of in-game officiating, volleyball is leading the way. [O](#)

# People

THIS MONTH'S INDUSTRY MOVES

**Nicolas Buompane** will replace André Gueisbuhler as the secretary general of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). The appointment of Buompane, who has been deputy secretary general at the FIG since 2007, was approved unanimously by the governing body's executive committee after president Morinari Watanabe had proposed the promotion. He will start his new role on January 1, 2019. Gueisbuhler has served as the FIG's secretary general since 2004, having previously been deputy secretary general for 13 years.



**Olivier Gers** has resigned as chief executive of the International Association of Athletics Federations. Gers was appointed in October 2016 following a six-month search that attracted more than 200 candidates. He will continue in his role for three months while the IAAF seeks a successor. "The pre-existing commercial framework makes it difficult for me to apply my talents and fully leverage the assets of the IAAF in the way I would like," Gers said.

**Tim Hunt** has left his position as the head of marketing at golf's PGA European Tour to become the new group chief executive at Premier Team Promotions, a UK-based events company that is seeking to expand its esports portfolio. Hunt joined the European Tour nearly a decade ago and became the Tour's head of marketing in 2016.



The Rugby League International Federation has elected **John Grant** as its new chairman. Grant, who has served as the RLIF's deputy chairman, will succeed Nigel Wood. Wood will become RLIF chief executive in May, after stepping down as chief executive of England's Rugby Football League. Graeme Thompson, of the Rugby League European Federation, will replace Grant as RLIF deputy chairman.

The appointment of **Gaetano Micciché** as the interim president of Lega Serie A was approved by the 20 clubs that compete in the top division of Italian football, according to the Lega's extraordinary commissioner, Giovanni Malagò, who is also president of the Italian Olympic Committee (Coni). Micciché, the chairman of financial services group Banca IMI, will serve on a temporary basis, with Coni in the process of overhauling the administration of the sport in the country.

**Arkady Dvorkovich** has been appointed as the new chairman of Russia's local organising committee for the 2018 Fifa World Cup after fellow Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko stepped down from the role in order to fight sanctions imposed on him by the International Olympic Committee for his alleged involvement in a doping scandal. Russia 2018 chief executive Alexei Sorokin had reportedly assumed the position on an interim basis in December, after Mutko's resignation.



German media group ProSiebenSat.1 has appointed **Max Conze** as its new chief executive. Conze will take up his new post on June 1, succeeding long-serving Thomas Ebeling. Conze has been chairman of the executive board at UK tech company Dyson since 2011. Prior to that, Conze spent 17 years at US consumer goods provider Procter & Gamble in various management and marketing positions in Germany, the US, China, and Switzerland.



The Event Rider Masters equestrian series has appointed **Jim O'Toole** as its new chief executive. O'Toole previously served as chief executive of English Premiership rugby union club Worcester Warriors. He was also a founding director of Premiere Consulting, which later became part of WPP Group, and the chief executive of Powerboat P1. O'Toole also previously worked at London Irish Rugby Club and served as the chief executive of the World

Match Racing Tour sailing series.

English Premiership rugby union club Northampton Saints has hired **Lee Gibbons** as its new commercial director. Gibbons joins the club from sportswear company Adidas, where he had served for nine years, most recently as senior director of sports marketing. He had previously held senior commercial positions at the IMG agency. The club has also recruited Will Peasgood as its new head of retail. Peasgood previously worked at English Premier League football club West Bromwich Albion.

## MOVE OF THE MONTH



**Simon Cory-Wright**  
Head of consulting,  
SportBusiness Group

SportBusiness Group, the publisher of *SportBusiness International*, has appointed Simon Cory-Wright as its new head of consulting.

Cory-Wright joins SportBusiness, which provides data and analysis to the sports industry, from Deloitte Middle East, where he led the company's Sport and Event Management practice, providing a broad range of management consulting services to the region's sports sector. His previous roles included being Middle East director for TSE Consulting, as well as sponsorship and public relations for Qatar's successful 2022 Fifa World Cup bid, and sponsorship, brand and marketing at golf's PGA European Tour.

"I am delighted that Simon will be joining SportBusiness Group to head up our consulting division," said chief executive Ben Speight. "Our consulting division has been operating for almost a decade, and Simon's arrival enables us to strengthen our consulting capabilities significantly, helping decision-makers within the sports business industry overcome commercial and strategic challenges in an increasingly competitive landscape.

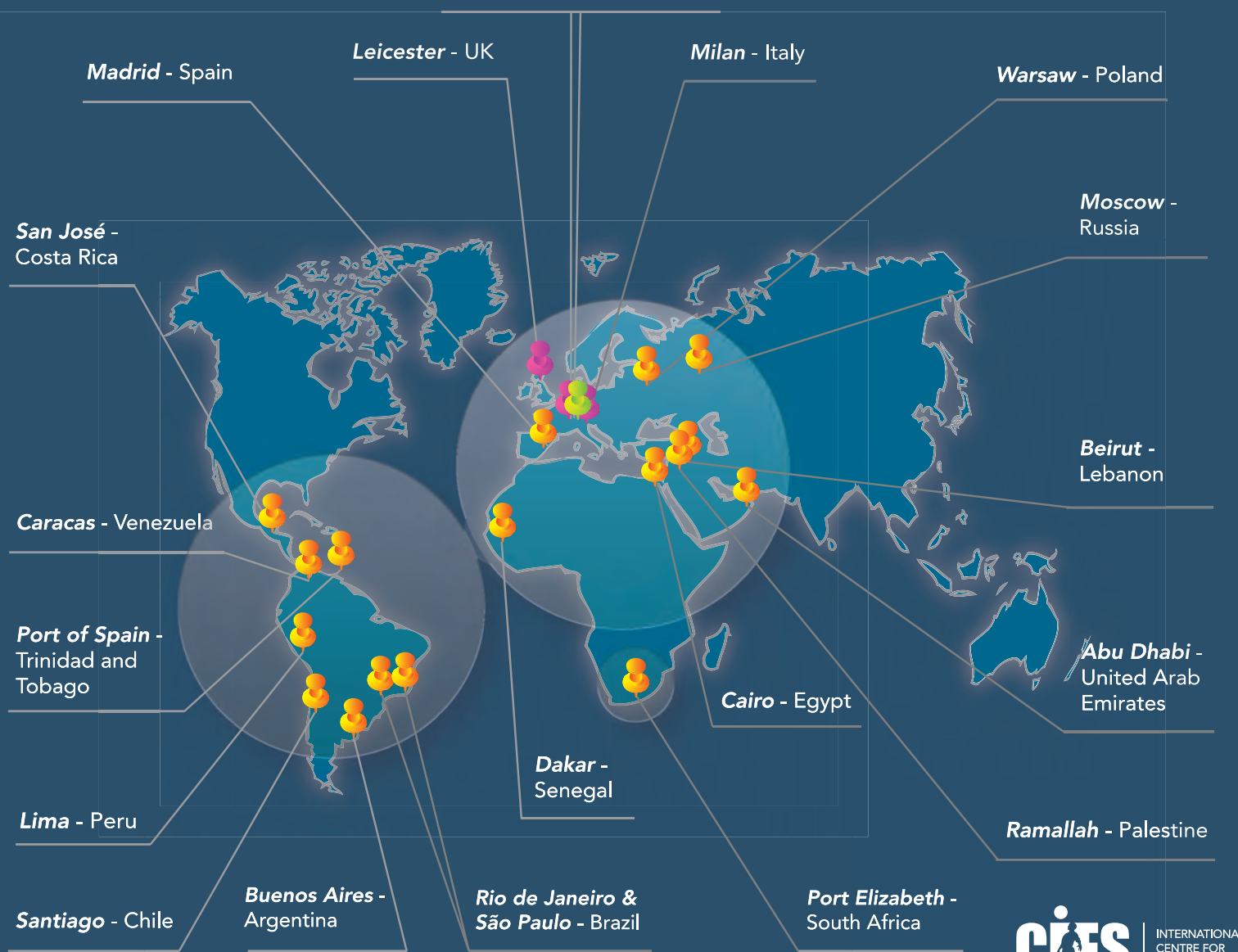
"Simon is well-respected in the industry and has vast experience in delivering successful commercial and operational projects for prestigious clients."

Cory-Wright added: "This is a fantastic opportunity to join an ambitious organisation; one that is respected as a leader in the industry. Because of SportBusiness Group's unique access to sports data and analysis, I see great potential to support new and existing clients to grow their businesses in the world of sport."


Cory-Wright will be based at SportBusiness Group's headquarters in London. His appointment follows the February announcement that SportBusiness Group is to expand into the Americas with the establishment of an office in Miami, Florida. [O](#)



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## Hannah Burns, Head of the Promotion – Olympic Games and Olympic Candidatures at IOC, and FIFA Master Alumna

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Hannah Burns, Head of Promotion of Olympic Games and Olympic Candidatures at the International Olympic Committee (IOC) graduated from the FIFA Master in July 2006.

Before entering the professional sports world, Hannah worked in politics and government. "Right after university, I had the opportunity to work for Jean Chrétien, who was the Prime Minister of Canada. I worked in policy development and it was an incredible and dynamic experience," she recalls.

She later went on to work for the Minister Responsible for National Revenue, before deciding to make a change in her career. "I'd love to be able to tell you that she had an "ah-ha" moment, but there was no such thing. I always loved and played sports and, I guess, quite frankly, the idea just seemed perfect. A good challenge. Simple as that", she explains. I knew someone who was just completing the FIFA Masters, and believed that the Programme, combined with the opportunity of living abroad, would provide the knowledge and experience that I needed to break into the industry".

After graduation, Hannah returned home to work for Hockey Canada in marketing and events. "That was an absolute dream come true and I enjoyed every single minute of it", she says. "There was an incredible buzz to the job. Nothing is more energizing than an arena full of passionate, and boisterous cheering sports fans".

When the opportunity of an internship with the IOC Sports Department presented itself, Hannah headed back to Europe. She packed up two hockey bags and moved to Lausanne. During her ten years at the IOC, Hannah held several positions within the Sports Department and was responsible for matters relating to several IOC Commissions, namely Athletes, Entourage, Sport for all Commission and Olympic Programme. Since joining the Olympic Games Department, in 2014, Hannah has focused on promotion of the candidature process and the Olympic Games, and has been instrumental in the development of the new candidature processes for 2024 and 2026. Here is more of the interview with Hannah Burns:

**What is the thing that you love about your job?**

It is about two things for me. The people and the diversity of my job. Those that I work with at the IOC and within the Olympic Movement, are passionate, dedicated, have a vision for continuous positive change and evolution and they are fun, which is so important. Since joining the IOC I've held various roles and each of them has covered a diverse number of topics and projects. I've learned that not only do I enjoy this, but I thrive most in it. This diversity and the continuous learning is why ten years later, I still love what I do!



**How important was the FIFA Master for your career?**

The Programme gave me knowledge, insight and contacts in an industry I knew very little about. Combined with my previous work experience and passion for sports, helped me land my first gig at Hockey Canada.

**Are you still in touch with classmates or other alumni? How important is that network for you?**

I am in touch with alumni daily, either personally or professionally. And, it was actually a fellow alumnus, Pierre Ducrey, that hired me to work at the IOC as an intern in 2008. So, I guess it is safe to say that the network has been very important in my career.

**Sport has traditionally been a "men's world". How do you see the role of women in sport administration?**

As a senior manager within the IOC, I have experienced first-hand that things are changing, yet sport needs to do a better job at putting women in positions of leadership. The reality is that men are still dominate senior leadership positions. Women within the sports industry, and all industries for that matter, need to continue to support, encourage and celebrate women. The Chief Marketing Officer of the NHL, Heidi Browning, has spoken about the fact that men seem to fear less about what they say, how they act, what they think. Women, including myself, need to have a similar attitude and be encouraged to do so.

CIES - Centre International d'Etude du Sport, avenue DuPeyrou 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland - Phone +41 (0) 32 718 39 00 - Email [fifamaster.admin@cies.ch](mailto:fifamaster.admin@cies.ch)

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Philadelphia 76ers' head of business operations Chris Heck sat down with HBSE chief executive Scott O'Neil and president Hugh Weber to talk with *SportBusiness International*

# “We wake up every day ‘palms up’ as opposed to closed”

CHRIS HECK, SCOTT O’NEIL & HUGH WEBER, HARRIS BLITZER SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT

- ▶ HBSE group includes Philadelphia 76ers and the New Jersey Devils
- ▶ Acquisition strategy is helping to create new sponsorship opportunities
- ▶ International roster of players is building affinity in new markets

BY BEN CRONIN

It’s the morning after the NBA London Game and Scott O’Neil is shaking off jet lag and the Philadelphia 76ers’ loss to the Boston Celtics the night before. “They’re a good team”, he says, reflecting on the Celtic’s rousing comeback from a 22-point deficit to win the game at the O2 Arena.

The response to the defeat is characteristically upbeat from the chief executive of the Sixers’ parent company Harris Blitzer Sport and Entertainment, and it doesn’t take long for the mood to lighten as his colleagues arrive at the breakfast table.

“The great Hugh Weber has just joined us,” says O’Neil, goading HBSE’s new president as he strides over. Weber jokingly takes O’Neil to task for not standing up on his arrival before Chris Heck, the Sixers’ president of business operations, joins the group.

Looking at the bare statistics there’s no reason why the preceding evening’s loss ought to have dampened their spirits unduly. Last year, the 76ers ranked first in the NBA for just about every business growth metric that counts, despite an underwhelming 28-54 win/loss record.

The relaxed bonhomie and the fact that the three executives are conducting the interview together can also be attributed to the formation of Harris Blitzer Sport and Entertainment in September last year.

Where previously O’Neil and Heck had overseen operations at the Sixers and Weber had presided over the fortunes of NHL team the New Jersey Devils, the distant cousins

started to work more closely with each other when their common owners, Josh Harris and David Blitzer, brought their sports assets together under the HBSE holding company. O’Neil stepped up to be the chief executive of the new group while Weber slipped into the role of president.

The purpose of the closer alignment is to focus resources more effectively, seek out joint sponsorship opportunities and grow the different HBSE brands internationally. Other properties in the portfolio include the Devil’s Prudential Center arena in New Jersey, the Delaware 87ers, the Binghamton Devils and esports franchise Team Dignitas. Although Harris and Blitzer also own a stake in English Premier League club Crystal Palace, it doesn’t fall under the HBSE umbrella.

Heck says the Sixers’ debut in the London game has provided the management team with the perfect opportunity to meet up with some members of the wider family.

“I think London being our first step on the international stage was appropriate because of David Blitzer and his history here,” he says, referencing the fact Blitzer lived in London for ten years while he helped establish the the Blackstone investment group in Europe. “That’s not to mention our cousins down the road at Crystal Palace,” he adds.

O’Neil reveals that the HBSE team met with Crystal Palace executives the day before to discuss joint opportunities and share ideas before travelling to the NBA game. It’s consistent with the famous culture he embedded at the Sixers to question established thinking and to be open minded

about new ways of doing business.

“In our DNA we say we wake up every day ‘palms up’ as opposed to closed,” he says. “We wake up asking ‘what if?’, looking to learn, looking to listen and looking to see what best practices are out there that we may be able to ‘borrow’.”

## International roster

But he thinks the process of turning the 76ers into a truly international brand started with decisions made closer to home: the fact that the team has a more polyglot roster than at any point in their history is helping to attract new fans and partners.

“Internationally, it seems affinity is built through stars on the court, or at least that’s the tip of the spear where it starts,” he says. “It’s not just Ben Simmons from Australia. Joel Embiid is from Cameroon. Furkan Korkmaz is from Turkey, Dario Šarić is from Croatia. Timothé Luwawu-Cabarrot is from France and so you have five players on this roster with an international flavour, which certainly gives us the opportunity as we look to drive content in multiple languages to expand to other markets.”

Even though it is the Australian Simmons’ first season in the team, he ranks in the NBA’s top 10 for jersey sales and can also take some credit for the team’s first sponsorship deal with an Australian firm: pie maker Four’n Twenty. The brand wanted an entry into the US market and saw the Sixers, which also boasts ‘Bos-tralian’ Brett Brown as it coach, as the perfect vehicle to do so.

The lengths the team is going to reach

**CHRIS HECK, SCOTT O'NEIL & HUGH WEBER** *continued...*

Australian fans, and help its new partner to activate, can be seen in the fact that it will host its first ever Australian Heritage Night on January 24 in Philadelphia. And now that the brand is in the HBSE fold, O'Neil explains that the new holding company will introduce the sponsor to the other teams in the portfolio and the markets they reach.

"This could truly be an example, where you have an Australian superstar who leads our incredible sales team to explore opportunities in Australia and find a match," he says. "And they say let's expand this to Newark, New Jersey and the Prudential Centre and the Devils, let's expand this to Crystal Palace in South London, let's take a look at esports and the impact there. That's why we pull these together."

**Local versus global**

Weber describes the creation of HBSE as a 'reset' which allowed the sales, finance and marketing teams of each group member to be more closely aligned, but he says the merging of resources will not be visible from the outside.

"We see ourselves as HBSE people but to our fans it has to feel hyper-local," he says. "They don't see an international conglomerate of people going out and doing all that stuff."

The team with which Weber is most synonymous, the New Jersey Devils, faced their own local-versus-global dilemma last year when they weighed up the idea of scheduling more of their games in the afternoon to allow audiences in Switzerland to watch their new star-pick Swiss player Nico Hischier. The way the team handled the decision appears to have been vindicated by an increase in local TV ratings of 40 per cent – and by the reaction of local fans.

"Our team is really targeted towards families and so the more afternoon games we have, it's a positive thing. So, when the opportunity came along to actually tell them the reason we were doing it was because there's a whole bunch of people in Europe that think that our team is interesting now, that actually made them feel a little bit more like they had affirmation from the outside, that their team was actually relevant.

"I'd say the thing that is consistent about our brands is everybody's got a little chip on their shoulder. New Jersey Devils fans? They've got a chip on their shoulder. Philadelphia 76ers fans? We've got a chip on our shoulder."

O'Neil adds Crystal Palace and Team



Hugh Weber at a New Jersey Devils game (Getty Images)

Dignitas to this description and suggests that this is exactly the way he likes it.

"You have to work twice as hard, be three times as smart to get half the attention and half the progress, and we're signing up for it. That's kind of the way we are and the way we work. I mean, I have a chip on my shoulder."

**Social issues**

He thinks it will be the edgier, unpolished teams and leagues that dominate sport in the future because they will resonate more with Millennial audiences. While it might be stretching to see the NBA as a challenger brand, he thinks the league's leadership on social issues plays well with the demographic.

"This is a league that took on issues in race relations," he says. "This is a league that took on the drug issues. It's a league that took on issues in education. It's a league that took on stereotypes about those with Aids..

"We continue to encourage our players to take real positions on issues that absolutely connect 100 per cent with Millennials, who will be the dominant category in the world for years to come."

The contrast with the NFL and the way that it has dealt with different political issues in the past year, particularly the take-a-knee protests, feels deliberate. So, does O'Neil feel that the NBA is now in a position to knock American football off its perch?

"I think this is the NBA's game to win. First off – I'm going to reference China because I have the facts – the Chinese government

is building 100,000 courts a year. It's cheap to play, it's accessible, anybody with a smart phone can not only follow the game and get to know their stars, but also the highlights are tailor-made for the way we consume media now. So while the NFL has a stronghold in the States, the NBA is the sport on the world stage."

You won't hear a bad word for Adam Silver from any of the trio around the table. O'Neil credits the NBA commissioner for his deal making capabilities, and for his 'incredible relationship' with the players that has created the 'labour peace' necessary to allow the teams to travel to places like London. Heck prefers to see Silver as a sort of Pied Piper figure, leading the teams into new markets.

"We're happy to have the fate of the league in his hands. He has an outlook on the sport like no other commissioner in the world and if Adam thinks there is an appropriate route on the international landscape, then we're buying."

While the UK might not embrace the NBA quite as wholeheartedly as China, O'Neil thinks the London game provides a platform to reach other markets.

"Does this market get everybody screaming down the street? No. Is it front page news as it is in other markets? No. But this is the centre of industry and finance and commerce for much of the world," he says.

"330 million people watched that game and this is an English-speaking country which I



*“We’re happy to have the fate of the league in his hands. He has an outlook on the sport like no other commissioner in the world and if Adam thinks there is an appropriate route on the international landscape, then we’re buying.”*

**SCOTT O’NEIL**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HARRIS BLITZER SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT

think helps in terms of ease and access. It’s a global hub of commerce, [which is] very helpful. The right time zone in an incredibly brilliant facility – the O2 in London – and I think it provides more than a stepping stone.”

### Esports

Aside from the relationship with Crystal Palace, the Philadelphia 76ers have another stepping stone into the UK market in the shape of Team Dignitas, the UK-based esports team that it acquired in 2016. By buying the team, the Sixers became the first US professional sports team to purchase an esports property.

In keeping with the HBSE ‘palms-open’ philosophy, the team has helped the Sixers learn about the gaming market while the NBA has helped professionalise business operations at the esports franchise and give it some mainstream legitimacy and attention.

“We’ve capitalised on the exposure that the NBA lends itself to with courtside signage, being exposed to television, not to mention the audience,” says Heck. “We even put [the Team Dignitas logo] on the jersey of our minor league team for the 76ers. We’ve had some fun with that – a lot of cross-promotion on social media.

“Every property has its own merits and they help the other properties and that’s the goal of the big picture. How do we find continuity without being forced?”

In return, Team Dignitas has led the Sixers to sponsors like Buffalo Wild Wings and gaming headset manufacturer HyperX.

### NBA 2K League

The acquisition ought to prove useful now that the NBA is also moving into esports with the creation of the NBA 2K League.

The Sixers are one of seventeen teams from the NBA to pay an estimated \$750,000 to play in the league. The best NBA 2K players from around the world will be scouted by these teams and represent them in the competition.

Adam Silver thinks the league will provide the NBA with an opportunity to connect with the young and growing esports community and that there is significant appetite for the



Adam Silver and the 76ers’ Ben Simmons (Mike Stobe/Getty Images)

game in China, where 34 million registered users play a free version.

More immediately, Heck says the league has furnished his sales team with additional sponsorship inventory that they can sell to the Sixers’ existing partners.

“We’ve exceeded our expectations before we’ve even launched the team, on adding our partners,” he says. “And what we see is the continuity with our NBA 2K team is more aligned with the 76ers team and brand than it is with your typical esports world.”

For this reason, O’Neil likens the new league to a ‘starter kit’ for Team Dignitas sponsors that want to move into more mainstream sports sponsorship.

“You can dip your toe in the water with an sport, and with the NBA, the global power and weight of the NBA behind it. So, for us it’s a wonderful stepping stone for a much larger conversation.”

### Data and content

O’Neil says the Sixers will draw on its celebrity fanbase and social media influencers to grow the new league. Once again, engaging content will be the mechanism to break new markets.

“You’ll see a pretty dramatic increase in investment in US sports clubs in terms of content. We have eight content people here for this game. That’s a lot,” he says. “What we spend money on is data and content, so

building out a data warehouse, understanding the habits, interests, inclinations, buying patterns, of people who touch this brand and then trying to match our content to fit their needs – across different psychographics and demographics and through all distribution channels.”

On this point, Heck says the team’s secondary and primary ticketing relationship with StubHub has proved invaluable in building a clear understanding of its fanbase.

“Our StubHub relationship is unparalleled with data share. So much so, the data that we were exposed to by StubHub this past year attributed to 40 per cent of our new season ticket members, so the conversion rate, that’s a staggering number.”


As a result, the team has now entered into an agreement with the ticketing company to not only share the data for single game buyers but to offer these purchasers a chance to be on a waiting list for season tickets. Heck explains that the list now includes the names of over 7,000 people.

It’s the sort of innovation that puts the Sixers out on their own, even by the lofty standards of the NBA. So what do the trio think of the commercial acumen of their equivalents in the English Premier League?

“They’re commercial giants. I think we have so much to learn,” says O’Neil. “It is the international expansion through content and events. It is incredible to see the engines they’ve built. If you look at Tom Glick who’s at Manchester City, that is a monster and a machine – they’re doing over \$300m of sponsorship per year.”

Weber says he most admires the City’s Group’s global relevance. “The acquisitions are part of that globally relevant strategy, but all of it is wholly interconnected.”

It sounds uncannily similar to the HBSE blueprint outlined by the trio. The question is whether this means more international acquisitions are planned.

“We have a few things that will be announced in the next few months that I’m very excited about,” says O’Neil without being drawn any further. “We’re spending quite a bit of time thinking about who we want to become when we grow up.” 



## SPORTRADAR | TAKING AUDIOVISUAL FORWARD

With a host of partners in the international sporting community, Sportradar's data and integrity services are hardly a secret. However, the company's burgeoning audiovisual services, including an innovative OTT offering, are now also grabbing the attention of federations and leagues worldwide

It may come as a surprise to some, but Sportradar has actually offered audiovisual services for more than a decade.

The growth of in-play betting over recent years has meant that audiovisual content – once considered as merely nice-to-have – is now a must-have for bookmakers whilst also providing a significant commercial opportunity for sports.

“More and more bettors want and expect to be able to see the contests and matches that they are betting on, no matter the sport, country, league or time,” says Lutz Tigges, Sportradar's senior director of media rights.

“That means more and more sports have the opportunity to generate revenue when they sell their betting audiovisual rights to reputable and well-established companies in this space.

“We can distribute that content to more than 500 licensed operators worldwide, taking a sport further afield than might have previously been possible.”

### Sportsman

Having already established a proven track record in audiovisual services, Sportradar acquired Sportsman, one of the industry's leading sports-rights agencies, in a game-changing strategic move in 2016.

“Sportradar had already established a strong partnership with the International Tennis Federation back in 2012, but wanted to diversify and build its portfolio,” Tigges says. “Sportsman was a pioneer in delivering audiovisual content to betting companies and had in fact created this media-rights category.

“Now, following the acquisition of Sportsman, we offer over 30,000 live matches from tens of sports every year and have firmly established Sportradar as the go-to and trusted partner for any sport or competition, large or small, that is looking to take their audiovisual content into this vibrant space.”

Over the past 10 years, Sportradar has collaborated with a number of major partners, such as the German Bundesliga

and Spanish LaLiga in international markets, while long-term partnerships with the likes of the European Volleyball Federation (CEV) and the World Rally Championship underline the opportunities of joint management, development and syndication.

### OTT

Whereas the focus was once solely on delivering sports content to licensed betting operators, Sportradar has in recent years built on these solid foundations and expanded its horizons.

The most significant development in this regard has been the development of an innovative and adaptable OTT platform, which caters for a variety of requirements.

“Following the Sportsman acquisition, we poured our significant pedigree, experience and infrastructure into creating a new Sportradar OTT offering,” says Rainer Geier, the managing director of Sportradar's digital platforms and services.

“This was officially rolled out last summer and its unique proposition was that while we could offer the standard version of the platform, we had developed a suite of highly customisable, tailor-made solutions that could be adapted to fit the priorities, concerns, resources and viewers of a whole range of sports, competitions, clubs and even broadcasters, most of which had been effectively excluded by the options that were available until then.”

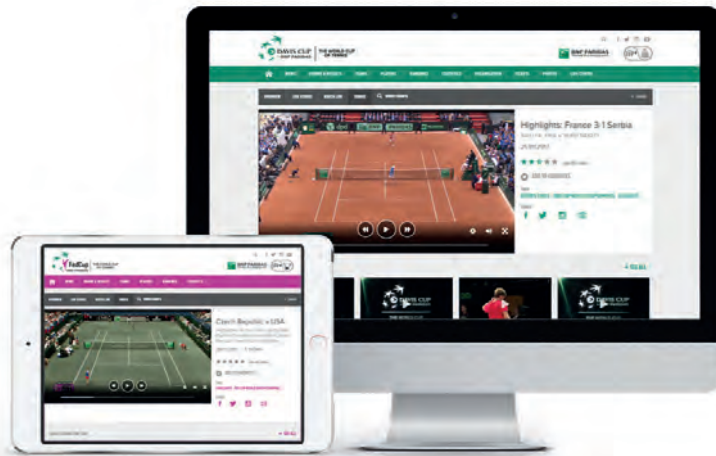
### Revenue-share model

For international federations, one of the most attractive aspects of the OTT platform is that it can be offered on a no-cost and revenue-share basis.

According to Geier, this model resulted from research and conversations with IFs and leagues, which recognised the opportunity of owning their own OTT offering, but had budgetary concerns.

Less than a year after launching, the OTT platform has been launched for 20



international rights-holders – including the European Handball Federation, European Hockey Federation and the International Tennis Federation’s Davis Cup and Fed Cup – with five more in the pipeline.

“The pick-up for our revenue-share model has been extraordinary, but we are not fixated on pushing just this model,” Geier says. “We often work with hybrid models and combined offers.”

“With almost 20 years of streaming experience from the Sportsman team and the outstanding data expertise of Sportradar, rights-holders can provide a data-driven OTT platform that can deliver a peerless fan experience to a new generation of followers, while also generating elusive ‘digital’ revenues.

“That is before a partner looks to bolt on any of the other Sportradar portfolio services, such as support with identifying sponsorship and advertising partners, as well as our market-leading integrity services. That kind of holistic offer just cannot be matched.”

### One-stop shop

Sportradar adopts a broad outlook when it comes to supporting its partners, as Tigges explains.

“We are not only their best partner for data, betting and integrity services, but also in the non-betting area and commercialising media content globally,” he says. “We create multiple synergies with our digital and OTT businesses that are very attractive to our partners as they enhance the offering towards fans.

“This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Sportradar has expertise in betting audiovisual services, but also media-rights distribution and delivering the best OTT solution for any sport. That breadth of expertise, all under one roof, means we can meet the objectives of each sport or league across all audiovisual elements. That is a powerful proposition.

“If you add in the data pedigree we have, which is already well known across the industry, we can factor in how a data partnership, distribution and visualisations can enrich the content across all those elements. Putting together that unique puzzle for each client is what is so exciting and what Sportradar can uniquely offer rights-owners.”

### Data integration

The integration of Sportradar’s data into audiovisual services is a prime example of what sports fans are increasingly engaging with, according to Tigges.

“Fans want to watch live coverage, but they now want data visualisations to help them gain insight into the action,” he says. “They also welcome predictions and even live betting opportunities that help them to deepen their emotional investment in the

contest. They also want to chat and upload to social media to keep conversations going. So, rights-holders that can deliver that kind of multi-engagement functionality on one screen are going to be delivering what fans want and will soon expect.

“The aggregation of Sportradar’s capabilities in delivering all of those elements credibly and reliably means that we are already developing these kinds of experiences.”

As part of this one-stop-shop offering, OTT is just one part of the approach, Geier explains.

“Sportradar tries to help our partners establish a content strategy that integrates and leverages the strengths of the whole spectrum of distribution channels and we don’t push for OTT platform exclusivity,” he adds.

“In order to really explore what monetisation opportunities are still out there, Sportradar recently established a digital advertising monetisation unit, which has connections with some of the leading media agencies and networks. Among its objectives, that unit will specialise in brokering official partnerships for our OTT partners.”

Geier predicts that the dovetailing of video and data will be increasingly common in an exciting future.

“Users will be able to enjoy their own personalised highlights based on data and machine learning, and sponsors will be able to activate when the connection and relevance between the content or action and the advertising is at its strongest,” he says. “These capabilities are in our DNA already – driving fan engagement and insight, as well revenues.”



## Q&A | BEN MOREL, NBA MANAGING DIRECTOR, EMEA

Ben Morel has been the NBA's senior vice-president and managing director (EMEA) for six years, overseeing the growth of the London Game from experimental novelty to staple of the NBA calendar. Here, he tells *SportBusiness International* about the development of the league's overseas strategy and how it intends to grow its brand internationally

BY ADAM NELSON

### **How has the NBA London Game grown in the eight years that you've hosted a regular-season fixture in the O2?**

This year was the 25th anniversary of our first pre-season game in London, back in 1993, and it's growing from strength to strength. There's great appetite from our fans to come to the game, and the interest is not only in London, it's across the UK and Europe. The demand across Europe has grown dramatically, so we say internally that this is our European All-Star game, where the whole of Europe – whether it's our fans or our business partners – wants to attend. It's becoming a classic in the sport calendar.

### **How are responsibilities divided in the NBA's international operations? Does the London office have much autonomy from NBA HQ in New York?**

We are a truly global business, so we operate like one. My team has the responsibility to drive the P&L for all our business lines across the EMEA region, but obviously we do that in full partnership and collaboration with our global headquarters to make sure that we leverage global relationships and that we are able to sell the rights we are entitled to sell. We've got a lot of staff based internationally, in 13 offices around the world, and it has always been a clear strategy of the NBA to have relevant on-the-ground employees in our key markets.

We have contact with other overseas offices in the same way; discussing similar opportunities that we might have, similar challenges, similar solutions, and obviously linking on big discussions because a lot of our partners and prospects are interested in the global appeal of the NBA and that requires a lot of coordination. There's constant discussion not only with New York but with the other regional offices.

We don't look at markets with a conquest mentality. The approach will vary greatly from one market to another. The key way will be the strength of the sport market as well

as the popularity of basketball itself in that market, so we would look at those two things and adjust our strategy accordingly. That's a very binary description and it's obviously a lot more complex than that, but how much does the sport exist, or not exist? How much do we need to explain the sport? There are very few markets where you need to do that, but the popularity of the game is important. Then the strength of the sport market and the appetite of sponsors and broadcasters is the other issue.

*“It's so simple to play, you need a hoop and you need a ball and in every gym you will have it. The NBA might be a US sports league but we're a US league of a global sport”*

### **Outside of the US, what are the biggest territories for the NBA, and where does the UK and Europe rank within that?**

China and Europe are among the key regions. The UK is a primary market for us in terms of our European business. It's the number one market for our League Pass business; we've got 1.4 million followers of our UK Facebook page; it's one of the leading markets we have in terms of merchandising, especially in e-commerce where it's the second market. So it's a market that resonates, and obviously it's a very big sport market so there's a lot of opportunity for us.

### **How important is it for you to hold games overseas to gain a foothold in new territories?**

Bringing the game to the market is very important. It's an opportunity for our fans to experience an NBA live experience, and the regular season game is the most authentic experience you can get. It's also very important for our partners – whether

local or global – to have a platform to activate strongly around the NBA at a key moment in the year. The third objective is to give us an opportunity to showcase to all our partners what the NBA is. They don't have that many opportunities to experience the NBA so to do that is pretty important.

A game is nice, but it's also just one part of a 360-degree strategy to grow the popularity of the sport. Beyond the London Game for example, it's about bringing our game to a more available time slot – a lot of our games in the US are in the middle of the night in Europe, so we've got big initiatives like NBA Sundays where every Sunday of the season there will be a game at 20:30 local UK time, to create a regular appointment with our fans. Our ratings on NBA Sundays have grown 25 per cent year-on-year across Europe, and they grew 90 per cent in the UK. The strategy is working.

### **What other efforts are you putting into growing the NBA brand in the UK and Europe?**

We also work very closely with the local governing bodies across Europe and here in the UK with our junior NBA programmes, and that really has the objective of putting a basketball in the hands of as many kids as possible to make sure that we grow the participation in basketball.

The overseas games are essential, but they are one of the many pillars that hold up our strategy. What is difficult is to attribute what part of the effort is boosting that popularity or not, but we know that by going at it with a 360-degree approach, we'll grow the participation, the popularity of the game and of our brand.

Participation is definitely up. It's so simple to play, you need a hoop and you need a ball and in every gym you will have it. The NBA might be a US sports league but we're a US league of a global sport and that helps dramatically. We're not in a position where we have to explain the sport. We have to grow its popularity and participation levels. ○





## VAULTING | DANCING ON HORSEBACK

The equestrian discipline of vaulting sees athletes performing gymnastic dance routines on the back of a cantering horse. For both fans and competitors, it's an intriguing combination of athleticism and artistic flair





**H**andstands, scissor kicks, somersaults, back-flips... gymnastic movements like these are tricky enough when performed on an exercise mat. Imagine the extra physical challenge, then, if you have to execute them on the back of a cantering horse.

This is the equestrian sport known as vaulting. A mixture of dance and gymnastics, it sees highly skilled athletes performing specially choreographed moves on the back of a horse while it canters around an arena.

Vaulters compete as individuals, or as pairs (known as pas de deux), or as squads of six (with three on the horse at a time). Meanwhile another team member (known as the lunger) guides the horse on a long rein from the centre of the arena.

Like gymnasts, the athletes wear tight-fitting and colourful clothing to allow them ease of movement as they carry out their stunts, and to give their performances a certain artistic flair. Like figure skating, there is musical accompaniment to the routine, as well as an artistic theme. At last year's FEI Vaulting World Cup™ final, in Dortmund, for example, the winning pair in the pas de deux competition took the French novel *Le Petit Prince* as their inspiration, while their German rivals opted for a Swan Lake theme. In the singles event the themes included Sherlock Holmes, zombies and wolves.

Top vaulters come from all walks of life. Former world number one Kristina Boe, for example, is a doctor, while Lorenzo Lupacchini, one half of the winning team in last year's pas de deux at the FEI Vaulting World Cup™, is studying to be a dentist, and Jannik Heiland, currently sixth in the FEI world rankings, is an aviation engineer. German vaulters Regina Burgmayr and Erik Oese work in project management and teaching, respectively. Since vaulting is ideally suited to smaller athletes, many vaulters are children, some as young as six years old.

#### For everyone

Bettina de Rham is vaulting director at equestrian sport's governing body, the International Equestrian Federation, or FEI. "It's a sport of the people," she says. "Even the top athletes have day jobs. The demographic is therefore very wide."



*“The performances are inspiring, emotional, full of drama, comedy and vitality.”*

**BETTINA DE RHAM**  
VAULTING DIRECTOR, FEI

De Rham points out how several vaulters train with Canadian theatrical troupe Cirque du Soleil. All of them require amazing fitness and skill to succeed in this equestrian discipline.

“The top athletes are constantly pushing the boundaries of the sport, performing highly sophisticated gymnastic exercises,” she says. “They need massive strength, flexibility and artistic flair. The key to success is a lot of hard work and dedication along with artistic talent and gymnastic ability.”

She stresses how vaulting is a great foundation for all equestrian disciplines. “In many countries around the world, young

people start equestrian sport by doing basic vaulting training, to learn balance, how to be in harmony with a horse, and how to understand how a horse moves.”

But there's an artistic side to vaulting, too. “The performances are inspiring, emotional, full of drama, comedy and vitality,” De Rham adds. She explains how recent vaulting competitions included routines inspired by the Hollywood films *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Great Gatsby*, as well as pop star Michael Jackson's song Blue Gangsta.

#### History

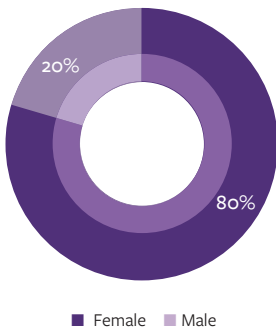
There's an incredibly rich heritage to vaulting. Historians trace its origins back over 2,000 years to ancient Crete where performers used to dance on the back of bulls. During the early years of the Roman Republic, acrobatics on horseback were often practised as a sport.

In the Middle Ages, vaulting was considered an important part of education for knights and nobles. In later centuries it was used for training cavalry since the skills involved enabled mounted soldiers to evade projectiles and retrieve fallen comrades.



### DEMOGRAPHICS OF VAULTING FANS

Of the 323 million equestrian sport fans worldwide, 17% follow vaulting. They are 80% female, 20% male.



Top vaulting nations by spectators:

**27%**  
Germany

**17%**  
USA

**13%**  
UK

**7%**  
France

**5%**  
Switzerland

At the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, the sport made a fleeting appearance under the banner of artistic riding. However, it wasn't until after the Second World War that it became an established sport.

Modern vaulting was developed in post-war Germany both to introduce children to equestrian sports and as a form of exercise to improve general horse-riding. By the 1960s it had spread to neighbouring countries across Europe and to the United States.

Finally, in 1983, vaulting became an FEI discipline, governed by the International Equestrian Federation. Three years later the first FEI World Championships took place in the Swiss town of Bulle. The sport also featured as a demonstration sport at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

#### Vaulting today

Nowadays you'll find over 120 FEI vaulting competitions staged all over the world. According to a 2016 report, there are just under 1,900 athletes and around 600 horses involved, making this the fastest-growing of all the FEI disciplines. Five per cent of the world's 37 million active riders participate in vaulting.

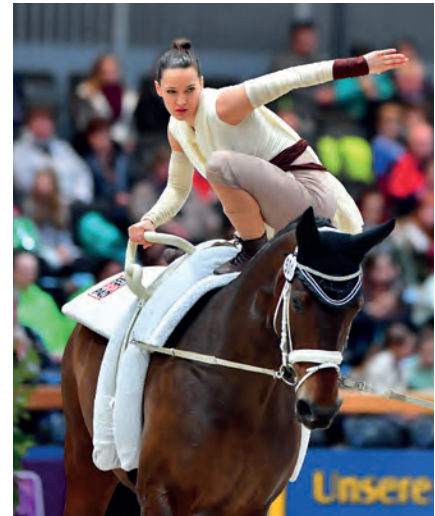
The most prestigious competition is the FEI Vaulting World Cup™ series, comprising the best vaulting events on the planet. The most recent season, which finished in late March this year, featured six qualifying rounds in Madrid, Paris, Salzburg, Mechelen, Leipzig and Offenburg, and culminated in a final in Dortmund.

Other major FEI vaulting events take place at the FEI World Equestrian Games™, the FEI World Championships, and the FEI Vaulting European Championships.

The FEI estimates there are 323 million fans of equestrian sport worldwide, with 17 per cent of them taking an interest in vaulting. The biggest audiences are in Germany, which has a 27-per-cent share of the market, followed by USA (17 per cent), UK (13 per cent), France (seven per cent) and Switzerland (five per cent).

According to FEI research, 80 per cent of vaulting fans are female, 20 per cent male; 36 per cent occupy the 18 to 24-year-old age bracket, and 24 per cent are in the 25 to 34-year-old age bracket, making this a very popular sport with young spectators.

Further research shows that vaulting fans



are "creative and business-minded", attend art exhibitions, and are involved in their local communities and in conservation projects.

The FEI has plans to boost interest in vaulting by targeting more male fans, especially in the 25 to 34-year-old age bracket. Latin America is seen as a great potential fanbase, especially Mexico and Brazil.

De Rham emphasises the growing popularity of this discipline as a family sport. "For children, young adults and their parents, this is a really engaging activity," she says. "It requires fitness, time, dedication and artistic flair."

But ultimately, she explains, vaulting is all about the spectacle. "Competitions are awe-inspiring, really amazing to watch," she adds. "For the crowds, it's interactive. There is energy and vitality, there is loud music. This is full-on entertainment as well as sport." ○

*"For children, young adults and their parents, this is a really engaging activity. It requires fitness, time, dedication and artistic flair."*

**BETTINA DE RHAM**  
VAULTING DIRECTOR, FEI





# Esports

## BOSTON E PARTY | WHY THE KRAFT GROUP INVESTED IN THE OVERWATCH LEAGUE

- ▶ Owner of NFL New England Patriots and MLS New England Revolution operates Boston Uprising team in global league
- ▶ Kraft Group paid \$20m to buy one of initial franchises
- ▶ Kraft hoping to rent or renovate a venue in Boston to host games



Boston Uprising take the stage during the first season of the Overwatch League (Activision Blizzard)

BY **BOB WILLIAMS**

**A**side from being billionaires, what do the owners of the New England Patriots, New York Yankees and Golden State Warriors have in common? They're all investing in the esports industry.

As competitive gaming moves from a subculture into the mainstream, many US sports organizations and their backers have begun to look for a slice of the pie. A list of investors in League of Legends competitions and the Overwatch League (OWL) – based on two of the most popular competitive esports games – reads like a who's who of the US sports business world.

Sometimes this relationship is relatively distant: OWL team Dallas Fuel's parent company recently received a \$35m investment from Hersh Interactive Group, a minority investor in the Texas Rangers.

Sometimes it's a lot deeper. The Kraft Group – owners of the NFL New England Patriots and MLS New England Revolution – is sole owner and operator of the Boston Uprising OWL franchise. Robert and Jonathan Kraft were heavily involved in the acquisition of the team, which is run by the Uprising president of gaming Chris 'HuK' Loranger.

Jennifer Ferron, chief marketing officer of Kraft Sports and Entertainment, sat down with *SportBusiness International* at the MIT

Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, to explain why the Kraft Group got involved in the Overwatch League and what it is looking to gain from the investment.

### Early bird

Kraft's involvement in the OWL began when Bobby Kotick, chief executive of Overwatch developer Activision Blizzard, invited Robert Kraft to the 2016 BlizzCon, an annual convention that promotes the company's major video games. Exploring opportunities to invest in esports, Kraft's interest was piqued by what he saw in California.

Kotick was looking for investors for a league based around his popular and critically-acclaimed first-person shooter

Overwatch – which then had 30 million players worldwide. Kraft liked the idea of purchasing a franchised team in a sustainable league structure, following his similar involvement in the NFL and MLS.

Six months after the city-based Overwatch League was announced in November 2016, Kraft executives met with members of the Activation Blizzard team to discuss the matter further. In July 2017 it was announced that the Kraft Group had paid the \$20m fee to purchase one of the initial seven franchises.

There were 12 by the time of this year's inaugural season. With entry fees predicted to rise to as much as \$60m next season, getting in early has already looked a wise investment.

“Esports has been something that many people have talked to the Kraft group about more from an investment standpoint as opposed to an ownership participation,” says Ferron. “At BlizzCon the Kraft Group really got to experience what it looked like from a live participatory standpoint. That was a turning point to dig a little bit deeper and see if this was something the Kraft Group really wanted to not only invest in but also be an owner/operator.

“We wouldn't have a seat at the table if we didn't believe that it could be largely successful. For us to invest in anything there needs to be a lot of mindful discussion about: is this right for our bigger brand? Is it right for us to invest even time and resources in?”

“Writing a cheque is one thing – and there is always a large contribution to enter into something – but I think there was a notion that we could help to grow it from what it is today.”

Having seen the benefits of being an initial owner-operator in MLS – the Revolution was bought for \$5m in 1996 and is now worth around \$225m – Kraft was keen to be involved from the outset.

Significantly, the Kraft Group believes fans will soon follow Overwatch teams and players far more than the league itself – and being an initial investor will give the company, according to Ferron, a “good share of the voice” as the business model potentially changes. As Activation Blizzard owns the intellectual property of the league, it is currently more difficult for its franchises to sell sponsorship and monetise the content.

“For the publishers, the IP is theirs and over time we are going to have to work collaboratively to find a balance where the IP is as much the teams' as something that



BlizzCon 2017 (Joe Scarnici/Getty Images)

belongs to the publisher,” Ferron said at a Sloan Conference panel.

“Over time you are going to see a greater share of voice for the teams, the partners, the sponsors and for the people who want to invest in the property in the long-term. The question is: how does that dynamic shift over time? We are helping that process along.”

Robert Kraft himself was deeply involved over the decision whether to invest in the Uprising and has taken the time to meet the team in California. Now he leaves the running of the team largely to his executives – as he does with the Patriots and Revolution.

#### Challenge to engage fans and sponsors

This season – and for the immediate future – all 12 Overwatch League teams will play in a purpose-built esports arena in Burbank, California. Eventually they will play in their home cities in front of their home fans, which is when many commercial opportunities will arise.

With this in mind, the Kraft Group are taking a slow and steady approach to bring sponsors on board and get fans engaged.

“For now, while we are playing in LA, our initial [introduction] into this marketplace are some watch parties [in Boston],” says Ferron. Merchandise and signed jerseys are given away at these viewing parties to entice fans to take part and be involved.

“We want to bring the team to the market in the coming months [to visit] and we hope

to do that between stage two and stage three of the season [late March/early April]. It is something we hoped to do prior to the start of the league and it just didn't work out – there wasn't enough time.

“The fact that we don't know when we're going to play in the [Boston] market suggests we need to be smart in terms of what we're doing. We're not going to spend a number of mass-media [advertising] dollars right now as we don't have a timeline for when we're going to be here.

“When we know we're going to be in Boston, we'll have a venue that we'll either rent or potentially renovate, then we'll start to get granular and look at ticket sales, concessions and merchandising – all those commercialization opportunities that start to develop once we're back in our market.

“For now, it's really keeping up an engaged fanbase and making sure that people in Boston know about the Overwatch League and that they're excited to have the opportunity to be part of it in person.”

The naming of the team in a global league [outside of the US there are also teams nominally based in London, Seoul and Shanghai] was hugely important and ultimately the Kraft Group went with the Boston Uprising and not New England Rising, something they were encouraged but not directed to do.

This was for two reasons. Firstly, because the OWL is a city-based and not a region-based tournament. Secondly, it was felt that ‘New England’ is not well-known internationally and would potentially lessen the appeal to foreign fans.

“We thought a lot about it. Does ‘New England’ help us or hurt us?” Ferron says. “I think when you are talking about city-based teams, when you are comparing yourselves to New York or London or Seoul or Shanghai, New England as an area is potentially not as well known outside of North America.”

As for sponsors, the Kraft Group has not signed any major partners yet, but it has brought interested parties to watch Uprising matches in Burbank to teach them about esports and the OWL.

“We've not gotten into it to make money in the first couple of years. For us it is always a long-term view on everything that we are doing,” Ferron said at the Sloan Conference panel. “I do think the teams in the league are having a lot of success in bringing in partners and sponsors and even exceeding some projections and expectations that they have had, both in

Continued from previous page...

terms of viewership and partnership. That is all very, very positive, but we are [very early] into the league so it is too early to say one way or the other.”

The Kraft Group is actively engaged in conversations with “traditional sponsors” but is also seeking commercial opportunities specific to the esports field, such as the hardware: headphones, mice, keyboards, computers and even chairs.

“There will be some typically endemic partners that we have historically not had a relationship with,” Ferron adds. “Part of this [experience] is learning that space and being comfortable having introductions being made to those companies and having really good conversations with them.

“Some of the conversations we are having with our more traditional sponsors are very healthy and very positive but it is very much a bit of an education process. We are educating ourselves and also educating a potential partner about ‘why esports?’

“We’re very comfortable telling the NFL story, we’re very comfortable writing the MLS story. Now we’re writing the story for esports if you will – and for the Overwatch League.”

Ensuring a good deal for Uprising sponsors is of huge importance for the Kraft Group as a whole, says Ferron. “If we are promulgating something that isn’t going to be a good return on the investment then that is something that could damage our relationship we have with them for other pieces of the business.”

#### Crossover potential

The Kraft Group’s main properties, the Patriots and the Revolution, are already involved in esports to an extent, via the Madden NFL Club Championship and the upcoming eMLS Cup respectively.

Being an owner/operator of a team in the OWL, Ferron says, will help the Kraft Group navigate commercial activities in the esports world and learn how to engage with its young, digitally-savvy audience.

“We are going to learn an immeasurable amount from the endemic esports business and from the individual companies and teams that have been involved in esports for years,” Ferron says.

“It will be an opportunity to leverage experiences from the esports conversation. Not that we couldn’t pick up on it for our NFL and MLS operations but it allows us to be more intelligent and smarter and find ways to engage with that fanbase.

“It’s also an exciting opportunity to think about how to create Boston fans and how to start to get to know them better and market to them on a one-to-one basis. We want to reach out to this young, digital, really technology-driven, really smart global audience and use the data capabilities we have as a company to really drive that forwards.

“In addition, we can use a lot of the principles and practices that we have from our NFL and MLS experiences to try to [help other Overwatch teams] in terms of what we have seen as successful as from a real fan-engagement, fan-experiential proposition.”

The Kraft Group has already utilised its teams’ social media accounts to promote each other but Ferron says the company is wary of alienating the company’s hard-earned American football and soccer fans with too much cross-pollination.

“There is great opportunity but we have to be mindful about it,” she adds. “It can’t feel fabricated or unauthentic and I think we’ve done some really fun things with our first Boston Uprising match this year.

“We sent out messages from our Patriots Twitter account and Facebook page and they were wildly received by both audiences and I think they saw that association that the Krafts are doing something new and that one team in our portfolio was recognising another and that was really great.”

This cautious philosophy applies to marketing activities, too. “We have been very careful not to message people with something that they are not interested in,” Ferron adds. “So if you are part of our family as a Patriots fan but you don’t care for the Overwatch League I’m not going to want to market to you.

“So part of it is exploratory and testing the waters a little bit. It is something we have done between the Patriots and the Revolution over the past 20 years and it is something that we will do between the Patriots, the Revolution and the Uprising.

“If you’re happy in more than one of those then we are happy to cross-promote but only when it makes sense and it’s what the audience wants.”

The Patriots and Revolution players can also be utilised, Ferron says. “If we learn that one of our players on one of our teams is an avid esports fan or participant, we will look to leverage that and have fun with it in a way that is entertaining and value-added. It won’t be for self-promotion or to take advantage of the teams to leverage another one.”

This year’s Super Bowl, in particular, was golden opportunity for cross-branding. A viewing party was held in LA for players from the rival Uprising and Philadelphia Fusion teams to see the Patriots take on the Eagles. “That is the unification that sports can have,” says Ferron. ○

### Several major league owners have put money into OWL teams



Kraft Group owns the Patriots and the Uprising



Hersh Interactive Group holds stakes in the Rangers and the owner of the Dallas Fuel



Miami Heat have a stake in Mayhem owner Misfits



Kroenke Sports & Entertainment owns the Rams and the Gladiators





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## STEPPING OUT ON THE ROAD TO THE BUDOKAN

These are exciting times for judo and the sport's return to its ancestral and spiritual roots in Japan for the next Olympic Games provides a perfect opportunity to assess just how far the sport has come

**T**he world's leading judoka take their first steps along the road to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in May when they take part in the International Judo Federation Grand Prix event in Hohhot, China.

The competition marks the beginning of what promises to be an intense two-year qualifying programme which will reach its climax in Tokyo's world-famous Budokan, which hosted the competition when judo made its Olympic debut at the 1964 Games.

While the first Olympic competition featured just 72 male judoka from 27 countries competing in four categories, the sport has since blossomed worldwide. Women's judo was introduced as a demonstration sport at the 1988 Games and became a medal sport four years later. The sport has continued to spread geographically and grow its competitor numbers.

For the International Judo Federation, the return to Tokyo 'closes a circle' for a sport which refuses to stand still.

But, while the sport may have grown and changed beyond most expectations, it has done so by ensuring that it has remained anchored firmly to the Moral Code developed by founder Jigoro Kano.

This emphasises the core values of courtesy, courage, honour, modesty, respect, self-control and friendship which remain at the heart of a sport now played and enjoyed in around 200 countries and which is now using its reach and influence to change the lives of the displaced and disadvantaged.

### New dimension

The growth of the sport was clearly illustrated during one of the early events of this season, when Dusseldorf's ISS Dome hosted the first Gland Slam event ever held in Germany. While a successful entry into one of Europe's biggest and most important markets was a significant achievement in its own right, the fact that judoka from 26 different countries were among the



medallists says a lot about the spread of talent and the rising stars coming from emerging judo nations. That suggests that this is a sport in good health.

The addition of a mixed team event to the Tokyo 2020 programme is also seen as a significant step forward, both as an example of gender equity and peaceful co-operation in line with the aims of the IOC's Agenda 2020, and as a way of driving media attention and interest during the ultimate sports showcase.

The IJF believes the team competition will prove to have special appeal to young people because it highlights the rewards of

working together, sharing responsibility, being empathic and supportive – all the while performing to your full potential and working towards a common goal.

The introduction of the mixed team competition adds a new dimension to a sport where the globalisation of the circuit, regularity of major competitions and the focus on training camps after major competitions is creating a rising tide of performance across the world.

The result is a sport which is more competitive, global and enthralling than ever before – and one set to shine on the Tokyo stage. **O**



## Q & A WITH IJF PRESIDENT MARIUS VIZER

**How do you assess the progress of Judo worldwide in the past year and what have been the highlights?**

The implementation of the reforms in all the sectors, the social and educational programmes, promoted among most member federations, lead to an increased popularity of judo and an increased number of practitioners. The highlights of the past year were: judo becoming more spectacular after improving the rules and thus making judo more comprehensible for spectators and viewers, media partners and the judo community; the organization of quality events within the World Judo Tour; the last successful World Championships held in Budapest; the partnership with CNN which was signed last year; and last but not least, the introduction of the team event at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

**What do you expect to be the judo highlights for the remainder of 2018 into next year?**

The judo highlights of 2018 consist in strengthening the current strategy, attracting new media and marketing partners, and of course, having successful World Championships in Baku, in September.

**What are your observations of the growth of the sport in terms of the numbers of young people taking up judo?**

When it comes to the growth of judo among young people, some years ago we launched the programmes Judo for Children and Judo in Schools, which had a powerful impact on the appeal of judo to children and even their parents. Thanks to these programmes, the IJF supports a large number of countries along with local partners – Ministries of Education, Ministries of Sports and the National Federations. Furthermore, a long time ago we launched the programme Judo for Peace in numerous regions affected by political crises, with which we developed many projects in refugee camps, some in partnership with the United Nations.

**What are the thoughts on the return of judo to the Olympic Games after more than half a century?**





*Continued from previous page...*

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games represent the return of our sport to its home after a long time. Not only is the introduction of the judo team competition to the Olympic Games a premiere, but also an indisputable value for the Olympic Games and their success in Tokyo.

**How important is the addition of a team competition to the Olympic schedule and why?**

The team competition is important and appealing as it covers a gamut of emotions and collective enthusiasm from the part of athletes and spectators, motivating more the national identity and the patriotic spirit than the individual competition. We have had the team competition for the National Federations in our calendar for a long time and it brings an undisputable added value for our sport. The team spirit implies a collective enthusiasm.

**What do you feel are the unique selling points of judo for the public, players, media and sponsors?**

The USP of Judo for the 2020 Olympics will be first of all the comeback of our sport to the traditions, spirit and culture of the Japanese people. And as I mentioned before, I conducted several reforms at all levels with regard to judo in order to make it more attractive and more understandable for the media and the followers. In the future, we will do our best to continue the reforms in our sport, to be up-to-date when it comes to



the current requirements of the consumers so that we can contribute to the growth of the number of the spectators and viewers and the comprehension of our sport.

**As President, what are your short and long-term objectives for your sport and what challenges do you face?**

As president, my utmost mission is to

continue ensuring all the necessary resources in order to develop and promote the popularity of our sport worldwide. Also, I want to offer the requisite conditions so that judo could continue forming generations of elite athletes, able to make the world a better and fair place and to contribute to the promotion of the Olympic values through our sport. ○



Takato Naohisa is a man on a mission.

As the reigning world judo champion in the 60-kilogram category, the 24-year-old is training and competing hard in the build-up to the defence of his title in Baku, Azerbaijan later this year.

But, like all his contemporaries in the Japan judo programme, he also has one eye on the biggest prize of all.

“To walk out in the Nippon Budokan on day one of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics is my dream but it’s also very frightening.

Of course it’s pure coincidence that the games are coming to Tokyo in 2020, but fighting at the Budokan in my home country actually makes me nervous.

“Now [with qualification getting under way] I want to focus on my road to the Olympics,” he says.

It’s an indication of the healthy state of judo around the world that Naohisa knows he will face intense competition when he comes to defend his title at the World Championships in Baku in September.





## THE SPIRIT OF JUDO | CHANGING LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

Judo's athlete focus moral code can help people build discipline, honour and self-respect. Judo for Peace aims to give people in some of the world's most troubled regions the support to develop these values



**T**he core values of judo are at the heart of a wide-ranging International Judo Federation Project which is helping thousands of refugees in some of the world's most troubled regions.

Malawi, in Southern Africa, is the latest country where the National Judo Federation and IJF have joined forces to develop and deliver a programme which aims to build on the educational potential of judo to bring diverse groups together and provide a focus for peace.

The programme, under the Judo for Peace banner, is being run at the Dzaleka refugee camp which houses some 35,000 people from 15 countries who have fled their homelands

because of war or social conflict. Of these some 55 per cent are under 17 years old.

"The programme will recreate a collective identity, and strengthen unity, fighting stereotypes and building on trust, discipline, friendship, respect, politeness, courage, honour and modesty, which are the fundamental values of the moral code of judo," says Judo for Peace Commission head Nicolas Messner.

"All refugees will be welcomed with open arms," he adds.

Young refugees are inevitably confused and vulnerable and judo offers a safe space and mental focus which will help them to develop physically, mentally and emotionally

through regular structured practice, play and competition.

Judo for Peace projects are also helping refugees in:

**Syrian Refugee Camps:** Under the supervision of the IJF and led by the Turkish Judo Federation a refugee camp program was launched in the Kilis Region of Turkey in 2015. Judo activities are organised for children at a camp on the Syrian border with both equipment and expertise provided by the programme. The IJF won the prestigious Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Creative Sports Award for its work with the prize money reinvested to support the young refugees.

**Great Lake Region of Africa:** The JFP program has been successfully running since 2006. Starting with 80 judokas in 2006 and three clubs in Burundi, there are today 1,500 judokas and 17 clubs over the same territory. A national dojo has been built in Bujumbura to help the development of judo in the whole region. Equipment is regularly sent to support the activities. In 2014, Burundi obtained its first medal at the continental level [Cadets African Championships].

**Zambia:** An extensive program is running in Livingston that involves 600 children in three clubs. This program is led by the Judo for Fred committee of Norway and the Zambian Judo Association with the support of IJF. A refugee camp programme was also officially launched in 2016 in the Maheba Refugee Settlement in the North-West of the country. A dojo is under construction in the Olympic Youth Development Center of the capital city Lusaka, which will help to spread furthermore the judo values.

**South Africa:** Several activities were set up over the past years in South Africa to help to support the development of judo in difficult and disadvantaged areas. The Judo for the World programme, led by IJF expert Roberto Orlando, is taking care of refugees who are living in the country. [O](#)



## SAFE HANDS | IMMAF SETS RULES BASED ON OLYMPIAN VALUES TO SUPPORT GRASS ROOTS MMA

With continental championships in Africa, Europe and Asia scheduled in the build up to the year-ending World Championships in Bahrain, 2018 is proving to be a big year for mixed martial arts, which is now firmly established as one of the world's fastest growing sports

**M**assive global interest in the sport, triggered in large part by the success of elite professional series, has seen a surge of interest from the grass roots and the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation is working to ensure that all those coming into the sport enter a safe and well-regulated environment where they are able to fulfil their potential and train for success.

MMA may be a relative newcomer to the international sports scene, but its roots are deep. Pankration, thought to have been very like MMA in format involving a combination of striking and wrestling was featured in ancient Olympic Games and in many ways MMA represents the natural evolution of combat sports in a super-connected world where media, technology and travel have brought cultures together and created a fresh appetite for new and exciting sporting spectacles.

### Top-down

Densign White, chief executive of the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation, recognises that the way the sport has grown has created distinct challenges.

"More or less every other sport you can think of has started with the grassroots and grown from there and, as they have developed, governing bodies have been launched to regulate the sport and organise elite competitions," he says.

"With MMA things are different. This is a sport which started with elite competition and has since exploded at the grassroots level but the IMMAF is focused on ensuring that we embrace the highest standards of best practice in sports governance to ensure that our sport operates with the same high levels of safety, scrutiny and regulation as more traditional sports," White adds.

White, who was recently elected to the council of the Sport Integrity Global



Amateur MMA action

Alliance, says that as MMA develops it is attracting a new breed of athletes.

"In the past people tended to come into MMA from one of the established combat disciplines, often as a way of making some money as they came to the natural end of their careers. But things are different now. Youngsters coming into the sport today are still fascinated by the traditional martial arts which make up our sport, but their starting place is different - it is MMA itself," he says.

IMMAF has responded to the massive interest among young people by developing regulations designed to enable them to enjoy and benefit from the sport in an appropriate environment. Next year will see the introduction of pre-Junior and Cadet rules from 12-year-olds and upwards.

"This is a really important decision. The rule changes were necessary to support our young athletes and help them get the most form the sport as they develop. The rules eliminate headshots in junior contests and

young fighters don't fight in the cage," White explains.

"We are also introducing youth competitions and a grading system which gives people coming into MMA goals for personal development so that they can enjoy the fitness benefits of the sport even if they don't take part in competitions," he says.


Elsewhere IMMAF is rolling-out coach and referee education courses and continuing to develop its regulatory policies.

"The point is that we are about the grassroots and participation," says White. "People may think they know the sport because they are among the millions who watch UFC on television, but the amateur side is different and governed by different rules. These include clothing and protection, the use of 7oz gloves, fights which last just three rounds and restriction which ensure that fighters are in action just once a day," he said.

The IMMAF also operates a thorough medical programme which ensures pre-fight tests and compulsory brain scans for fighters who are stopped or knocked-out. In addition, the federation operates a comprehensive, WADA-compliant doping policy with random testing and testing of all gold medalists at every event.

With governance, medical and doping procedures firmly in place could amateur MMA one day find its way onto the Olympic programme?

"I'd say it fits the bill perfectly," says White. "MMA is universally popular, has competitions for men and women and has tremendous appeal among young people and they are all attributes that the Olympic Movement demands of its sports.

"Perhaps more importantly the work we continue to do has ensured that MMA produces true sporting contests, that it is a safe sport and that it reflects all the Olympic values of inclusivity, fair-play and respect." 

# Conferences



## SPORTACCORD CONVENTION

**When:** 15-20 April

**Where:** Bangkok, Thailand

**What:** “SportAccord is the world’s premier and most exclusive annual event at the service of sport. It is focused on driving positive change internationally and dedicated to engaging and connecting: rights-holders, organising committees, cities, press and media, businesses and other organisations involved in the development of sport.”

**Who:** Speakers include Formula 1’s Zarah Al-Kudcy; Jean-Marc Paihol, head of global market management and distribution, Allianz; and LaLiga managing director of marketing and sales Adolfo Bara.

**Tickets & more info:** sportaccord.com

## THE FAN ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE, DUBLIN

**When:** 28 March

**Where:** Dublin, Ireland

**What:** Fan engagement conference organised by fan data auditing firm Sportego.

**Who:** Speakers include Kerry Keenan, head of marketing & multimedia at Celtic FC; Everton FC head of engagement Scott McLeod; Paul Morgan, communications director, Aviva Premiership; and Rob Mackmurdie, head of technology at the Lawn Tennis Association.

**Tickets & more info:** sportego.ie/fecdublin/

## COLISEUM SUMMIT, US

**When:** 9-10 May

**Where:** Detroit

**What:** Conference looking at the design, delivery, operations and legacy of stadia and arenas globally.

**Who:** Speakers include Jim Willits, Chicago White Sox VP of sales and service; Mike Lorenc, head of Google’s sport and live events; and Tery Howard, Senior VP and Chief Technology Officer of the Miami Dolphins

**Tickets & more info:** coliseum-online.com/us-coliseum-summit-2018

## SPORTEL DECISION MAKERS SUMMIT

**When:** 15-16 May

**Where:** Miami Beach

**What:** “The SPORTELSummit is the conference based networking event designed only for an exclusive circle of global decision makers of the sports marketing and media industry.”

**Who:** The speaker line-up includes Atlanta United president Darren Eales; Carsten Cramer, Borussia Dortmund’s director of sales & marketing; and Oscar de la Hoya, chairman and chief executive of Golden Boy promotions.

**Tickets & more info:** sportelsummit.com/



## LEADERS WEEK, NEW YORK

**When:** 21-24 May

**Where:** New York

**What:** “A who’s who of global sport, technology and entertainment gathered for an unrivalled series of knowledge-sharing, experiential, networking and social events taking place all day, all night, all week across the city of New York.”

**Who:** MLB commissioner Rob Manfred and Jim DeLorenzo, Amazon Video head of sports.

**Tickets & more info:** leadersinsport.com/leaders-week-new-york

## CALENDAR MARCH-MAY 2018

Date	Event	Location	Website
28 March	Fan Engagement Conference	Dublin	sportego.ie/fecdublin/
15-20 April	SportAccord Convention	Bangkok	sportaccord.com
9-10 May	Coliseum Summit	Detroit	coliseum-online.com/us-coliseum-summit-2018
15-16 May	Sportel Decision Makers Summit	Miami	sportelsummit.com
21-24 May	Leaders Week	New York	leadersinsport.com/leaders-week-new-york

# UIPM INNOVATION PATHWAY

1912



STOCKHOLM (SWE):  
FIRST TIME IN THE  
OLYMPIC GAMES

1948



LONDON (GBR):  
UIPM IS BORN

1981



THE FIRST  
WOMEN'S WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
TOOK PLACE  
(INDIVIDUAL + RELAY)  
IN LONDON (GBR)

1989



MEN'S RELAY IS  
INTRODUCED

1991



HANDICAP START  
FOR RUNNING  
EVENT

1992



WOMEN'S RELAY IS  
INTRODUCED

2009



INTRODUCTION  
OF SHOOTING  
AND RUNNING  
COMBINED  
IN LONDON  
(GBR) DURING  
SENIOR WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIPS

2010



FIRST MIXED RELAY AT  
THE YOUTH OLYMPIC  
GAMES IN SINGAPORE  
AND UIPM WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
WITH LASER  
SHOOTING INSTEAD  
OF AIR PISTOL

2011



MIXED RELAY IN  
ALL UIPM MAJOR  
COMPETITIONS

2012



LONDON (GBR):  
FIRST TIME  
COMBINED  
SHOOTING AND  
RUNNING IN  
OLYMPIC GAMES

2013



DISTRIBUTION OF  
LASER SHOOTING  
EQUIPMENT TO  
MORE THAN 65  
COUNTRIES TO  
DEVELOP THE SPORT

THE FIRST UIPM  
TRIATHLE WCH  
COMBINING WITH  
BIATHLE

2014



SECOND YOUTH  
OLYMPIC GAMES IN  
NANJING (CHN).  
IMPLEMENTATION  
OF FENCING BONUS  
ROUND, MAKING  
THE SPORT MORE  
ATTRACTIVE TO  
SPECTATORS AND  
BROADCASTERS



UNION INTERNATIONALE  
DE PENTATHLON MODERNE



UIPM  
ANNIVERSARY  
SINCE 1948

1993



ONE-DAY FORMAT INTRODUCED AT UIPM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN DARMSTADT (GER)

1994



AIR PISTOLS ARE INTRODUCED

1996



ATLANTA (USA): FIRST TIME ALL 5 DISCIPLINES IN ONE DAY

2000



SYDNEY (AUS): FIRST TIME WOMEN'S COMPETITION AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

2008



BEIJING (CHN): FULL STADIUM WITH 40,000 SPECTATORS ON BOTH FINAL DAYS AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

2015



FIRST LASER-RUN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, CONSISTING OF LASER SHOOTING AND RUNNING, LASER-RUN IS DESIGNED TO ALLOW MORE ATHLETES AN ENTRY POINT TO MODERN PENTATHLON IN PERPIGNAN (FRA)

2016



ALL IN ONE: THE INTEGRATION OF THE FIVE SPORTS IN ONE SPORTS COMPLEX, AS ENVISAGED BY DR. KLAUS SCHORMANN, IMPLEMENTED IN RIO 2016 OLYMPIC GAMES

2018



NEW VISUAL IDENTITY  
LAUNCHED BRAND NEW UIPM EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM AND E-LEARNING FOR COACHES AND JUDGES

2020



TOKYO (JPN): ALL FIVE DISCIPLINES WILL BE CONTESTED IN ONE STADIUM IN OLYMPIC GAMES



# DYNAMIC NEW VISUAL IDENTITY FOR UIPM

*With a new visual identity, the 2018 season began with a bang for World Pentathlon (UIPM) at Pentathlon World Cup Cairo.*

*The five-discipline sport is the ultimate test of mind and body in the Olympic Games and UIPM's new creative suite reflects the dynamic nature of UIPM competitions, all of which will be promoted through the new visual identity.*

*As well as the the core Olympic sport of Modern Pentathlon, UIPM oversees the high-participation development sports Laser-Run, World Schools Biathlon, Biathle/Triathle and Tetrathlon.*



UNION INTERNATIONALE  
DE PENTATHLON MODERNE

# UIPM

World Pentathl

UIPM  
Pentathlon  
World Cup  
CAIRO EGYPT



# UIPM GLOBAL LASER-RUN CITY TOUR

*UIPM Global Laser-Run City Tour was launched in 2017 with 60 city tours in 25 countries. In 2018 the 2nd edition attracted more than 130 applications, with 100 cities from around 40 countries making the cut.*

*Laser-Run is the UIPM's newest invention, derived from the closing event of the Olympic sport of Modern Pentathlon. Global Laser-Run City Tour creates fun, excitement and serious competition in an urban environment.*

*Laser shooting is safe and sustainable and the concept suits all ages, genders, fitness levels and disabilities. Events are organized by UIPM National Federations, city/local Government and local sports organisations.*

*Beyond the competition, Global Laser-Run City Tour is a vibrant event with local engagement through social media, DJs, commentators and entertainment. Try-outs are available for the public during events, demonstrating that Laser-Run is an easy, fun and safe sport that offers an entry point to the legendary Olympic sport of Modern Pentathlon.*

# Merchandising

## FAST FASHION | DAVIS BRINGS SUCCESSFUL V-COMMERCE MODEL TO EUROPE AND ASIA

- ▶ In six months Fanatics has established offices in Spain, Germany and Japan
- ▶ \$1bn investment from Softbank being spent on upgrades to international supply chain
- ▶ Firm has helped the NBA expand its e-commerce operation in Asia





*“The actual profit or revenue that a club is able to gain from merchandising revenue is minimal, not very material and not growing. And I believe we can change all those facts for a club.”*

STEVE DAVIS, HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL, FANATICS

BY BEN CRONIN

**W**hen Steve Davis took up his role of head of international at sports merchandise retailer Fanatics in October last year, his remit was clear: take the fast-fashion licensing model that has been so successful for the company in the United States and replicate it overseas.

In an extended interview with *SportBusiness International* he explains how the company is developing additional international merchandising opportunities for its existing roster of clients and forging new relationships with European and Asian rights-holders.

#### **How does the Fanatics fast-fashion model work and what investments have you had to make to take it global?**

It's our belief that the future of this industry and the way that merchandise or fan merchandise should work, is what we call a 'v-commerce' operation, which is an agile, on-demand supply chain – a supply chain that looks far more like Inditex with Zara or H&M or Uniqlo, like a fast-fashion supply chain and much less like a traditional supply chain. We're expanding what we call our made-to-order infrastructure around the world, and we have approved investments for that MTO infrastructure both in Europe and in Asia to start to establish that operation, so we can expand fan choice and fan styling to fans around the world. Those are the two biggest things I've been focused on, in addition to really just meeting with clubs, meeting with performance brands and partners such as Adidas and Nike and learning the industry and opportunities.

#### **Can you give an example of how you use data to inform your manufacturing and supply chain decisions?**

I'll give you an example from the NFL, where my very own Philadelphia Eagles won their first ever Super Bowl. They called a play called the 'Philly Special' and it's one of the most famous plays that's probably ever been called in Super Bowl history. Immediately after the game, we produced

artwork and t-shirts and a whole line of products that celebrated the Eagles' victory and the Phillies' special call. That, as well as some 'underdog' t-shirts that were also very unique, were real-time designs created on the fly that we put on our e-commerce business.

Those designs were some of the best-selling designs and when we saw that, we immediately then manufactured those designs for our wholesale operation and we distributed that in physical retail through wholesale around the country. And it's an example of taking real-time data that's occurring – literally the Philly special was called in the game. We immediately, real-time, are producing designs for that item, we're putting it live the second the game ends on the NFL's website and the Fanatics website. We're seeing that that's a top selling item and then we're immediately manufacturing and distributing that out into our wholesale operation.

#### **Where do you think the untapped opportunities are in merchandising?**

In all the time I've spent with clubs and rights-holders over the last six months, merchandise contribution to a club is not meaningful. It's just not. Media drives huge revenue and contribution to a club. The performance brand partners are largely [about] marketing partnerships more than the merchandise itself – that's what drives those rights cheques. So, Nike or Adidas or others clearly write a meaningful cheque, but the actual profit or revenue that a club is able to gain from merchandising revenue is minimal, not very material and not growing. And I believe we can change all those facts for a club.

#### **You've been in position for six months. Can you explain how you have grown your global footprint in that time?**

If you step back, there's an important milestone pre-dating my arrival: the \$1bn (£810m) dollar investment from the SoftBank Vision Fund to help to accelerate our global expansion. In the context of that, we have a very clear vision about the opportunities that exist in our industry and essentially to make merchandise meaningful

and a growth business for clubs and for the licensed sports industry overall. And there are a few key things that we've been focused on. The first is to build out our international and global footprint; we're building local offices and local teams throughout the world so that we can engage with fans of global sports properties where they are and in a way that they are accustomed to. In this last six months we've established a Spanish office in Barcelona, a German office in Hamburg and an office in Tokyo.

#### **Why those countries in particular?**

Each market has its own rationale. If you look at Germany, it's obviously a very big and well-developed economy and football market on the continent, and one in which we think we can add a lot of value.

In the case of Spain, we have wonderful and strong relationships with Real Madrid, Atlético Madrid and Valencia and so it makes sense to localise our operation and service the clubs and the market better to properly grow these businesses.

Then when you look at Japan, you've got a well-developed economy and we acquired a business [Majestic] that has relationships with five Japanese baseball teams, so today we have relationships that we can lean on and build upon to expand out. The one place that you didn't hear me make an announcement about yet, but that we have our biggest plans for, is China. You should expect to see increasing investments in China over this year, and more announcements to come. We launched a Chinese warehouse fulfilment centre just last week. So that's kind of hot off the press and not officially announced but you're going to hear about a very significant build out and local operation in the Chinese market.

#### **Given the levels of counterfeiting in China and the fact incumbents are already well-established in e-commerce, would you say it is one of the toughest markets to crack?**

China is filled with counterfeit. Chinese customers covet authenticity: they want to buy authentic and they want to own authentic. The issue is there's very little access that we as an industry give Chinese

Continued from previous page...

customers to authentic product. I think when you marry their desire and love for authenticity with our plans to create a truly local real-time and available assortment to the Chinese customer that's in their sizing, that's in their styling, that is authentic – it's direct from club – I see tremendous reason to be optimistic.

I can't emphasize enough that you often have a breadth of assortment in a home country that is just not available to fans outside of that country or at least the home continent. Chinese customers today might have only access to five per cent of the assortment of merchandise that a UK customer has for European football clubs. So the first thing we're doing is we're bringing that whole world of assortment to China.

**How successful have you been in establishing relationships with new rights-holder clients since opening these new offices and the international division?**

I shared a five-year plan with the board 60 days into my tenure and I think we're going to dramatically over-deliver on our ambitions, and our growth ambitions were strong. You've got two elements to acquiring rights and helping clubs expand those businesses. The first is we've got existing relationships today in America and in Europe and they are anxious for us to expand and activate rights in new markets. If you take the National Basketball Association, we took ten countries in Asia live over just the past couple of months as an expansion of our relationship.

With Real Madrid we've launched sites on T-Mall [the Chinese language online retail site operated by the Alibaba Group] and in the China market and in the Japan market and Korea market. Basically, you're seeing very quick traction from our existing rights-holders to expand and then a relationship with local teams in the market, and that takes a bit longer.

This business is about relationships and trust and you spend time to do that. Our relationships with local clubs in these markets is something you should expect to read about in the next six or 12 months, more so than the last six.

**It was said around the time that the international office was first created that the international business made up 10 per cent of your revenues. Has that figure shifted with your recent successes?**

This is a business that should be 50 per cent



of the total company's business. If you look at the licensed sports industry, a little more than half of the industry is transacted in the US today. And we believe we can grow the rest of the world industry much more so than even the US industry, so we as a company should have 40 to 50 per cent of our revenues internationally or outside our US home operation.

**Are there any other examples of partnerships, like the one you have with Alibaba, where you have worked with a local firm to give you scale quickly?**

Clubs don't understand each market around the world and it's our job to understand these markets and understand how to best connect with fans. And what you're going to see us doing is finding the best ways to do that for clubs to grow this industry. If you look around the world of e-commerce, you often have very big leading players in each market and so there are opportunities to partner in many markets around the world.

**You once talked about bringing manufacturing into sports stadiums to make the supply chain even shorter. Was that a playful suggestion?**

I don't believe that. I may have been misquoted. What we believe is that there are things that happen in real-time on the pitch and that your ability to react to that in real-time and supply the market and the fans in real time is a really important component of

how you grow this industry.

We have some tests in stadiums now where customers can order and have product delivered to their seat. We have some experiments now where they can buy online and pick it up at the stadium so that they don't have to wait in line because there [are] a lot of lines for the 30 or 60 minutes prior to a game starting. There's a whole host of experiments right now.

**What's your most effective source of data? Do you respond to what is trending on social media?**

Fanatics is by fans, for fans. Our whole company is watching that game just like our whole company watches European football non-stop every weekend. We adore sports like anybody else does. And so, yes, we're following social media and social tags but we're also just the fans loving the game in real time on the pitch and reacting to it ourselves.

But if you take social media and hashtags as an example, Manchester City, and Benjamin Mendy [the team's left back] started calling Manchester City 'the #sharkteam'. Well we've produced a whole line of product, first for promoting Manchester City as the 'shark team' and we had that in the stadium and online at the Manchester City store.

That's an example of just having fun with what's going on in real time and social media and leveraging it in merchandise as well. ○

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# AHEAD OF THE GAME

Data Project is part of Genius Sports. We are the global leaders in volleyball technology.

We provide software to:

- Collect in-depth statistics
- Manage competitions digitally
- Improve in-game coaching
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Our software is used by over 80% of the world's leading leagues and federations including:



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## CALGARY | SPORT LIVES HERE

The 1988 Winter Olympics created a culture of sporting and volunteering excellence in Calgary. It's a culture the city would look to tap should it come forward with a bid for the 2026 Games.





**W**hen 22-year-old free skater Kaetlyn Osmond took bronze at the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang her success marked a new milestone for Canadian sport. It was the nation's 27th medal of the Games, taking the team past the 26-medal mark earned on home soil at Vancouver 2010.

In all Canada took 29 medals – including 11 golds – and third place in the Medal Table, securing the country's standing as a powerhouse of winter sport. In fact, 80 per cent of Canadian medals won at the 2018 games were by athletes who train or competed in Calgary and Canmore.

That's something they're massively proud of in Canada, and nowhere is that pride more evident than in Calgary, Alberta, a city where, locals will tell you, a good proportion of those medals were forged.

Calgary prides itself on being a Sports City; a city where Canada's athletes choose to live and train not only because of the facilities but the support available through national sports organisations including Hockey Canada, the national federations for Alpine sport, bobsleigh and luge as well as Canadian Sport Institute, which, along with WinSport Canada, is a performance hothouse. The city is also home to Own the Podium, described as a co-ordinated made-in-Canada solution set up to focus the disparate resources of the sports system and channel them into medal success.

### Sports city

Calgary, whose downtown office towers are testament to its commercial success as a major centre for the oil and gas industry, but whose heritage as an agriculture or equestrian hub is never far from view, is a city which lives and breathes sport, and which has become a magnet for regional, national and international events as well as a base for countless elite athletes. Calgary is where the prairie meets the mountains, and the proximity of the Rockies helps explain the city's relationship with winter sport.

The Canmore Nordic Centre, home to a host of Nordic disciplines, is just 45 minutes from the city and the Lake Louise Ski Resort, where the FIS Alpine season kicks off, only 90 minutes.

The city was chosen to host the Winter



*“People think of infrastructure and venues as legacies of the Games but in my experience the most meaningful and lasting legacy has been the volunteer spirit and sense of community”*

**ALICE HUMENY**

CHAIR

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CALGARY

Olympic Games in 1988 and the legacy lives-on in a clutch of world-class facilities and an infrastructure which has helped create a sports culture that permeates many aspect of city life, whether it's taking part in recreational sport or watching one of its pro sports teams, which include the NHL's Calgary Flames, the Canadian Football League's Stampeders and the Calgary Roughnecks of the National Lacrosse league.

But sport *in* Calgary isn't only about sport *for* Calgary. In the past three years alone, the city has hosted 41 World Cups and World Championships, 35 international championships and competitions and 68 national championships.

Now, with the city finalising its decision

on a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games, it looks as though there's every chance a virtuous circle established in 1988 will have a chance to continue to develop and strengthen.

Many of the facilities created for '88 are still critical to the life of the city, representing a clear legacy success story. The Scotiabank Saddledome, which accommodates just over 19,000, is now home to the Flames while the Olympic Oval, created for the speed skating programme, has hosted countless subsequent events and is widely regarded as one of the best facilities in the world and one of the fastest tracks. It was the first covered speed skating oval in North America, and was the first at a Winter Olympics. The smaller Max Bell Centre held curling and short-track skating and remains part of the city's varied facility stock.

The city also boasts a significant outdoor venue, the 36,000 capacity McMahon Stadium at the University of Calgary. Although not built for the '88 Games – it opened in 1960 as the home of the University football team and now houses the Stampeders – it became the venue for the Opening and Closing ceremonies.

The story of Calgary's enduring love affair with sports and sports events is perhaps best told through the voices of the people who both live there and who have both



contributed to and benefitted from it.

Among them is Alice Humeny, an athlete who became a member of the organising committee for speed skating at the '88 Games and who has never looked back. As chair of Organizing Committee Calgary, she has welcomed countless major events to the city and played a key role in developing its reputation as the leading speed skating host.

Three decades after those Winter Games, she feels it is the impact on the people of the city which has proved the most enduring legacy.

"People often first think of infrastructure and venues as legacies of the Games but in my experience the most meaningful and long-lasting legacy has been the volunteer spirit and sense of community. This has enhanced our ability to mobilise interest and expertise for a variety of events held in Calgary and our Organizing Committee Calgary has contributed to various events outside of speed skating during our 30 years," she says.

Among the secrets of the city's success as a sports host is, she says, the determination to ensure that every event is "athlete-focussed".

"We have surveyed and listened to the feedback from the visiting teams over the

***"So much of the brand and reputation of the city is based on sport and, in particular, around the '88 Games."***

**JEFF BOOKE**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
REPSOL SPORTS CENTRE

years and made adjustments accordingly. The secret is the delivery of a positive experience for our guests. It seems very simple; however, it is without a doubt the competent and friendly nature of our team that is most often mentioned.

"When I am at events in other countries I am always asked about specific volunteers as those individuals have left a lasting impression on our guests and are instrumental in creating a positive experience for them. Each member of our team contributes to this.

"The high-calibre delivery of the technical event is expected – the positive guest experience is what they talk about," she says. She also believes the sport culture in the city breeds an appetite to help in hosting events.

"Sport brings people together – not only the athletes and coaches but everyone who is linked to the event in some way. It allows people in various roles, be it the high-performance athlete or the volunteer driver, to experience the event together and feel a sense of accomplishment in their role.

"This experience fuels the desire of individuals to continue to participate and contribute to other events in the city. In short, sport plays an important role in the creation of community.

"It is the combination of volunteer spirit and expertise in event management that has made Calgary a formidable sports destination," she adds.

"The volunteer spirit comes into play when we interact with national/international guests and encourages them to come back and see the City during another season, whether during the summer for hiking and Stampede or during the winter for skiing."

**Home comforts**

Among the many elite Canadian athletes to have chosen Calgary as her home is freestyle wrestling gold-medallist Erica Wiebe, whose passion for sport is also central to her work with some of the city's young people.

"I moved to Calgary because I wanted to be in a training environment that offered the best coaching, training partners, and facilities. Calgary had it all and I needed a place to become great. It didn't hurt that I visited for the first time in mid-February when the entire city was covered in fresh, snow, sun was out, and it was 5°C!

"Now I'm incredibly fortunate to train every day in world-class facilities alongside other high-performance athletes at WinSport. But I also access on a regular basis a number of the facilities across the city to mix up my training environment or just to play a game of pick-up soccer," she says.

"Calgary is an incredibly active city with an unprecedented opportunity to engage in and support amateur sport. Over the winter, it feels like every weekend we are welcoming international competition, whether it's freestyle skiing, bobsleigh, or speed skating. The sport communities are very close and very supportive. It's great to have such an interconnected culture that drives excellence and passion.





“I believe in the transformative power of sport and I have been lucky to have incredible opportunities through sport but it has also taught me so many powerful lessons.

“It’s important for me to pass on those opportunities and skills to the next generation and therefore I am an ambassador for a number of grassroots organisations that use sport as a vehicle for social change.

“I work with KidSport Calgary which provides financial assistance to youth who can’t afford registration fees as well as Fast and Female which is a global organization founded in Alberta that is dedicated to empowering young women through sport.

“I also volunteered for eight months at an after-school sport program in a high-risk neighbourhood.

“The social landscape of Calgary is so diverse and vibrant., I’ve called Calgary home for just over a decade and it’s been exciting to watch the city evolve and transform,” she concludes.

One man with a firm grasp on the sporting dynamic of the city is Jeff Booke, chief executive of the Repsol Sports Centre, a multi-sport facility whose roofline has become a city icon since it opened three decades ago.

“The Repsol Centre is a world class facility providing aquatic and dry sports areas and a dual mandate to provide access to facilities not only for the development of elite athletes but for all the citizens of Calgary.

“The point is that we focus on both groups equally. Its about providing for training, competing and for playing,” he explains.

It’s a mission which, in many ways, encapsulates Calgary’s relationship with sport and which helps its sports culture thrive.

“Sport is a strong and positive part of life and there are lots of opportunities for recreational and high-performance sports participation and for being a fan!” he adds.

“At the Repsol Sport Centre we are a member facility from Monday to Friday and a competition venue for local, provincial, national and international events at the weekend.”

Those international events include the Fina Diving Grand Prix to be held in May, another tick in the city’s hosting box.



### Olympic Games

Jeff Booke, like Erica Wiebe and award-winning Alice Humeny, is excited about the prospect of a bid for the 2026 Olympic Winter games, both for the city and the Games themselves.

“I am a big proponent,” Booke says. “So much of the brand and reputation of the city is based on sport and, in particular, around the ‘88 Games. This is about building on the legacy and making the city even better in the years to come.”

And according to Erica Weibe, the impact of ‘88 is still evident and the prospect of a new Calgary Games is one to relish.

“People still talk about the ‘88 Games...it’s been incredibly impactful on the culture of the city. However, the city’s population has almost doubled since those Games.

“Hosting the Games in 2026 would reignite the Olympic flame in our city and provide an opportunity to inspire a new generation of Calgarians on the art of the possible,” she explains.

“I came to Calgary because of the talent, facilities, and volunteer legacy of the Games. The impact and value of the Games has lasted

30+ years and I would like to see the impact continue.”

But with or without the Games, sport continues to run through the veins of the city.

In addition to an impressive roster of annual events – including international showjumping at Spruce Meadows and countless national and local events including the world famous Calgary Stampede – the city has recently hosted the ISU Speed Skating World Cup, the FEI World Driving Championship and the FIS Ski Cross World Cup, the FIVB Volleyball World league and the FIS Freestyle Moguls World Cup, among others.

Calgary and the Bow Valley corridor will host 10 World Cups for the 2018/19 season including Bobsleigh, Luge, Short Track Speed Skating, Long Track Speed Skating, Freestyle Ski Moguls, Snowboard Halfpipe, Freestyle Ski Halfpipe, Alpine Men, and Alpine Women Biathlon events.

Erica Weibe describes her adopted city as “a place to become great” and it’s clear that it is events as well as individual athletes that are given the opportunity to flourish in a city where sport lives. ○

# Women's sport

## SAME RULES, DIFFERENT GAME | THE COMMERCIALISATION OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

- ▶ *SportBusiness International* spoke to Marzena Bogdanowicz, a key architect in creation of Team GB now at the Football Association
- ▶ Establishment of Women's Super League allows for clearer commercial division between men and women's game
- ▶ Partners such as SSE and Disney have come on board specifically to work with the women's team



Todd Koro/Getty Images

**SPECIAL  
REPORT:  
WOMEN'S  
SPORT IN 2018  
AND BEYOND**

- Insight
- Features
- Interviews
- Case studies



Includes interviews with WTA founder Billie Jean King and Marzena Bogdanowicz, head of commercial and marketing for women's football at the FA.

Read more or download the report at [bit.ly/2DDIivh](https://bit.ly/2DDIivh)





*“We want to raise the profile of all the WSL players. They are football’s freshest stars. We want them to be household names, we want young girls to aspire to be like a Lioness, behave like a Lioness.”*

**MARZENA BOGDANOWICZ**

HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND MARKETING FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL, THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

BY ADAM NELSON

**M**arzena Bogdanowicz's greatest achievement was so successful she worries it's becoming forgotten.

Team GB – the phenomenally successful rebrand and restructuring of the UK Olympic team, of which Bogdanowicz was one of the key architects – “has just become part of the general day-to-day life,” she says. “Everyone thinks it's always been there, but I can tell you it wasn't.”

Bogdanowicz's latest challenge is to bring that kind of inspiration to the Football Association. Her job, as the head of commercial and marketing for women's football, is to make England's women's football team as much a fixture of the national sporting landscape as the men's.

If that seems like a pipe dream, Bogdanowicz stresses that at the time of Team GB's conception, “everyone thought I was crazy. We were tying up however many sports under one banner, which seems so simple, but nobody thought it would work.”

If there are reflections of her previous work in the new role, there are also significant differences. “The Olympics has always been about sport for everyone, irrespective of gender, race or religion,” she says. “Olympics doesn't isolate gender. It's all treated as one, men's and women's together.

“Football is a different challenge, in that it absolutely is open for all – irrespective of age, gender, race, religion – but we still have a slight hill to climb in terms of changing perceptions and beliefs that actually football is okay for women and girls to play, because it's just so dominated by boys and men.”

2018 is a critical year for the women's game in England. 2017 saw a significant commercial and sporting restructure – involving the creation of the new two-tiered Women's Super League, with a fully professionalised top division – but also the Lionesses, England's senior national women's team, making headlines for the wrong reasons.

A run to the semi-finals in the Uefa Women's Championship was overshadowed

by the scandal which led to head coach Mark Sampson losing his position after allegations of using racially abusive language toward players Eniola Aluko and Drew Spence.

The handling of the appointment of former England men's player Philip Neville as Sampson's successor, after several prominent female figures within the game were reported to have turned the role down, was also a PR disaster. Neville's fast-track into the role, despite his relative lack of experience, became a further stick with which to beat the beleaguered FA.

#### Commercial division

Nevertheless, Bogdanowicz feels that “the building blocks are now in place” for 2018 to be a landmark 12 months for women's football. “In general, I'd say the game is on an upward trajectory that none of us can quite believe,” she says. “The change over the last five years has been incredible in terms of participation, broadcast, spectators, fans – all of those elements are really growing at a rate that is hard to keep up with, and one of our challenges is to keep up with it and keep ahead of the game. We've got so much to do and we are rushing like crazy.”

The FA has outlined four key objectives for Bogdanowicz and the commercial team – “to signpost, to build profile, to change perceptions and ultimately to raise commercial value” – with the ultimate aim of doubling both participation and attendance in women's football.

She references the fact that WSL fixtures are now regularly receiving 1,000 fans per game, “a monster number” compared with other women's sports, as evidence that the foundations are strong, and argues the move to professionalise the WSL opens up a whole new range of commercial opportunities for both the league and its member clubs. Most crucially, Bogdanowicz feels, it allows for a greater separation in the way men's and women's football are marketed, a step that has been long overdue.

“You can't market the women's game in the same way as the men's game,” she says. “It's the same rules, but it's a different game. You've got to change how you position it and

how you market it and I think in the past it was, ‘this is how we market and promote the men's game, so that's how we're going to do it with the women's game’, and you can't do that. There's been a sense of, ‘if you sponsor the men's you get the women free’ – it doesn't work like that.

“The WSL is absolutely separated, but if a partner from the men's game or someone who's interested in the men's game says they're interested, we wouldn't say no to that, we would work with them, but the key is that they have to have the commitment to the women's game.”

Dividing the commercial structure of the men's and women's games will allow Bogdanowicz and her team to work much more closely with brands and partners who are committed to women's football, and not just taking it as a bonus bolt-on to a wider FA partnership. Some partners – such as energy firm SSE and entertainment giant Disney – have come on board specifically to work with the Lionesses, while sportswear brand Nike have expanded their FA partnership to include the women's team but have already begun working on tailored, female-specific activations.

“We're looking at working with partners that want to go with us on a journey,” says Bogdanowicz. “The first conversation with a brand is, ‘what are you trying to achieve from a business perspective, what are your key objectives, how can we help in terms of the women's game to support your objectives and deliver against your objectives, what can we do for you?’ Rather than, ‘give us money and badge it’.”

The process of engaging new partners will be much more of a collaborative effort than it has been in the past, Bogdanowicz says, noting that securing the right partner and taking a flexible approach to working with them is more important than just looking at the bottom line, with a greater focus on what each brand will get out of the partnership, always with an eye on the long-term goals of the FA. Brands must have a specific goal they wish to achieve through the promotion of women's football, rather than just be looking for exposure through a popular national team.

Continued from previous page...

“We can look at numerous opportunities that the women’s game can offer a brand, be it challenging some of the cultural perceptions, building community programmes, or encouraging women into leadership positions,” she says. “But if we understand what their objectives are, we can help them achieve them, which is why no single size fits all. The work that we’re doing now with Nike, their recent campaign with one of the female players, that is just the start of where we’re going with Nike and that is a huge opportunity.”

While commercial value is maximised by engaging with partners who can bring something unique to the promotion of the women’s game, Bogdanowicz says top-level integration between the FA’s personnel and commercial teams remains vital to achieving the organisation’s core goals – chief among them the promotion of the sport to girls and women.

“We now have more dedicated individuals that are working on the women’s game specifically than we’ve ever had before, and they are very much integrated across the whole business rather than, ‘that’s the women’s team, that’s their job’”, she says. “By integrating it, it’s part of every day life, it’s not, ‘they do that over there’. It’s integrated and that to me is crucial in terms of actually normalising the women’s game.”

### Grassroots growth

The professionalisation of the WSL also means the FA is working much more closely with its member clubs, and is relying on them to help open up the pathways to young girls interested in getting involved in football.

“The opportunity that a WSL club has, or any club along that new pyramid, is to make a generation of girls active,” Bogdanowicz says. “We want to raise the profile of all the WSL players. They are football’s freshest stars, that’s what we are looking for: to show all the players across all the teams, not just the Lionesses, but the pathway that we have. That is an amazing opportunity for young girls to get involved and come with us on that journey. We will build the profile of all the top players. We want them to be household names, we want young girls to aspire to be like a Lioness, behave like a Lioness.”

For now, the FA’s approach is largely a top-down one, with the focus being on promoting the WSL and the Lionesses in the hope that it will inspire a new generation of girls to take up the sport. There are plans in place, however, for further work at a grassroots



England players Jill Scott and Eni Aluko during the Euro 2017 qualifier v Bosnia and Herzegovina (Michael Steele/Getty Images)

level, where once again the FA is expecting its commercial partners to play a major role. SSE has already become the title sponsor of the SSE Wildcats, an initiative designed to encourage girls aged between five and 11 years old to get involved in football.

The partnership which has most excited Bogdanowicz is the tie-up with Disney, who she calls “the best storytellers around”. Disney will collaborate with the FA on Girls’ Football Week, which runs from 23rd to 29th April, helping the body communicate the value of football to young people across the country.


“To work with them gives us an opportunity to talk in a new way with a new narrative to young girls who we can’t otherwise reach,” Bogdanowicz explains. “We know how to talk football to a football audience, but they know how to tell a story to girls and boys and parents – because as much as we need to show girls about football, we also need to show boys that it’s okay for girls to play football. Disney can help us do that.”

While Bogdanowicz acknowledges the debt owed to other sports, particularly the

Olympic disciplines, in blazing a trail for equal representation between men and women, she sees the FA as “treading our own path” as far as football is concerned, and she wants England to be the example other associations look to in the future.

The FA’s commitment to promoting women’s football, from the top level right down to the grassroots, is “extraordinary”, she says, and adds that since joining the FA she has been amazed by “the power of football”.

“More so than any other sport, football can make a generation of girls active,” she concludes. The FA and WSL, she says, have created “an incredible opportunity to really normalise football for girls, and the FA’s commitment is incredible in terms of the support across the board, internally and for all the stakeholders. That’s what I find really exciting.”

**SportBusiness International will publish an in-depth report about women’s sport that will be available to subscribers on 26th March. To download the report, go to: [bit.ly/zDDLivh](http://bit.ly/zDDLivh)** 



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# AT THE HEART OF SPORT

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## AUSTRALIA'S GOLDCOAST™

# GOLDEN AMBITIONS

The City of Gold Coast, and the Australian state of Queensland, may have grabbed the world's attention with the 2018 Commonwealth Games, but for a destination that is immersed in sport and can boast some of the southern hemisphere's top facilities, this year's mega multi-sport event is only part of the journey



Sunrise highlights the runners of the Gold Coast Marathon (*Gold Coast Marathon*)

**H**aving welcomed 6,500 athletes and team officials from across the world to Queensland for the Commonwealth Games, an unprecedented number of elite sportspeople have been given a flavour of the Gold Coast.

For a city that prides itself on providing an unrivalled destination for sportspeople and fans, hosting the largest sporting event to land on Australia's shores this decade has provided an ideal platform for its state-of-the-art facilities.

Some A\$200m (€127/\$156m) was pumped into the Gold Coast's sporting infrastructure ahead of the Games, with sustainability at the heart of the plans. Three new venues - Gold Coast Sport Precinct, Coomera Indoor Sport Centre and Sound Stage 9 - were not only delivered well ahead of the Games' deadlines, along with upgrades at six other

venues, but were also fully tested. For example, the Sudirman Cup took place at Gold Coast Sport Precinct and Pan Pacific Games competitions took place at Gold Coast Aquatic Centre.

In addition to the sporting infrastructure, the Commonwealth Games Athletes Village will provide more than 1,200 permanent dwellings, alongside future development opportunities within the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct.

The significant investment in the bricks and mortar of the Gold Coast's sporting future is part of a broader \$12bn investment programme covering key infrastructure projects across the city.

### Transformation

To support the transformation plans, Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) has

embarked upon an ambitious event-hosting strategy in partnership with the city.

In 2017 alone, Queensland, through the work of TEQ in partnership with various local administrations, hosted numerous high-value events, including the Total BWF Sudirman Cup on the Gold Coast, the UCI Mountain Bike World Championships in Cairns, the Brisbane Global Rugby Tens and the spectacular WBO Welterweight Championship bout between Manny Pacquiao and Jeff Horn at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

In 2018, the portfolio keeps growing with the ITU World Triathlon Grand Final and the FAI World Parachuting Championships taking place on the Gold Coast.

Domestically, the Gold Coast has supported dozens of state and national championships in recent years, including

*“So many countries around the world have amazing event cities, but what sets Queensland apart is its natural environment”*

**DAVE BEECHE**

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF IRONMAN OCEANIA

the Gold Coast 600 V8 Supercars race, Australian PGA Championship, Australian Surf Life Saving Titles, Gold Coast Airport Marathon and Magic Millions Racing Carnival.

The packed schedule, culminating in this year’s Commonwealth Games, has also given locals – and local businesses – a taste for sports events. Ahead of the 2018 multi-sport event, the local small-business community engaged in initiatives designed to boost their role in the successful delivery of the Games, while 15,000 enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers signed up.

As a hub of activity, it is no surprise that a number of sporting institutions have opted to make the Gold Coast their home, alongside established teams such as the National Rugby League’s Gold Coast Titans and the Australian Football League’s Gold Coast Suns.

Baseball Australia, V8 Supercars Australia, Skateboarding Australia and the Australian Institute of Sport (representing sprint canoe, triathlon and BMX) all have offices in the city. Moreover, Triathlon Australia, Mountain Bike Australia and FIBA Oceania have all relocated their headquarters to the Gold Coast in recent years.

#### **Positive experience**

Dave Beeche, managing director of Ironman Oceania – which operates numerous events in Queensland, including the ITU World Triathlon Series Gold Coast, Cairns Ironman Asia-Pacific Championship and iconic Noosa Triathlon and Multisport Festival – says the modern sports spectacle is just as much about where it is held as it is about the event itself.

“People will choose events based on travelling to great destinations, and one of the strengths of Queensland is that it’s a great year-round destination that is highly aspirational for our customers,” he says.

“So many countries around the world



Action from the Quiksilver Pro World Surf League event on the Gold Coast (World Surf League)

have amazing event cities, but what sets Queensland apart is its natural environment. Stunning landscapes and experiences, its outdoor lifestyle and perfect weather make Queensland and cities such as the Gold Coast an enviable event destination.

“For the events that we deliver, this has a tangible and positive impact on the athlete experience and the bottom line. Great locations draw more participants and, as a result, we’re able to deliver more attractive commercial partnerships and grow our events year-on-year.

“Following the success of the 2016 Ironman 70.3 World Championships on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, we’re working hard to make sure the 2018 ITU World Triathlon Grand Final on the Gold Coast continues to lift the bar and is a knockout success, and I think Queensland will set us up well for that.”

With major events and sports bodies



landing in the thriving east coast city, numerous top organisations are increasingly using the Gold Coast as the perfect training destination.

Football clubs such as Manchester City from England and Villarreal from Spain, as well as England’s rugby league team and the Canadian, Chinese, Japanese and US aquatics teams have all used the city as a pre-event or pre-season training base in recent years.

Sally Pearson, Cameron McEvoy, Mick Fanning and Emma Moffatt also train in the Gold Coast, with top athletes such as these being supported by some of the world’s leading coaches, management and medical staff.

The Gold Coast has also established a reputation as a renowned centre of cutting-edge sports science research.

The city is home to three world-class universities – Bond, Griffith and Southern Cross – each a centre for sporting excellence, offering state-of-the-art testing facilities and clinicians with extensive experience in treating national, international and Olympic-level athletes.

As a hub of elite sports science, as well as events, facilities and athletes, it is easy to see why the Gold Coast was handed the Best Newcomer award in the SportBusiness Ultimate Sports City 2016 awards. It is also obvious to see why the 2018 Commonwealth Games merely represents a beginning for a city on the rise. 

# Event bidding

## SPORT AT THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY | MAKING THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES RELEVANT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

- ▶ Durban hosting crisis has helped to speed up Commonwealth Games Federation reforms
- ▶ Joint venture with Lagardère agency will provide more commercial support to host cities
- ▶ New model allows CGF to cross-sell partnerships, media and merchandising deals across different editions of the Games



Commonwealth Games Federation chief executive David Grevenberg, in Samoa during part of the 2015 Commonwealth Youth Games Athlete Personal Development programme (Commonwealth Games Federation)

BY BEN CRONIN

**D**avid Grevenberg could be forgiven for overlooking the latest edition of the Commonwealth Games, which starts in the Australian city of Gold Coast on April 4.

While the local organisers have gone about planning the 2018 event with customary levels of professionalism, uncertainty about the arrangements for the 2022 edition are likely to have occupied far more of the Commonwealth Games Federation chief executive's brain-space in recent months.

The stripping of hosting rights from

Durban triggered a scramble to identify a new host for the 2022 event which was only resolved when Birmingham was ushered in to replace the South African city just three days before Christmas last year.

The CGF's travails highlight the troubles of multi-sport events in finding hosts, and did nothing to disabuse people of the notion that there are only a handful of countries in the Commonwealth that are prepared for or capable of taking on the Games in the present climate.

Grevenberg says that the CGF foresaw sport's hosting crisis, but reforms the organisation approved as far back as

September 2015 in its Transformation 2022 action plan were not implemented in time to prevent the problems that arose in Durban. If nothing else, he says, adversity has helped to speed through the changes that will safeguard the future of the event.

The standout reform is the creation – with the Lagardère Sports agency – of CGF Partnerships, a joint venture designed to provide more commercial support to host cities. Under the new model, the CGF will act as a 'host city partner', helping cities to refine their delivery models and produce more sustainable events that are better aligned with their own development goals.

Gold Coast is the last event under the CGF's current model and Birmingham 2022 will be the first under the new approach.

"Long gone are the days where you have a transfer of knowledge program where you just say: 'here's a bunch of spreadsheets' with no context," says Grevemberg. "We're actually all in the car together, driving along versus: 'here's the key to the brand-new car, I hope you bring it back in one piece'."

Where once host cities were left to sell their sponsorship rights alone, the new model shifts the responsibility to the new CGF Partnerships subsidiary. All net revenues from selling the rights will be passed to the host city, after costs. The new model will also see the CGF take more of the burden of event delivery.

"The CGF will essentially be responsible for delivering the sponsorship, broadcast rights and merchandise and licensing programs and then providing a stream of support in key areas to ensure that the expertise is available, that we are creating more efficient programs and ultimately getting there faster," Grevemberg explains.

The benefit, he argues, is that the CGF will be able to cross-sell partnerships, media and merchandising across multiple Games and attract more value-in-kind sponsorship.

"I think it's been maybe a missed opportunity where you're starting over a procurement process again when you know it's the same services and the same process that you're going over," he says.

"There are missed opportunities for promoting the movement between games or finding efficiencies of scale where you may have sponsors that are also interested in the Youth Games and future games."

In an attempt to improve the rationale for hosting the Games in the developing world, and outside of the traditional trio of Australia, Canada and the UK, the CGF has also made it an obligation of each host city contract to contribute to the United Nation's 17 goals for sustainable development, but always in relation to the specific context of the host city, region and nation.

Grevemberg points out that by enshrining a respect for prosperity, good governance and human rights in its approach, the CGF will be aligned with the ideals of the modern Commonwealth, as stipulated in the Commonwealth Charter.

"Human rights, recognition of marginalised groups, conflict resolution and reconciliatory activities really form the foundation and a base, because if you



*"Long gone are the days where you have a transfer of knowledge program where you just say: 'here's a bunch of spreadsheets' with no context"*

**DAVID GREVEMBERG**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
COMMONWEALTH GAMES FEDERATION

don't have a strong platform to build on – a peaceful platform – you can't build the pillars of sustainability."

Grevemberg would like to enshrine humanitarian thinking into each edition of the event. His greatest disappointment about the removal of Durban's hosting rights was the fact that the Games offered an opportunity to test the CGF's sustainable development objectives.

"If you look at the first two pages in their documents, it was all about how South Africa could use these games to contribute to the 2030 South African sustainable development goals, so it spoke directly to the vision that we had set out," he says.

The CGF and its membership, he adds, retain the hope that they will host the Games in Africa one day, but not at any cost.

"We obviously had to ensure that our games were deliverable, that there wasn't going to be risk in relation to that deliverability, and that our Games were not going to be a harm to the local economy, that they were not going to be harmful to people. They didn't withdraw; we took it away."

It might be a while before the CGF takes the Games back to a less developed economy, as it did with Delhi in 2010, but it can console itself with the way the event aligns with local

objectives in the case of Birmingham.

The CGF was one of the beneficiaries of Brexit as the British Government put its full weight behind the city's candidacy to host the 2022 Games in the hope that the event would help to develop trading relationships with countries outside of the European Union post-Brexit.

Grevemberg says the Brexit debate reminds him of the questions around the Scottish referendum which created uncertainty during his previous role as the chief executive officer for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014.


"It's always great to have a project with a definitive delivery date and timeline that you can work to," he says. "It plays to all the tiers, so in a microcosm it's a great project that can, I think, address challenges that may be experienced through Brexit, but also take advantage of opportunities.

"Having worked with running an organising committee with 46,000 people under your duty of care – 1,700 staff, 15,000 volunteers and 30,000 contractors – one of the things I realised quite early is people are driven by either anxiety or ambition. If you can get people to control their anxieties, and understand and manage risk, and you give people the opportunity to harness ambitions, you really get the best out of people."

He says the awkward history of the Commonwealth means the CGF is accustomed to having difficult conversations, which makes the Games a good platform to take on difficult social challenges. On this point Grevemberg refers to the Gold Coast Organising Committee's Reconciliation Action Plan, which aims to deliver legacy outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as an example.

Once again, it's easy to forget the imminent Gold Coast Games in the excitement about the future hosting model. But maybe the Australian city should take that as a compliment.

"I think we're going from strength to strength from Glasgow to Gold Coast," says Grevemberg. "It's a stunning backdrop. There's great professionalism in the Australian sports industry when it comes to events."

"The ways Gold Coast has used these Games to future-proof the city environmentally, socially, economically – in terms of some of the capital build projects and the repositioning of the city itself – are really good tell-tale signs that the event and the extraordinary cultural programmes will be fantastic." 

SPORT EVENT  
DENMARK

## A DANISH RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

What are the ingredients of the Danish success in bidding for and hosting major international sporting events? Sport Event Denmark chief executive Lars Lundov shares the recipe



Denmark will stage the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships 2021 in Royal Arena in Copenhagen. (Lars Baron, Getty Images)

**F**or more than 10 years, Sport Event Denmark has been a trusted partner in bidding for and staging events in Denmark.

According to Sport Event Denmark chief executive Lars Lundov, the so-called “event triangle” is the cornerstone of hosting major international sporting events in the country.

“The triangle consists of the national federation, the host city and Sport Event

Denmark,” Lundov says, outlining the recipe for the Danish model.

“Then you mix it with innovative thinking, solid event management and a robust economy. Then you dress it up with that special culture of Danish volunteering and an eye for epic settings. Finally, you let it rise for 10 years and more.”

The organisation was established and funded by the Danish government and posts

a success rate of 80 per cent in winning bids.

“The Olympics is the biggest sporting event in the world regarding participating sports, countries and athletes,” Lundov adds.

“An Olympic host city will forever be an Olympic host city, boosting the brand of the host nation. However, every sporting event has the potential to put the sports and athletes on display.

“Most of the events will add to the brand



*“Mix innovative thinking, solid event management and a robust economy. That special culture of Danish volunteering. And an eye for epic setting. Let rise for 10 years or more”*

**LARS LUNDOV**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SPORT EVENT DENMARK

of the city and nation, putting the focus on the sport and its athletes. For example, take athletics – an Olympic sport that gets a lot of attention both at the Games and in between.

### Reputation

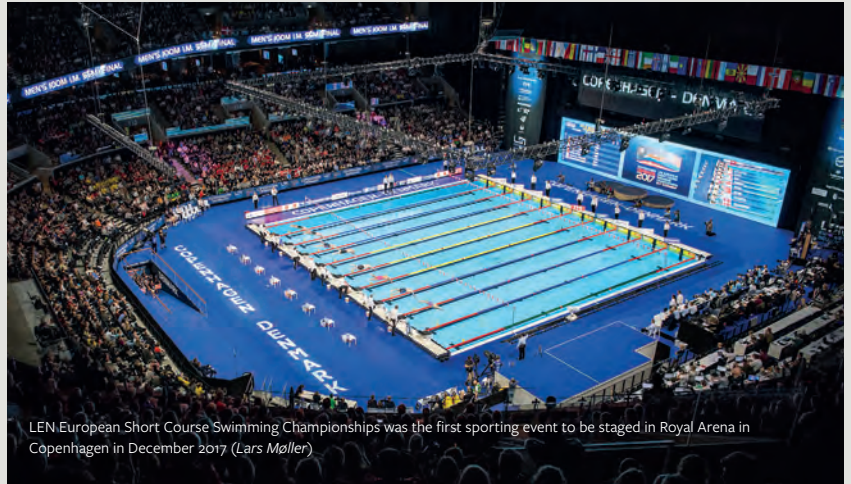
Denmark has a great reputation in hosting running events. The country previously hosted the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in 2014 and is currently preparing a game-changing set-up for the IAAF World Cross Country Championships next year.”

Denmark has succeeded in securing and staging many significant World and European championships in Olympic and non-Olympic sports over the years in all parts of the country, as well as a number of General Assemblies for international federations, the IOC Session and Olympic Congress in 2009 and the 2017 edition of SportAccord. ○



IOC president Thomas Bach attended the SportAccord Convention in Aarhus 2017 (Lars Møller)

## THE INGREDIENTS



LEN European Short Course Swimming Championships was the first sporting event to be staged in Royal Arena in Copenhagen in December 2017 (Lars Møller)

### 2018 – an epic year of World Championships in Olympic sports

From May 4-20, Denmark will play host to the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship at the Royal Arena in Copenhagen and Jyske Bank Boxen in Herning. It will be the first time that Denmark will have hosted the IIHF’s flagship event.

From July 6-14, Denmark will host the 2018 Fyn ITU Multisport World Championships Festival. Visitors from all over the world will experience a huge international triathlon festival consisting of five world championships over nine days.

From July 30-August 12, Denmark will stage the Hempel Sailing World Championships for all Olympic Classes in Aarhus. Aarhus, also known as the City of Sails, has a long track record of hosting sailing events.

### 2019 – more World Championships

Denmark has already secured the following events to be staged in 2019 in various places in Denmark:

- IHF Men’s World Handball Championships 2019 (Herning & Copenhagen – together with Germany)
- UCI Cyclo-Cross World Championship 2019 (Bogense)
- IAAF World Cross Country Championships 2019 (Aarhus)
- WCF World Women’s Curling Championships 2019 (Silkeborg)

- World Championship Three Cushion 2019 (Randers)

### 2020 – a celebratory atmosphere

Creating a festival atmosphere and engaging in a celebration of sports is important to Sport Event Denmark, the host cities and, not least, the national federations.

- Uefa Euro 2020 (Copenhagen)
- 2020 WTF World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships (Vejle)
- IOF World Urban Orienteering Championships 2020 (Vejle, Kolding, Fredericia)

### 2021 – hitting the target

Choosing the correct destinations for the events is front-of-mind in Denmark for the events lined up in 2021.

- ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships 2021 (Gladsaxe/Copenhagen)
- FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships 2021 (Copenhagen)
- WDF World Cup 2021 (Esbjerg)

### 2022, 2023 – rising success

Building on 10 years of success and working strategically means that Denmark has a long-term approach to securing events.

- UCI World Mountain Bike Championships 2022 (Haderslev)
- IHF Women’s Handball World Championships 2023 (together with Norway and Sweden) ○



## ECONOMIC POWER DICTATES DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

Sport has conquered the world. So where does it go next? **Tim Crow** predicts sport's next big frontier

**T**he story of modern sport's lightning-fast international expansion – fuelled by sports marketing – is also the story of new product development (NPD) and shifts in the balance of economic power between states, sports and markets. And all the signs are that the next chapter could be the most fascinating yet.

In the modern era, it all started back in the late 1970s, with Horst Dassler and Patrick Nally's creation of the Fifa World Cup sponsorship programme and the multi-partner template that still conditions how sponsorship is bought and sold worldwide to this day.

At the time, the world's top three countries by share of world GDP were, in order, America, Germany and Japan.

No surprise then, that the first wave of sponsors in the initial Fifa programme were Coke and Adidas. Nor that Dassler then joined forces with Dentsu, the Japanese ad agency, who parlayed their dominance of Japanese advertising into a wave of global sponsorships by Japanese brands which still persists, notably in the shape of Dentsu's influence on Tokyo 2020 and its ownership of the IAAF's global commercial rights.

Just as the World Cup led the first chapter, the second was also led by football, in the early 1990s.

Fuelled by Rupert Murdoch's pay-television money and spearheaded by Manchester United's multiple titles and mushrooming worldwide fan and sponsor base, the Premier League – a breakaway by the top clubs from the old English Football League – became a financial phenomenon and the global game's first global league, domestic only in format.

And in parallel, Uefa reinvented the European Cup as the Champions League. Driving up volume, leveraging commercial free-to-air TV for reach and the American 'sponsorship as TV buy' model for ad budgets, it created a new platform for its aristocrat clubs in the big five European markets to face off globally, and in so doing transformed their brands and balance sheets.

TV and NPD. Goals and Galacticos. Money and Mega Brands.



India will follow China as sport's next frontier market (Clive Rose/Getty Images)

Global game, global leagues.

And that set the pattern for the third chapter: sport reinventing itself as Big Sport, for Big Business and Big Money.

Sport behind the pay-television paywall. The Olympics' pursuit of mega-cities and mega budgets. Rugby Union turning professional overnight.

The IPL.

And so on.

So, what does the fourth chapter in modern sport's relentless expansion look like?

Some themes are already evident.

Sport is in 'test and learn' phase for a new era of tech-enabled global distribution, whether direct to the consumer or in partnership with the tech giants.

Esports are here to stay, and they were born global.

Women's sport has the momentum and potential for huge growth, and I have no doubt that that potential will be realised, worldwide.

But to look at the biggest theme, and the biggest influence, we need to look beyond sport.

Remember, back in the 1970s when all this got going, the world's top three countries by

share of world GDP were America, Germany and Japan. And that had a huge influence on sport and sports marketing.

Now let's look forward.

By 2030 that list will likely be, in order, China, America and India.

China and America you probably expected. But in third? Yeah, you read that right. India.

Right now, the world's fastest-growing big economy, and on track to overtake China as the world's most populous nation, if it hasn't already.

Twenty-five per cent of the world's population. Bigger than China. And an economy in top gear. Think about what that will create in a few years' time.

Not that long ago, people doubted China would become what it has. They saw it as a wild card. Now look at the size of its economy, the scale and dynamism of its start ups, and the huge presence China and its brands already have in sport.

India is where China was not long ago. Sport's next big frontier. And they don't come any bigger. ○

*Tim Crow is the former CEO of Synergy. Follow him on Twitter @shaymantim*

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2019

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CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAY

GUINNESS PRO14 FINAL

NOVEMBER

UCI WORLD CUP TRACK CYCLING

DECEMBER

LEN EUROPEAN SHORT COURSE  
SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

2020

MARCH-APRIL

WORLD MEN'S CURLING  
CHAMPIONSHIP

JUNE-JULY

UEFA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

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