



Player power

IN A CHANGING WORLD, WHO
HOLDS ALL THE CARDS?



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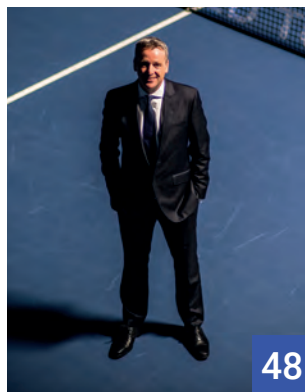
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Fortnite player's contract lawsuit unlikely to be the industry's 'Bosman moment'

Fortnite player Turner 'Tfue' Tenney sues his team FaZe Clan over contract

Tenney had to give up to 80 per cent of his personal sponsorship revenue to employer

But new investors from traditional sport are improving conditions for players



(Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

Callum McCarthy

You've heard of Fortnite. It's the most popular video game in the world. It made \$2.4bn (£2.1bn) for its developer Epic Games last year and despite reports that indicate revenue is dropping, the game made Epic \$203m in the month of May 2019.

Fortnite is consistently the most-watched game on streaming platform Twitch, and the vast majority of its watched hours come from individual streamers and private tournaments.

This is because Fortnite is not an esports like Overwatch or League of Legends. There are no franchises, no revenue sharing and no minimum salaries. Instead, the game's competitive scene is a playground for influencers who generally care far more about

Twitch subscriptions, YouTube ads and endorsements than winning tournaments.

As a result, the advantages of representing an esports organisation or team are relatively limited for Fortnite players.

The game's most-watched player this year is 21-year-old Turner 'Tfue' Tenney. To get an idea of just how popular Tenney is, he consistently racks up more watched hours each week on Twitch than the entirety of the Overwatch League.

Tenney's combination of skill and adolescent charisma has turned him into a global superstar in less than 12 months. Since signing with esports organisation FaZe Clan in April 2018 – which has over 10 million followers across Instagram and Twitter – Tenney has gone from a relative unknown to one of the most influential gamers in

the western hemisphere with over 6.4 million Twitch followers.

Tenney's primary reason for signing with FaZe was the organisation's 10 million followers across its social media platforms, which he was able to gain immediate access to.

Much like the majority of young gamers, Tenney signed his contract without consulting an agent or a lawyer. If he had, he may not have ended up with a contract that paid him just \$2,000 per month to exclusively represent FaZe for an initial six months, followed by three-year optional extension [at the same wage] that was activated by FaZe.

To make things worse, the deal stipulated that Tenney had to give up to 80 per cent of his personal sponsorship revenue to FaZe and be classified as a contractor – he could be fired at any



Turner 'Tfue' Tenney (YouTube)

time without cause and received none of the benefits or protections an employee usually receives.

Outside of franchised esports leagues such as the Overwatch League and the League of Legends Championship Series, contracts like Tenney's are common.

The 'bro' culture of organisations like FaZe – which is essentially a fraternity of gaming influencers and professionals – is incredibly attractive to children, teenagers and young adults.

Ryan Morrison, talent agent and founding partner of law firm Morrison Rothman, says most players treat their esports teams as extended families rather than business partners, and shy away from any form of legal representation. "I cannot tell you how many times a player fired us because of that," he says.

Taking a stand

But Tenney is not like most players. With no mutually agreeable way out of his deal until the end of October 2021, he became the first professional gamer to file a lawsuit against his own organisation on May 20, alleging that FaZe had committed illegal restriction of trade and was acting as his agent while unregistered.

He filed the suit in California, which has the most pro-worker labour laws in the United States. As a result, experts believe Tenney is highly likely either to win or to get a settlement and is all but guaranteed to secure his release.

Tenney has received plenty of public support, not least because of the public outbursts of Richard 'Banks' Bengtson, the 27-year-old owner of FaZe. Three

“He didn't do this to save the world and be an advocate, but whether he likes it or not, he's the voice of the little guy.”

Ryan Morrison | Morrison Rothman

days after the suit was filed, Bengtson said: "I fkn [sic] helped him blow up and changed that kids [sic] entire life. The very least I could ask for in return is he stay loyal to me and the brand that gave him his first real shot. Like what? FaZe is what's best for him."

Bengtson also publicly admonished Tenney for communicating with FaZe via his lawyer: "Like seriously homie? You're down the street from me. Let's talk."

"There are better owners for sure," says Morrison, who represents Fortnite professional Justin 'Kayuun' Ha. "Andy Miller [co-owner of the NRG Esports team and the Sacramento Kings] has never called and asked me to direct a player I represent to take less money. Andy treats it like business. Other owners call me and explain that they'd rather talk to my client directly. Of course, I'm not going to let them do that."

Bryce Blum, founding partner of esports law firm ESG Law, has spent the past six years representing teams and investors seeking opportunities in esports. He believes that the majority of investors and top-tier esports teams aren't looking to egregiously take advantage of young players.

"No one comes into esports and says: 'I want to have an agreement that's so

one-sided that if it becomes public, the community is going to light me on fire,'" he says.

Forwards or backwards?

While FaZe has been figuratively lit on fire by the gaming community, opinion is split on whether Tenney's decision to sue his way out of a bad contract comprises esports' 'Bosman moment'.

In 1995, Jean-Marc Bosman took Standard Liege, a Belgian football team, to court over their refusal to release him at the end of his contract. He won, and subsequently handed footballers in the European Union the freedom to leave their clubs at the end of contracts, as well as the leverage to force transfers while under contract.

Some believe that Tenney's decision to sue will embolden other players to seek representation, demand better pay and gain more freedom from their esports organisations. Others believe it will have the opposite effect, with teams pulling rank and preventing players from seeking sponsorship deals outside their organisations, for fear of falling foul of labour laws.

Much of the media coverage surrounding the lawsuit has heralded it as the beginning of a player power revolution in esports – something that Morrison agrees with.

"To do the thing that Tfue did, it would ruin the average player's career," Morrison says. "Tfue is the biggest talent in the world some months, so he's able to do this. He didn't do this to save the world and be an advocate, but whether he likes it or not, he's the voice of the little guy. Players are going to receive benefits as a result of this, and he should be commended for that."

Blum strongly disagrees with this line of thinking. He believes that by invoking the California Agency Act – alleging that FaZe illegally acted as his agent by taking a cut of his personal sponsorships – Tenney's lawsuit will scare teams into preventing players from controlling any of their own marketing rights.

"Right now, the way in which esports teams function is they pay bigger compensation than a player is worth and try to recoup that on the back of sponsorship revenue," Blum says. "They are aggregators of inventory.

They bundle inventory and they try to sell against it. If a player wants to get those rights back, that's feasible, but they're going to have to take a massive drop in compensation, because that's the bulk of what teams are paying for right now."

He continued: "It's going to go back to where it was two years ago, before concessions were made for players. It's a perfectly legally defensible condition for teams to take back all of these rights and prevent players from signing independent marketing deals. No one is challenging that under the law."

Representation void

The world of esports has long had a reputation for being a sprawling, unregulated land of opportunity and ruin. Stories of teams exploiting players or failing to pay their players are still more common than they should be. But in certain games such as Overwatch, League of Legends and Call of Duty, situations like Tenney's are becoming a thing of the past.

Investors and executives from the world of traditional sports are remoulding the upper echelons of esports world in their own image: revenue sharing, closed franchise

leagues and – crucially for players – decent minimum salaries and guaranteed employee status at their teams.

The Overwatch League – a global franchise league – balances opportunity with security for its players, offering a \$50,000 per year minimum salary at any given franchise, health insurance, accommodation, a retirement fund, as well as a 50-per-cent share of prize money to be split with their team.

In the North American League of Legends Championship Series, the average salary has increased three-fold from about \$105,000 per year to over \$320,000 per year since it became a closed, franchise league in 2018.

But while an influx of executives from professional sports teams and broadcasters has swept esports over the past three years, esports has yet to reach the economic scale to attract the same kind of influx from talent and sports agencies.

Esports careers are often short, with players either burning out in their early 20s or ending successful careers before 30. Hundreds of young gamers break into an ever-increasing number of esports around the world each year, and there are very few agencies with

the necessary scale and knowledge to efficiently acquire talent and represent them to a high standard.

"Certain games have reached an economic scale where having representation just makes sense," Blum says. "The representative can justify spending the time because they can get compensated a reasonable level, and the player has enough at stake to want that kind of professional representation behind whatever it is that they're going to sign and do."

Blum believes that roughly half of the top 100 players in the three most-popular esports – League of Legends, Dota 2 and Counter Strike: Global Offensive – have professional representation.

"But if you ask what percentage of the best hundred players in the top 20 esports are represented? It's going to be less than 10 per cent."

"There needs to be more competition in the marketplace," Morrison says. "Evolved [Morrison's talent agency] can't represent everyone forever. There's ten thousand people with 'esports lawyer' in their LinkedIn description but, in reality, there are five attorneys in total who work on the talent side of things."



(Cooper Neill/Getty Images)

Security, opportunity, but no power

Despite so much potential for growth and change, there are two primary issues that will prevent esports players from clawing back a degree of control in the same way professional athletes have in the big four US leagues.

First, the global nature of esports makes unionising and collective bargaining next to impossible. The Overwatch League currently spans six different countries and is likely to expand. While an Overwatch players' association is possible, it would have no right to collective bargaining and no legal right to strike because it would span so many jurisdictions.

Second, to play most traditional sports, one needs a field, a ball and a goal. Esports players need the intellectual property of a game publisher or developer and are thus always subject to their terms of service and participation.

Franchise leagues are taking full advantage of this, and while they offer security, minimum salary and employee benefits to its players, the contracts leave players with next to zero rights and freedoms.

In the franchised North American League of Legends Championship Series (NA LCS), players give up their image rights for life for no extra compensation. The game's developer, Riot, also operates the league.

In the Overwatch League, players must agree to Activision Blizzard – the game's developer and the competition operator – placing cameras in their team house should they want to create content, or a reality show.

Players either have to accept these terms or decide not to play in the top level of their chosen game. And while Riot has funded a players' association for players in the NA LCS, those players have no ability to collectively bargain or strike.

With no franchise league and no recognisable esports structure to rely on for income, Fortnite players and influencers like Tenney have little-to-no security and can easily be taken advantage of by esports organisations looking to boost their own profiles.

However, players also have the option of going it alone and creating their own



Tyler "Ninja" Blevins reacts after a game win in Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 during the Doritos Bowl 2018 at TwitchCon 2018 (Robert Reiners/Getty Images)



Fans of FaZe Clan react during the game against team OpTic Gaming during Call of Duty World League (Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images)

content empires around their play, and can play in independent tournaments that allow players to have their own sponsorship deals.

Predictably, this is something that Fortnite is looking to change. Mainstream popularity never lasts forever, and Epic Games wants to create an esports structure that will help it retain relevance after the Fortnite craze subsides. Its recent hiring of Nate Nanzer, the former commissioner of the Overwatch League, indicates in which direction it is looking to push.

For many young hopefuls looking to break into the world of competitive Fortnite, such a development will offer safety, security, but precious few rights outside of that. Whether that is better than the current wild-west landscape,

where opportunity is plentiful but with no guarantees or protections, depends on who you ask.

What cannot be denied, however, is that neither model provides players with the combination of freedom and security enjoyed by European footballers and professional athletes in the top-four US sports leagues.

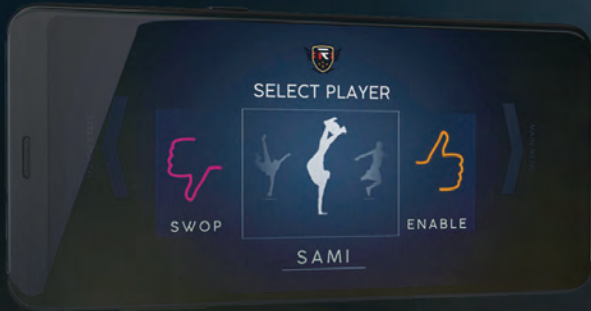
With help from lawyers, agents and investors, working conditions for esports players are improving. But without the ability to collectively bargain, strike or create their own professional breakaway leagues, the chances are remote that esports players will one day set the agenda in their chosen industry.

There will never be an esports player who takes their ball and goes home, because it will never be their ball. ○



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Philadelphia Phillies see large bump in its business fortunes with Harper signing

Acquisition of star has fuelled the MLB club's largest per-game attendance increase

While Harper is often the focal point, other key players are central to the club's engagement strategy

The Phillies' outspoken fanbase has embraced the player after his total immersion into the city



Philadelphia Phillies Managing Partner John Middleton (left) and General Manager Matt Klentak (centre) were key figures in the club's acquisition of Bryce Harper. (Philadelphia Phillies 2018)

Paul Hagen

Two weeks into baseball's spring training this year, the Philadelphia Phillies had sold around 10,500 season tickets, up by about a thousand on the previous year.

Not bad. After the bottom fell out of the final two months of the 2018 season, managing partner John Middleton made it clear he was ready to spend in attempt to fast-track the club's rebuilding. General manager Matt Klentak moved aggressively to sign outfielder Andrew McCutchen, a former National League Most Valuable

Player, and trade for a pair of All-Stars, infielder Jean Segura, and catcher JT Realmuto.

The customers responded accordingly. But that merely primed the pump for what happened next.

On February 28, news began to break that the Phillies had agreed to terms with outfielder Bryce Harper, one of the sport's most anticipated free agents ever and already one of Major League Baseball's most popular and marketable stars following a decorated seven-year run in Washington.

This was the moment the team's ticketing and marketing departments had been preparing for. Senior vice-

president, ticket operations and projects, John Weber knew exactly what to do once the Phillies' 13-year, \$330m (€292m) deal with Harper, representing the largest contract in MLB history, became official.

"Make sure we had enough people to answer the phones," he says with a laugh.

Good idea. After getting 2,500 calls the week before, the ticket office fielded 7,400 calls in the week that Harper signed his Phillies contract and then 8,100 the week after that.

In a normal week at that time of year heading into spring training, with some level of excitement, the Phillies might

expect to sell between 70,000 and 80,000 tickets.

That first week after Harper's signing resulted in about 340,000 tickets sold including season, group and single ticket sales. The final season ticket number was approximately 13,500. "Which is just incredible," Weber says. "It was an explosion. Everybody wanted to come out and see him."

But preparing for and fully capitalising on the acquisition of a player of Harper's star power is far more complex than just making sure the phone banks are properly staffed. In fact, that is mere table stakes. The bigger challenge is this: how does a franchise take that initial tsunami of marketplace enthusiasm and then harness it to create sustained benefit, lasting sales, and continued fan engagement?

Early gains

Nearly halfway through the 2019 season, the Phillies stand easily atop the entire league in attendance increase, with its bump thus far of more than 10,000 people to a per-game average to just north of 35,000. No other MLB team has boosted its per-game attendance by even half that much per game, and it's helped return a level of palpable energy to Citizens Bank Park that existed when the Phillies sold out 257 games straight between 2009-12.

The ticket sales gains are on top of a nearly 40-per-cent rise in local TV ratings for games on NBC Sports Philadelphia, and Harper in March fuelling the best 24 hours of sales for Fanatics of any jersey debut ever.

But with the 26-year-old Harper now set to be in Philadelphia for the next 13 years, club officials are still keeping a firm eye on the long-term impact well beyond this debut season.

"There's a period of euphoria at the onset. And there's a honeymoon period afterwards," Phillies' vice-president, marketing and new media Mike Harris says. "So our job was to set everything up and get it ready to go."

That preparation process was largely divided into two parts: areas the Phillies could specifically control, and the ones they couldn't.

One example of the former is that, when the 2019 promotional schedule was being constructed, well prior to Harper's decision to join the Phillies, a date was deliberately left open that could be used in case Harper or Manny Machado, the other big-name MLB free agent hitter on the market, ended up in red pinstripes. As a result, on July 28, all children under 14 attending that afternoon's game against the Braves will receive Harper replica jerseys.

Harper's presence also helped maximise the effectiveness of the other

planned early-season giveaways (knit cap, socks, a variety of T-shirts) and promotions (Dollar Dog nights) already in place. The average attendance for 17 home dates in April was around 38,000, a number that most MLB clubs in the US Northeast and Midwest can only dream of reaching during these early, cold-weather weeks of the season when school is still in session.

"A large part of that was Harper," Weber says. "It just got people really paying attention to what was going on. Some of the programs we had in place,



Philadelphia Phillies fans approach Citizens Bank Park on Opening Day on March 28. While star acquisition Bryce Harper has been a focal point of club marketing, as seen in the centre of the banner, he is often with joined with teammates (Philadelphia Phillies 2018).

they seemed to work a little better when we signed a guy like that.”

On Opening Day, a huge banner hung about the third base gates at Citizens Bank Park featuring, of course, Harper in a prominent position. But it also had McCutchen, pitchers Aaron Nola and Jake Arrieta, and third baseman Maikel Franco. Which pretty much sums up Phase II of the plan to promote their newest star, and another element they can control.

“Harper’s the centerpiece, but they’re equal,” Phillies’ executive vice-president David Buck says. “We’re not going to turn this into the Bryce Harper team. We’re going to have him as part

of the team and all the natural things that are occurring are better than just saying, ‘Harper this, Harper that, Harper this, Harper that’.

“When we sit in meetings, we don’t say, ‘How can we capitalise on Harper more?’, we’re past that. It’s, ‘How do we capitalise on the Phillies?’. I mean, [pitcher Zach] Eflin was [just] in *USA Today*. Segura is hitting the heck out of the ball. So how do we capitalise on all that? And it’s by focusing on the team,” he says.

That approach is neatly illustrated by the e-mails the Phillies regularly send to a database of season and group ticket buyers, as well as individual

customers. These communications feature the player or players who are making headlines at the moment.

At first, not surprisingly, it was all Harper, all the time.

“From an advertising and marketing and social media perspective, obviously we blitzed as much as we could out of the gate,” Harris says. “One of our jobs is to strike while the iron is hot...I can’t imagine you could have walked through Philly [then] without seeing a billboard or a digital ad or some reference to Bryce.”

Once the season started, though, that changed. “If [first baseman Rhys] Hoskins hits homers in 10 straight games, Hoskins goes to the top. Our TV commercials might say, ‘Come see Hoskins. Can he make it 11?’ Take advantage of what’s hot, what’s going on,” Buck said. “If Harper hits homers in 10 straight games, Harper goes to the top. Not because he’s Harper. Because he homered in 10 straight games.”

Data analysis

An analysis of its new ticket data following the Harper signing frenzy showed that 60 per cent of all accounts that purchased tickets this year did not buy in 2018, with those buyers helping fuel the ongoing attendance increase. That wave of new buyers, however, remained steady from 2018 in its geographic spread, with 67 per cent of buyers from the state of Pennsylvania, 26 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, from neighboring New Jersey and Delaware, and 3 per cent from other states.

“Obviously, it’s always great when you’re getting news customers into your database,” Weber says. “Some of those people may have purchased in 2012, 2013, 2014 then took a couple years off. But it’s great having new customers, or maybe customers who haven’t purchased in a while coming back. Then hopefully they’ll come back, not just one or two times but multiple times.”

To encourage that repeat visitation, the Phillies are emphasising greater contact between its ticket sales and marketing staffers and the fanbase, and not just through social media or outward promotional spots. During



(Rich Schultz/Getty Images)



Bryce Harper wears cleats featuring the Philly Phanatic during the game against the Atlanta Braves on Opening Day at Citizens Bank Park on March 28, 2019 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Drew Hallowell/Getty Images)

the first week of June, the team hosted customers at Citizens Bank Park to thank them for buying tickets in April and May. And the ticket renewal window for the 2020 season that, like many other MLB clubs typically would begin in August, is now being moved up to earlier in the summer.

Weber described the moves as amplifications of pre-existing sales strategies.

“Just making more of a concerted effort,” he says. “The good news this year is that, when you’re calling people, they want to talk to you. They want to have a conversation. They want to know what’s going on. They want to know how you’re going to fill McCutchen’s injury spot, or who we’re going to call up next. There’s a lot more buzz. People are glad to see ‘Phillies’ come up on their phone.”

Harper’s immersion

The element far less controllable by the front office is Harper himself, both in terms of his demeanor and his on-field performance. Fortunately for the Phillies, Harper immediately embraced the city of Philadelphia and the club’s notoriously outspoken fanbase.

When Harper took his outfield position for the first time on Opening Day he turned to the right field stands and bowed deeply. He was wearing green spikes adorned with images of the club’s popular mascot, the Phillie Phanatic, and, later, presented an oversized replica of those shoes to the costumed creature.

Harper then took part in a “ring the bell” ceremony before a NBA Philadelphia Sixers game, referencing the city’s famed Liberty Bell, and then watched the contest from the Wells Fargo Center seats with Hoskins and Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz. He also spoke at the press conference announcing that Philadelphia will host the 2026 All-Star Game, an event tying into the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Not long after the signing, a post of Harper wearing an Eagles hoodie popped up on Twitter, despite his status as a lifelong fan of Philadelphia rival the Dallas Cowboys.

“Bryce is doing a lot of this on his own right now,” Buck says. “It’s a legit, sincere effort to immerse himself into Philadelphia. And that works. So that’s the stuff that will enable this to keep going.”

“It’s great having new customers, or maybe customers who haven’t purchased in a while coming back.”

John Weber | Senior vice-president, ticket operations and projects, Philadelphia Phillies

Added Harris: “He’s clearly endeared himself through interaction with the fans, social media, the brotherly love with all the other local sports teams. The longer he’s here, the more he’ll assimilate into the community, culture and fabric of the city. And part of our job will be to amplify that connection and – over time because he’s got to earn it – over time he’ll become a true Philadelphian.

“There’s a danger of pushing it too hard in a non-genuine way. So you’ve got to thread the needle a little bit. But he gets it. He’s created the foundation of who he’s going to be in this city. And that’s a really exciting thing,” Harris says.

The biggest wild card, of course, is whether or not the Phillies win and what kind of numbers Harper generates. And the early results have been promising. The Phillies have spent much of the 2019 season atop the NL East

division and remain firmly in contention for a playoff spot. And after a slow start personally, Harper is now hitting at a rate approaching his perennial All-Star days in Washington.

“The ebbs and flows of ticket sales are obviously impacted by overall team performance,” Weber says. “It’s a long season, we’re off to a good start and our fans have responded. Ultimately where we end up will depend on many variables outside of our direct control. So our goal is to entertain our fans when they come to [Citizens Bank Park] and to always be improving our relationship with our fans.”



Mike Harris, Philadelphia Phillies vice-president, marketing and new media (Philadelphia Phillies 2018)

FXBALL – a connected crossover sport for the 21st century



Le Tremplin, the Paris-based sports and technology accelerator programme, has given a platform to a range of innovations designed to enhance sport and the experience of sport.

But until this year it had never selected a new sport for inclusion in its showcase event at the Hotel de Ville in Paris.

That changed when Henrik Jessen, game designer and CEO of FXBALL, recently took to the stage to explain his ambition for a brand-new sport which combines spectacular athletic action with a level of digital connectivity designed to build communities of players and fans and keep them engaged.

FXBALL is unique by combining the skills of football, freestyling, sepak takraw, beach soccer, volleyball and paddle tennis under one roof. In this

case the roof is called ‘the Pentadrome’, an arena equipped with targets and rebounding floors that guarantee non-stop acrobatic moves such as scissors kicks and dives.

Henrik Jessen says that, as a sports fan, he has always looked for opportunities to create better experiences for players and spectators alike.

“When I started looking into football-related sports, I figured there must be a way to mix it all up and add the things I loved from other sports and games.

“I dreamed about an arena, a futuristic colosseum, where players and spectators experience intense competitions with acrobatic action and very long rallies.

“And I wondered how I could use today’s digital technologies for broadcasting formats by giving the audience the power to decide and enable the ‘fate’ of players – just like

gladiators. A pursuit that sits at the intersection between reality sports and esports.

“It is really a hybrid. On a tournament level, fans are encouraged to use their smartphones to really get involved. They can “put players on fire” or “swop” them and vote for their MSP – most spectacular player – which creates a competition within a competition and encourages players to push themselves to the limits.

“In today’s live-mobile-online-TV hybrid world, sports fans are consuming media in completely new ways. It’s no longer enough to simply broadcast, they need to be part of an interactive show.

Henrik Jessen insists though that: “Gamification and other add-on technologies are important for us to remain an innovative brand, to prove and enjoy our freedom to be able to adapt quickly to trends and therefore

realise a broader commercial potential. But more importantly, even without any of these tech gadgets and interactivity, FXBALL delivers immense fun. We know now this sport will work anywhere you enter a Pentadrome, with or without electrification or a mobile phone.

“For more than a year now, we videoed all the sessions in our Pentalab, analysed the game situations, rules and the players’ behaviour. We have been constantly improving the features, angles balls and the size of the Pentadrome until we were convinced that we had it right. Thanks to the input of a few players, we added some fantastic innovative street rules to the game that we did not have on the radar before,” he says.

“We realised it was and still is important to build and be inspired by grassroots momentum because that will help us develop and refine the sport and its future development as an esport and a sport in its own right.

“When we tested our main target group – proficient male and female footballers (aged 13-35), freestylers (22-45) and sepak takraw players who play on a regular basis at least twice a week – the results were very encouraging.

“Almost all of the footballers we showed a video of FXBALL and the Pentadrome to, said they definitely wanted to play.

“And 80 per cent of the players we

invited to play for the first time, wanted to come back to improve their skills and become a better FXBALLer. Some of them even said playing was somehow addictive.

“Another fact was that 67 per cent of the players said they even would swap a paid-for five-a-side session in a soccer hall, with a game in the Pentadrome for the same price.

“Our survey also revealed that players loved the feeling of being in the Pentadrome and the sense of team spirit that it engendered. There is little physical contact between players, which minimises the risk of injury – landing on the specially-adapted floor is painless. The large numbers of interactions with the ball helps players to constantly improve their technical skills. Girls enjoy playing the sport because the physical performance gap is minimised.

“We will be launching our European kick off campaign in 2020 with an FX BALL Academy based in the suburbs of Paris that will deliver a daily platform for players to have fun and prove their skills, and for us to produce content on a daily basis and reach out for new talent.

“We are also reaching out for opportunities linked to Euro 2020 where cities and sponsors are looking for innovative solutions to activate their fan zones and produce fantastic visuals for their social media channels.

We have a very strong concept for the activation campaign linked to a Skill Hero Challenge that we will also kick off in 2020.

“Our expansion model then foresees South and North America activations as well as entering the Asian market. We are also planning FXBALL championships, national and continental promotional tours and showcase events linked to other sports and esports events. We will develop computer games and an augmented reality version of FXBALL.

“We are a 21st century sports business which is able to control and monetise a wide range of commercial assets and, in doing so, create business opportunities for all those who partner with us,” explains Henrik Jessen.

At a time when many traditional sports are looking for ways of revising their core offering to create shorter, sharper versions with greater connectivity to attract younger audiences, FXBALL appears to have significant, built-in advantages that make it a compelling proposition for investors and business partners alike.

Devised to operate in the sweet spot where live sports, OTT and traditional TV meet social media and esports, FXBALL will build from the roots up through the engagement of players and by making facilities available in communities.

Urban Pentadromes for inner city areas will breathe new life into dilapidated facilities including skate parks and other urban sport facilities.

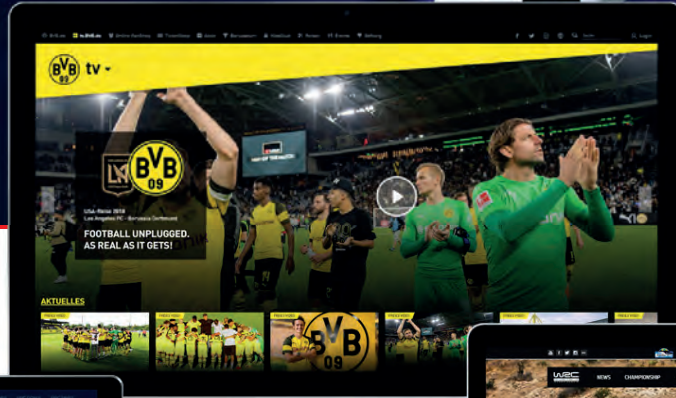
Another grassroots opportunity comes in the form of the mobile version of the Pentadrome, which allows owners and operators of existing facilities such as sports and indoor soccer centres, to add something different to their offering, generating fresh revenues in their own right and providing a point of differentiation against competitors.

The future of FXBALL is bright. Currently we are looking for strategic partners to help us to accelerate the growth of the business. ○

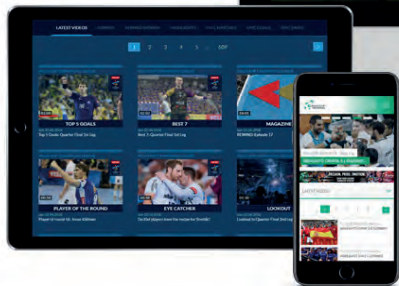


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Investors will look closely at Wanda and Endeavor football rights deals

Endeavor (IMG) and Wanda Sports (Infront) both looking to raise \$500m from IPO

Infront's margins depend heavily on four football deals with uncertain futures

Endeavor admits IMG is losing money on three football rights contracts



Frank Dunne

The imminent initial public offerings on the New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq of the world's two biggest sports marketing companies – Endeavor Group Holdings and Wanda Sports Group – should improve the liquidity available to both. Endeavor's listing could shake up the way the talent representation industry is structured long term. But the development won't be a game-changer for sport.

The industry's major underlying trends will not bend to a new trajectory. The competitive dynamics of the sports marketing sector will receive, at most, a minor jolt.

Nor is going public anything new in the sports marketing world. Lagardère

Sports and Entertainment has been part of its publicly-traded parent company, the French conglomerate Lagardère, since it was put together by the merger of the Sportfive, IEC in Sports and World Sport Group agencies over a decade ago.

It is a good moment to go to the capital markets with media, entertainment and technology stocks. Venture capital and private equity companies are cash rich and opportunity poor. And while anyone drilling deeply into the numbers – especially the levels of debt and future spending commitments – may have some concerns, it would be a surprise if both did not hit their short-term targets.

Last week the office messaging service Slack went public in New York with shares trading at a 50-per-cent

premium to the guide price of \$26 (€22.8) per share, valuing the company at more than \$24bn. Endeavor is reported to be looking for a valuation of over \$9bn.

The markets like to understand exactly what they are buying into and where it lies in the nexus of media and technology. One of the things the \$30bn listing last April of music streaming service Spotify showed was that the markets like platforms.

Not for nothing does the Endeavor prospectus continually refer to its disparate group of assets – IMG, UFC, Miss Universe, Professional Bull Riders, Neulion, tennis's Miami Open and so on – as a "platform". A platform that delivers "access" to talent, be that the current heroes of UFC or movies stars like Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson.

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Wanda Sports, a small part of China's massive Dalian Wanda conglomerate, comprises the Infront agency, the Ironman long-distance triathlon franchise and Wanda Sports China, which majors in mass participation events. Wanda's elevator pitch is less Hollywood than Endeavor's, but the company too gets the P-word in early. "We are a global sports events, media and marketing platform," its prospectus says on page one.

Limited impact

The impact on the sports marketing industry, even of a better-than-expected outcome for both, will be limited. It won't change the rankings, which have Endeavor at number one and Wanda Sports at number two. The two giants have managed to co-exist without ever posing a direct threat to each other and there is no reason why that should change.

There may be areas where IMG and Infront bump up against each other in future – both have been eyeing a major strategic move into rugby; IMG may tilt again at the winter sports empire controlled by Infront – but for the most part, they have developed business areas which don't conflict.

Nor is the injection of liquidity likely to propel the two players into a different stratosphere to their competitors. In theory, an additional \$500m ought to make them more fearsome adversaries in the market for valuable rights or assets. But this depends on the proportion of funds earmarked for growth and the amount which will pay down debt. Neither company is providing a breakdown on that but the suspicion in the industry is that dealing with debt is the priority.

From brokerage to ownership

Endeavor and Wanda are highly-diversified businesses, textbook cases of how sports marketing companies are pivoting from rights trading and representation to ownership of intellectual property – controlling assets which drive revenues long term, rather than gambling on high-risk rights owned by others. And where sports properties can't be acquired outright, joint

ventures or long-term partnerships have become the preferred modus operandi.

However, each still has – at its core – a huge, and volatile, sports rights business.

Wanda's business segments are: Mass Participation, Spectator Sports (which includes media rights), and Production/Digital. Spectator Sports is by some distance the biggest of the three, in terms of both revenues and profits.

WANDA SPORTS, SPECTATOR SPORTS % OF TOTAL REVENUES BY SPORT

Mass participation

Year	Revenue	Gross Profit
2016	196.4	74.8
2017	251.5	90.3
2018	284	100.9
Q12019	30	6.8

Spectator sports*

Year	Revenue	Gross Profit
2016	537.8	162.2
2017	547.1	198.1
2018	523.8	208.2
Q12019	194	44.0

Production/digital

Year	Revenue	Gross Profit
2016	143.1	40.1
2017	156.1	42.2
2018	321.3	56.4
Q12019	21.5	9.38

* includes rights trading Source: Wanda Sports IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

WANDA SPORTS, BREAKDOWN OF REVENUES IN MASS PARTICIPATION SPORTS, €

Year	Entry fees	Sponsorship	Host city fees	Merchandising	Licensing fees	Other
2016	85.1m	48.8m	16.1m	16.1m	6.0m	24.3m
2017	108.5m	59.5m	22.4m	19.0m	7.9m	34.2m
2018	124.1m	69.2m	25.5m	21.8m	10.6m	33.0m

Source: Wanda Sports IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

ENDEAVOR, ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS BY SEGMENT, 2018, \$

Activity	Income
Media rights sales	917.7m
Production	200.5m
Events/performance	1.155bn

Source: Endeavor IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

ENDEAVOR COMMITMENTS AT DEC 31, 2018, \$

Due date	Amount
2019	1.132bn
2020-2021	1.876bn
2022-2023	716.5m
post-2023	408.8m
Total	4.133bn

Source: Endeavor IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

Endeavor has three divisions: Entertainment and Sports (including rights trading), Representation (of talent) and Endeavor X (D2C streaming). Entertainment and Sports dwarfs the other two, with rights trading accounting for over \$900m in 2018.

Analysts will focus on the headline numbers. Endeavor reported total revenues of \$3.6bn in 2018, Wanda Sports of €1.129bn. Endeavor is carrying \$4.619bn of debt, compared to the €1.1bn of Wanda Sports. Endeavor has future spending commitments of \$4.133bn, Wanda has spending commitments of €2.5bn.

But deep in these labyrinthine, jargon-filled 200-page documents, can be found references to football rights deals which are worth close analysis.

In the case of IMG, they show no

matter how diversified your portfolio, you can't afford to get too many rights deals wrong at the same time without the whole edifice beginning to creak. In the case of Infront, they show that when a small number of deals contribute a big proportion of your profits, the burning question becomes: what happens if you can't renew them?

When describing these football deals, the Endeavor and Wanda IPO filing documents are not misleading. They are as rigorous as might be expected from a filing to the US Securities and Exchange Commission. But they do not tell the whole story.

Infront expects

On several occasions in the prospectus Wanda stresses that "no single rights-in or services contract in our current portfolio accounted for more than 10 per cent of our revenue". But Infront's revenues and profitability are particularly sensitive to four football deals. These are:

- A media-rights advisory agreement with top Italian football league, Lega Serie A
- A deal with Fifa to sell the media rights in Asia to the World Cups of 2018 and 2022
- A long-running deal for the media and marketing rights deal with the German Football Association (DFB)
- A long-running a deal to host broadcast Fifa events, including World Cup finals.

Their contribution to revenues is set out in the prospectus: "Deals due to expire in 2021, including Serie A, accounted for €159.5m in 2018, €165.6m in 2017 and €148.1m 2016. Contracts set to expire in 2022, including the Asia World Cup and host broadcasting deals with Fifa, as well as with the DFB for media rights relating to the DFB Cup, accounted for €79.2m in 2018, €68.7m in 2017 and €53.8m in 2016."

In the Risk Factors section, Wanda dutifully points out that it "may not ultimately be able to secure new long-term relationships or maintain our existing relationships (in the latter case, for example, because of changes in leadership and priorities of the relevant rights owners, or changes in operating models that contemplate moving monetisation efforts in-house, or our own management changes) and, if we are able to renew or extend rights-in contracts, the terms we are able to negotiate may not be as profitable as they were before".

But later the prospectus paints an upbeat picture. It says: "Reflecting the strength of the relationships that we have established with rights-in partners, rights-out clients and other stakeholders and the scope of capabilities we are able to offer in the evolving sports ecosystem, we currently anticipate that we will continue to derive significant business from many of the counterparties of contracts set to expire beyond the current term of the relevant contract, including with Fifa and Lega Serie A. We expect to continue to work with Fifa on various projects (including host broadcast production as well as media and sponsorship sales) and to leverage our long-term relationship with Lega Serie A beyond the terms of our existing contracts."

We currently anticipate. We expect. But what do the rights-holders expect and anticipate?

Serie A: Infront's deal with Serie A is generally considered to be one of the most profitable in the business. The agency has been adviser to the league since 2009. Its current six-year deal covers the period 2015-16 to 2020-21. It put up a guarantee of €5.94bn over the period, split €980m per season in the first three seasons and €1bn per season for the second cycle. Above this amount it shares profits with the league. Income from broadcasters was about €1.2bn in the first cycle and slightly higher in the second. On top of this, it is paid a fee for match production and makes a further margin by acquiring the clubs' archive rights and selling them on to broadcasters.

Although no decision has been taken at a league assembly to confirm that the

WANDA SPORTS, FUTURE SPENDING COMMITMENTS AT MARCH 31, 2019, €

Buy-out contracts	1.3bn
MGs in commssion-based contracts	1.2bn
Total	2.5bn

Source: Wanda Sports IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

contract will not be extended beyond 2021, it is difficult to find anyone of a senior level in Italian football who believes that a further renewal is likely.

The clubs are currently considering an offer from the Mediapro agency to create a league channel in a joint venture with Serie A from 2021, based on a minimum guarantee of €1.2bn per season. Mediapro would stand to earn the first €90m per season in revenue over and above that amount from distributing the channel. It is inconceivable that Infront's advisory deal will be renewed if the clubs accept Mediapro's offer.

World Cup: In October 2011, Infront acquired the rights in 26 Asian territories to all Fifa events from 2015 to 2022, including the World Cups of 2018 and 2022. Infront paid a minimum guarantee of \$600m. The sales for 2018 alone (along with China for 2022) brought in nearly \$660m. If the second cycle brings in something similar, the total should exceed \$1bn. Infront earns 12-per-cent commission on sales and will take 20 per cent of income above the \$600m.

However, Infront has no renewal options, either matching rights clauses or first rights of negotiation beyond 2022. A straight 'renewal' is not a realistic possibility and – after recent events that hardly need recounting – Fifa is determined that whatever happens next will be beyond reproach. The governing body may yet choose to take these rights in-house – in line with how it sells in the rest of the world – but if it doesn't, and chooses to work with an agency again, it will offer them in a transparent tender process. Infront may well continue to sell the rights beyond 2022, but first it would have to win them by outbidding all its rivals.

DFB: Infront, and its predecessor agencies, like CWL Telesport, have handled perimeter advertising for the German Football Association (DFB) for nearly 40 years. In 2011, the federation made Infront its global media-rights adviser, in a deal which covered media and marketing rights to both German national team games and the domestic cup competition. The large-scale centralisation of the media rights to European national teams by Uefa to create the European Qualifiers and

Nations League properties took a deep swathe of the value out of the deal for Infront but in 2015 the deal for the cup rights was extended.

“No single rights-in or services contract in our current portfolio accounted for more than 10 per cent of our revenue”.

Wanda IPO prospectus

In May, prior to publishing its IPO prospectus, Infront made a shock announcement. It said a former senior employee may have committed fraud when employed by Infront. The public prosecutor in Thurgau, Switzerland, had notified Infront of a pending criminal investigation into: “fraudulent activities linked to perimeter board advertising provided by Infront for matches governed by the German Football Association (DFB)”.

The alleged scam involved providing

sponsors with less advertising time than contractually specified in order to create a surplus of ad board time, generating additional revenue which the agency never saw.

In its IPO prospectus Wanda added: “The former employee has made certain formal allegations involving certain senior Infront employees as to their involvement in the fraudulent activities, which we believe, based on Infront's ongoing internal investigations, are without merit. The former employee may, in the future, continue to make these, or other, allegations.”

The strength of Infront's historic relationship with the DFB is not in doubt. But it might now find it is tested in a way it never has been before.

HBS: The highly regarded Infront division Host Broadcast Services has been covering Fifa events since 1999, most recently the 2018 World Cup finals in Russia. Host production generally in football is considered a low-margin business but one which can drive considerable revenues.

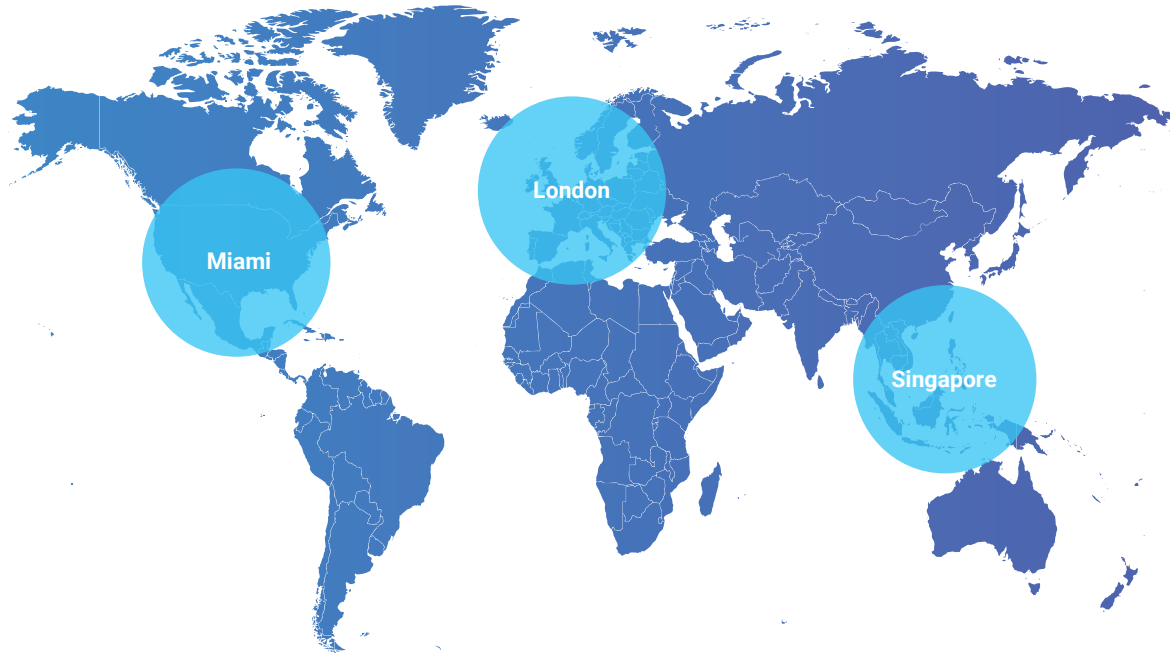
Historically, HBS had rolling two-



Wang Jianlin, chairman of Dalian Wanda Group (Imaginechina/MB Media/Getty Images)



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cycle deals with Fifa. These were usually renewed in the October or November after the first of the two World Cups. By that precedent, HBS would have known by now what was happening after the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. But it doesn't.

Following the change in senior management at the governing body, all commercial matters have fallen under chief commercial officer Philippe Le Floc'h since October 2016. All processes have been reviewed and are being handled differently.

It is understood that a discussion will take place over the next 12 months about what happens on host broadcasting after Qatar. Options include a further one-cycle or two-cycle renewal with HBS or a completely different approach, such as putting the contract out to tender. Wanda may expect the deal to be renewed. But it can have no certainty. And industry observers point out that the departure of the founder and chief executive of HBS, Francis Tellier, who announced he was leaving the company in October 2018, will not help. Tellier is seen as having been vital to the strong relationship with Fifa.

Football deals hit IMG profits

As a US company, IMG's roots were always more in golf and tennis than in football. Both have been highly profitable for the agency for decades. IMG insiders would hint that the agency had largely stayed out of football rights because it was a dirty business. Rivals sneered that they just didn't have the balls.

Whatever the real reason, things began to change about a decade ago. The process accelerated following the takeover of IMG by US talent agency WME in December 2013, driven by WME chief executives Ari Emanuel and Patrick Whitesell. As one insider put it, "Ari and Patrick said to IMG from day one: we've got your back. If you think it will make money, we are absolutely behind you. They never questioned IMG's projections because there was no reason to. IMG had never missed its numbers."

Since then the agency has bid aggressively for virtually every premium football property on the market and has succeeded in building a blue-chip portfolio: the Premier League, the Bundesliga, Major League



Ari Emanuel, chief executive, Endeavor (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

Soccer, Chinese Super League, Danish SuperLiga, Dutch Eredivisie, Football Federation Australia, European Qualifiers and Uefa Nations League. This list goes on.

In the period 2016 to 2017, several big football opportunities allowed the agency to flex its muscles. These included the global rights to Serie A, the global rights to the FA Cup and the rights to LaLiga in the Nordics. All were won with aggressive bids and all helped drive revenues.

Serie A: In November 2017, IMG acquired the global rights, outside Italy, to Serie A for the three seasons from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The agency paid just over €380m per season, which includes media rights, club archive rights, betting streaming rights and a commitment to marketing the championship.

In the previous three-year cycle, the MP & Silva agency had paid €185.7m per season. MP & Silva is thought to have brought in about €230m per season for

the rights, so there was clearly money to be made on the property. The agency is also thought to have matched the value of IMG's offer at the last minute in negotiations. Nevertheless, the scale of the IMG bid took the industry's breath away. Few experts could see where the margins might be.

According to research conducted in October 2018 by *SportBusiness Media*, IMG is on course to lose tens of millions of euros per season on the deal.

LaLiga: Between late 2017 and early 2018, IMG acquired the rights to LaLiga across the Nordics for three seasons, 2018-19 to 2020-21, paying about €30m per season. This was an increase of €6m per season on the €24m that the MP & Silva agency had paid in the previous cycle. The aggressive nature of the bid was a surprise given that most experts were convinced MP & Silva had lost money on its deal.

It is understood that IMG's confidence was based on a pre-deal

ENDEAVOR, ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS, \$				
Year	Revenue	YOY	EBITDA	YOY
2016	1.471bn	n/a	341.0m	n/a
2017	1.989bn	35%	467.2m	37%
2018	2.273bn	14.3%	439.5	(5.9%)
Q1 2019	674m	49.3%	61.8m	(33.6%)

Source: Endeavor IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

covering both Serie A and LaLiga with one of the region's major media groups. The operator backed out of the deal at the last minute, leaving IMG with little bargaining power with other broadcasters. It chose to launch the Strive Sport OTT pay platform across the region to carry the two leagues plus Major League Soccer. The agency does not publish subscriber numbers but even if local reports of 50,000 subscribers are wide of the mark, and the true figure is much higher, it is hard to see how the agency can avoid losing a

large amount on the deal.

FA Cup: In October 2016, IMG acquired the global rights to the FA Cup, excluding the UK, Western Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. The deal was for six seasons, from 2018-19 to 2023-24. The agency paid \$121.7m per season for the rights. The rights to the same territories in the previous six-year cycle had been worth \$48m per season.

At the time, rival agency executives saw the fee as a massive gamble that was predicated on three things: growth

in the value in China, growth in the US and the need for more blue-chip football properties ahead of the upcoming IPO. The Chinese market proved far more difficult than expected but so did most of Asia. One rights expert familiar with the property said that the agency had been hit by "a perfect storm" of negative factors. He expected the losses on the deal to be in the tens of millions of dollars over the lifetime of the deal.

The prospectus breakdown for the Entertainment and Sports division says: "Revenue for the three months ended March 31, 2019 increased \$222.6m, or 49.3 per cent, to \$674.1m, compared to the three months ended March 31, 2018. Approximately \$190m of the increase is attributable to the sale of media rights. Such increase was primarily related to three major soccer contracts, for which we started recognising revenue in the third quarter of 2018 with the start of the seasons, as well as the new UFC media deal."



Juventus celebrate with the Serie A trophy following the Serie A match between Juventus and Atalanta BC (Chris Brunskill/Fantasia/Getty Images)



Athletes start the swim course during Ironman Copenhagen on August 21, 2016 in Copenhagen, Denmark. (Stephen Pond/Getty Images)

However, there is a sizeable sting in the tail: “Adjusted EBITDA for the three months ended March 31, 2019 decreased \$31.2m, or 33.6 per cent, to \$61.8m, compared to the three months ended March 31, 2018. The decrease in Adjusted EBITDA was primarily due to costs in the first quarter of 2019 associated with the acquired soccer media rights in excess of revenue, for which the seasons commenced in the second half of 2018.”

It goes on: “The soccer media-rights contracts will continue to adversely impact Adjusted EBITDA for the term of the contracts. However, the year-

over-year impact will moderate as the second season begins in the third quarter of 2019. Two of these contracts expire at the end of 2021 [Serie A, LaLiga] and the third expires at the end of 2024 [FA Cup].”

Football is the world’s number one

sport. Commercially, it has been borne above the rest by powerful tailwinds for the last three decades. As such it has become a very expensive commodity. Expensive to win, sometimes painfully so. But equally expensive to lose. *Caveat emptor.* ○

ENDEAVOR REVENUES BY REGION, \$

Year	US	UK	RoW
2016	1.675bn	455.8m	235.9m
2017	2.292bn	485.3m	242.5m
2018	2.544bn	823.5m	246.0m

Source: Endeavor IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

WANDA SPORTS REVENUES BY REGION, €

Year	Europe	America	Asia	Oceania	Africa
2016	605.2m	123.5m	120.3m	19.9m	8.4m
2017	616.1m	166.7m	137.5m	20.9m	13.4m
2018	768.9 m	188.7m	129.0m	23.5m	19.3m

Source: Wanda Sports IPO prospectus, SportBusiness

How does engagement with the betting industry better protect sports from match-fixing?

Ben Paterson, integrity operations director at Genius Sports, explains why concerns around integrity shouldn't prohibit sports from realising the benefits of a progressive and sustainable betting strategy can offer.



Genius has worked with the LPGA to develop a tailored educational program to help players, caddies and officials to identify, resist and report incidents of potential betting corruption. (LPGA/Gabe Roux)

The argument appears to be logical: match-fixing only exists because of betting and, therefore, if the latter doesn't occur, the issue disappears. But while that argument could justify sports' reluctance to engage with the betting industry ten, or even five, years ago, it no longer holds true.

Sports betting has, like other e-commerce sectors, become available to almost anyone, at anytime and anywhere in the world. Sportsbook brands offer odds on almost every sport possible and often with hundreds of permutations within a single game or event.

The demand for betting on a huge variety of sports and bet types exists

in both regulated and unregulated betting markets around the world. And while the recent legalisation of major sports markets such as the US and Brazil is encouraging an era of greater cooperation between sports and betting, the reality is this demand will only continue to grow.

And so all leagues and federations are left with a choice: create a strategy which accepts that betting will continue to occur on their competitions regardless of their approach and embrace the upside. Or, ignore reality and risk depriving their sport of the transparency, cooperation and information that is essential to truly tackling match-fixing and betting-related corruption.

Working with the 'enemy'

The consequences of betting-related scandals for sports are well documented. For those who fail to put the necessary safeguards in place, the reputational damage, fan fury and subsequent financial damage can be severe and long-lasting.

However, it is often underappreciated how important integrity is to sportsbooks. After all, the betting industry cannot exist without fair or unpredictable competitions. What casual punter wants to bet on a game in which the outcome is preordained?

Sportsbooks and regulators, like the UK Gambling Commission, are a valuable partner to sports in combatting betting-related threats.

Regulators impose crucial integrity licensing conditions on all sportsbooks who themselves can form information sharing agreements with sports which are central to quickly alerting a governing body to suspicious betting activity and supporting investigations.

Sportsbooks can share customer account-level information, for example, if major sums of money are being placed on very niche betting markets, or even if a series of accounts are opened under the same IP address to circumvent betting limits.

In isolation, these agreements or initiatives aren't enough to provide a sport with sustained protection against betting-related threats. However, sportsbooks should be treated as a key ally by sports in combatting these threats, not an enemy as has been historically the case.

Controlling the supply

Sports' engagement with betting is now increasingly driven by licensing real-time data to sportsbooks. Similar to shirt or perimeter sponsorship agreements, this is largely motivated by revenue and increased fan engagement opportunities.

But sports who proactively take control of the collection and supply of their live betting data can also greatly reinforce their integrity measures, including providing highly accurate real-time information to monitoring systems which can then flag anomalous betting activity.

Perhaps more importantly though, a betting engagement strategy enables sports to determine who collects and uses their data – and for what purpose. The clearest benefit of this is to prevent their high quality data being used by unlicensed or illegal sportsbooks.

Such operators have little or no obligations regarding sharing intelligence (for example, key customer data) even in times of investigation and few restrictions on the volume of bets they accept. They also don't conduct

extensive KYC measures, creating an information vacuum which leaves sports integrity at risk.

Paradoxically, sports that invest in the creation and protection of an official data product and license it to the betting sector can ensure that the feed is only made available to compliant sportsbooks in properly regulated jurisdictions. If they deem it necessary, they can also prevent markets that may be more susceptible to manipulation, such as the number of yellow cards or throw-ins in football, from being made available.

All sports want maximum visibility over betting on their events and controlling the supply and use of their data is critical to achieving this.

Building for the long-term

Sports will always bear the main responsibility for safeguarding their competitions from betting-related threats. But this is not a battle they can or need to fight alone, and neither should they.

At Genius Sports, we occupy a unique intersection between the sports and betting worlds, providing the visibility and partnerships to develop a suite of advanced integrity services

which offer the greatest level of protection to sports possible.

Implementing an advanced integrity programme that includes robust measures to prevent, identify, combat and investigate betting-related corruption is a crucial component for how sports engage effectively with betting. These programmes provide long-term protection and often act as the building blocks for sports to expand their betting strategy across data collection, licensing and sponsorship.

Whether it is investing in bet monitoring software, forming direct information sharing partnerships with bookmakers, or creating an advanced data collection and distribution product with a licensed network, sports must commit to some level of engagement.

The alternative of simply pretending the threat of match-fixing doesn't exist is simply not an option. Public scrutiny on sports and their integrity strategies has never been higher but without visibility or cooperation through proactive engagement, they can inadvertently render themselves powerless in protecting themselves and their futures. ○



(LPGA/Gabe Roux)

Brazilian club football is shown the light, but chooses to remain in the dark

Série A the only major football league without international distribution throughout 2019

Investors have tried – and failed – to acquire international media rights twice in the past year

Overhaul of the league's commercial structure has been called for in response



(Juliana Flister/Getty Images)

Callum McCarthy

The Campeonato Brasileiro Série A – or Brasileirão – will be the only major football league in the world without international, local-language distribution in 2019. International TV coverage of the Brasileirão can only be found on the international, Portuguese-language channels of Brazilian media group Globo.

Twice over the past 12 months, investors have attempted to acquire international media rights and stadium advertising rights to the league. Twice, the deals have gone up in smoke.

The Brasileirão has long suffered from mismanagement and short-termism, and there are two Portuguese phrases which are helpful when trying to comprehend the business of Brazilian football.

Jeitinho Brasileiro.

Literally, “the Brazilian way”.

Figuratively, the idea that trickery and bending the rules is the smartest way to get things done.

Comprar gato por lebre.

To buy a cat, thinking it was a rabbit – to be duped and get a bad deal.

Mis-sold rights

The Brasileirão's international media rights are brokered by the Brazilian Football Federation (CBF) on behalf of the top-tier clubs, and are packaged alongside stadium advertising rights, seemingly to attract media rights distributors with contacts at global brands.

A first attempt at completing an international media and advertising deal collapsed in December last year. A shapeshifting consortium, eventually

named FanFoot after multiple changes in ownership structure, withdrew from a proposed deal that would have been worth R\$137.5m (€31.5m/\$37m) per year.

FanFoot says the CBF and the clubs had attempted to sell it ‘exclusive’ international media rights and stadium advertising rights, when both were anything but exclusive.

For one, Globo holds non-exclusive, global rights to broadcast the Brasileirão in Portuguese via its individual domestic free-to-air and pay-per-view deals with clubs.

Having done little to no research before its bid, this came as a surprise to FanFoot. Given that FanFoot's plan was to create a global, interactive streaming service aimed at the Brazilian football diaspora, the lack of exclusivity presented an insurmountable problem.

To add insult to injury, the CBF

neglected to mention its league-wide stadium advertising deal with Gol Airlines, which stretches into 2019.

The prevailing story in the Brazilian media is that FanFoot's refusal – or inability – to pay its first instalment was the primary cause of the deal's collapse. In reality, Fanfoot simply decided not to buy the cat.

Money or nothing

Enter Sport Promotion and Swiss investment fund Ecotonian. This group followed up the collapse of FanFoot's deal by offering even more money – up to \$460m over as many as ten years, from 2019 to 2028 – for the same inventory of rights, plus international betting rights.

After their offer was accepted in March, the deal collapsed on April 22. It transpired that the CBF, overseen by its compliance officer EY, had neglected to make international betting rights available to other bidders. Sources say that the CBF was advised to cancel the tender, and the clubs voted to abort the deal with Sport Promotion and Ecotonian.

Some club presidents remain in contact – outside the parameters of the tender process – with investment fund Prudent, an unsuccessful bidder in the second tender.

Prudent bid against Sport Promotion and Ecotonian in the second tender process, offering a huge \$800m, plus a 50-per-cent share of additional revenue and a commitment to invest \$500m in global marketing of the Brasileirão. It reduced its bid to \$604m – still \$144m more than Sport Promotion's bid – after being erroneously told betting rights were not available.

Its offer was still rejected. In a letter to the CBF, Prudent is understood to have described the situation as “a joke”.

The clubs empowered the CBF to negotiate the deal on their behalf as an admission of the reality that, even though each club still signs off on the deal, a collective sale is the only way to maximise the overall return. But the CBF's inability to run a successful tender process – even when overseen by compliance officers – means Brazilian clubs will now earn nothing for their international media and betting rights in 2019.

Caveats

Some clubs hope that Prudent can be brought back to the negotiating table, but there are doubts whether any deal on the investment fund's terms would be feasible.

For many onlookers, the numbers don't add up. The \$1.3bn total

investment Prudent offered is an eye-watering amount of money for what the Brazilian league can offer in return. International media and betting rights to the Brasileiro were worth just \$9m per year from 2016 to 2018.

One long-time Brazilian football executive, who asked not to be named, told *SportBusiness* that Prudent's proposed investment came with several caveats – notably that each club would have to undergo regular external audits, and that any contract between Prudent and Brazilian clubs would have to be subject to New York state law, not Brazilian law.

This would give Prudent a much better chance of reclaiming misappropriated funds than if it had to bring litigation in Brazil – a legitimate worry given Brazilian football's chequered past and the Brazilian legal system's vulnerability to corruption.

Despite the huge amounts of money on offer to the clubs, local experts believe they would have rejected Prudent's terms. Most Brazilian clubs would need to be completely restructured in order to survive a thorough external audit. In the words of another South American football business executive: “There is absolutely no way the clubs would have agreed to those conditions. Not a chance.”

Disparity

Bringing all of Brazil's clubs on to the same commercial page is difficult, to say the least, but it is becoming increasingly necessary. The biggest clubs – Flamengo, Corinthians, Palmeiras, São Paulo and Vasco da Gama – earn many times more than the smallest clubs in Brazil's top tier, and the total debt of Brazilian clubs is now understood to be well over R\$5bn.

This, along with the failure of the two potentially lucrative international rights tenders, has led to renewed calls for a complete overhaul of Brazilian football's commercial structure, and for collective selling.

Brazilian clubs operate as non-commercial members' associations, electing autocratic presidents that often spend beyond the clubs' means. As most clubs are not companies, they are unable to form private entities



(Juliana Flister/Getty Images)



(Ricardo Nogueira/Getty Images)

under which they can negotiate purely on business terms with each other, and externally make more from commercial rights via collective selling.

For Fernando Monteiro, managing director of LEK Consulting, the need for the change is urgent.

“The change has to happen. We need a model which is not associative. We need to have an enterprise model for football in Brazil. It needs to change because otherwise it’s not a good asset to attract investments.”

Monteiro believes that instead of relying on an angel investor, clubs need to start fixing their own problems.

“Some investors are approaching us to think about how we could develop a powerful league in Brazil, but it’s clear that that should be a consequence of stronger clubs, not a precursor. These initiatives, which sounded positive, were not well implemented. The clubs are still being managed under the old model, in the associative model, without financial discipline. Without a good level of professionalism, it’s like trying to run before you can walk. I think we need to walk before we run.”

Brazilian club football’s immense commercial potential can make it difficult to understand why wholesale reform isn’t at the very top of its agenda. But according to Fernando Manuel, head of sports rights at Brazilian media group

Globo, the issues go a little deeper.

“One way or another, this may have to do with the overall workings of the country itself, a cultural or social trait perhaps,” Manuel says. “In almost every subject, there is great difficulty in Brazil in understanding – or even focusing – on just how important it is to prioritise agendas which lead to stable and constructive pacts for parties which have clear, common goals. There is a difficulty to place such common objectives above individual interests.”

Mistakes of the past

Brazil has tried to walk before. A distinctly Brazilian version of German football’s ownership model was attempted in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Banks and investment funds began creating joint ventures with football clubs, which would operate the commercial side of the clubs. The members associations would continue to wholly control the club’s on-pitch activities.

Instead of the harmonious relationships seen in Germany, Brazil’s versions – the *parceria* – were ruinous.

The ISL agency planned to invest €667m in Flamengo over 15 years but went bankrupt just three years into the deal. The debt they accumulated from player transfers and expansive operational costs was passed to the

members’ club after the joint venture was dissolved.

Bank of America attempted something similar with Vasco da Gama. It planned to invest a minimum of €116m over ten years into Vasco, but quickly became alarmed when income from commercial rights was being paid directly to accounts associated to the members’ club, and not to the joint venture.

Whether through bankruptcy or simply cutting losses, none of those investors are still around. In the words of one Brazilian football executive: “The clubs would take your money and then kick your ass out of Brazil.”

In some cases, members’ clubs held their investors to ransom, threatening to play their youth teams in senior matches unless they were given more money.

Learning process

The man leading Bank of America’s disastrous investment in Vasco was investment banker Luis Barboza. Twenty years later, Barboza is back, spearheading Prudent’s attempts to buy into Brazilian football.

Whether by accident or design, Prudent’s offer has served Brazilian clubs with a reminder of what they could have, should they abandon the Brazilian way. Monteiro believes that due to the clubs’ spiraling debts, they will eventually have no choice but to listen.

“It is positive that you have investors bringing attention to what could happen if the model was better. Clubs are in a very bad financial situation, and they’re going to need money, otherwise they’re going to go bankrupt.

“If you put everything together, I think there is a good chance of something starting to happen. It’s hard to say if it’s going to be next year or in three years. But I think it’s very, very hard for this situation to remain the same. Either we’re getting close to the end, or something is going to change. It’s very hard to extend the situation for much longer, in my opinion.”

In the interim, the Brazilian league has vanished from the world’s television screens. If the CBF and the clubs want that to change, they have two choices: professionalise, or get used to selling a cat. ○

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Group Money Laundering
Reporting Officer
William Hill

College Sports carve out a commercial niche on OTT platforms

The Colonial Athletic Conference's 4-year deal with FloSports is now worth \$4.5m

Streaming platforms don't need large ratings to make college content economically viable

Deals are often non-exclusive, allowing smaller conferences to also cut linear deals



Eric Fisher

Joe D'Antonio, commissioner of the Colonial Athletic Conference (CAA), was looking for something beyond just money and scraps of television airtime when shopping the group's latest media-rights deal.

He was also looking to find a media partner that would showcase the conference and commit sizeable resources to shoulder programming and marketing beyond just showing live games. But as an administrator sitting firmly in the centre of US college sports' middle class, far away from the economic and competitive behemoths from the Power 5 group of conferences that dominate that portion of American

sports, D'Antonio knew getting all he wanted from a traditional media partner would be difficult, if not impossible.

"I'm a realist. I know where we sit in the pecking order," D'Antonio says. "Finding linear [TV] timeslots for games is more difficult for us. If we were going to sign with other entities, we were certainly not going to be their number one product."

Enter over-the-top (OTT) digital streaming. In May, the CAA signed a four-year deal with Texas-based digital sports media company FloSports to show more than 300 of the conference's sporting events live each year, including football and men's and women's basketball, along with ancillary content.

The groundbreaking deal, worth a reported \$4.5m (€4m) over the four

years, made the CAA the first US college conference to select a direct-to-consumer OTT company as its primary media partner. The agreement also marks the CAA's first dedicated batch of rights fees.

But the CAA, while perhaps at the front of the pack in terms of mid-tier college conferences committing to OTT streaming, are far from alone. Many of their closest peers, including the Mountain West Conference, Atlantic 10 Conference, and Conference USA, among many others, have found in recent years sizeable bumps in prominence and exposure by moving games to OTT providers such as FloSports, Stadium, and ESPN+, the sports media giant's unbundled direct-to-consumer offering.

Those streamers, conversely, have found college sports' middle and lower classes to be a highly fertile source of content that, divorced from the realm of broadcast or cable TV, doesn't necessarily require massive ratings to be economically viable. And less prominent sports such as volleyball and wrestling, that wouldn't previously be shown anywhere, have now found a new home from the programming-hungry OTT operators.

"Tens of millions of viewers are not necessarily in the roadmap for a lot of these entities, but it doesn't have to be either," says Mark Floreani, FloSports' co-founder and chief executive. "We think it's a great time for the have-nots of the sports industry because they don't have to be lost in the shuffle anymore. We see lots of opportunity in the middle and long tail."

Humble origins

Like many successful startups, the origins of FloSports started from a personal story. Floreani ran track and cross country at the University of Texas, while his brother Martin wrestled in high school and was still a huge wrestling fan. In 2006, the pair started the company covering events digitally in those two sports, sitting far off the radar of any major US media company. The Floreanis' start for FloSports involved just \$10,000 in seed money raised from family and friends.

Several years of essentially a hand-to-mouth existence followed, with halting corporate expansions into swimming and gymnastics, two more sports outside the industry's typical focus on US football and men's basketball.

However, fuelled in part by a fast-accelerating acceptance for all forms of streaming video and a continued focus on giving fans what other outlets weren't, FloSports' subscriptions and corporate fundraising began to grow by 2013, and then by 2017, revenue was close to doubling annually and now sits in an undisclosed eight-figure range, with content available in 20 different sports.

FloSports in early June also closed on a \$47m Series C round of funding, led by Discovery Inc, with the funds targeted in part for more rights acquisitions.

Stadium, created in 2017 from the merger of assets from the Sinclair Broadcast Group, 120 Sports, and Silver Chalice's Campus Insiders, has a much more corporate origin story. Sinclair is one of the largest broadcasting groups in the country, 120 Sports was backed by several major US pro leagues and media entities, and Silver Chalice was created by the Chicago White Sox.

But it, too, has quickly grown its business in no small part by steadily amassing content rights from the likes of the Mountain West and Atlantic 10 conferences, Conference USA, and the Patriot League, among others, and has quickly grown its presence in women's and Olympic sports.

Land rush

"Everybody is in play now," says Jason Coyle, Stadium's chief executive, regarding the land rush for rights deals. "Not only is there a wealth of content to be had, but we're continuing to see a lot of other players, whether it be DAZN, B/R Live, or somebody else, beginning to come into the market. It's a

really wide-open space now."

The developing niche that college sports play in US sports media contrasts sharply against an overall, historic shift in the college sports landscape over the last decade that has concentrated clout and influence among the Power 5, which is made up of the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and Southeastern Conferences.

Schools from those five conferences, boosted in part by a wave of realignment early this decade, now dominate both the on- and off-field competitive landscape in US college football and men's basketball, two key revenue drivers in that part of the industry. And each of those five conferences have struck long-term media-rights deals with sports TV behemoths such as ESPN and Fox worth in excess of \$2bn that extend well into the 2020s, and in the case of the ACC goes all the way to 2036.

As the recent CAA-FloSports deal shows, the next tiers of college sports operate at a vastly different level in terms of both dollars and years. But the rise of OTT streaming



The North Carolina-Wilmington Seahawks celebrate winning the Colonial Athletic Conference Tournament college basketball game (Mitchell Layton/Getty Images)



Flags of the schools line the wall during the Colonial Athletic Conference Championship college basketball game tournament between the North Carolina-Wilmington Seahawks and the Hofstra Pride (Mitchell Layton/Getty Images)

has allowed for a variety of different economic models, and an ability to work at a much smaller scale. Providers such as FloSports, ESPN+, and the much smaller College TV Ticket work on a subscription-based model, with fees typically ranging from \$4.99 to \$11.99 per month, generally in line with pricing for other streaming video products such as Netflix and Hulu.

ESPN, which in March struck a 13-year, broad-based media-rights deal with the American Athletic Conference that includes a sizable presence for the organisation on ESPN+, says a concerted push into college sports has been a boon for the subscription product, which debuted in April 2018. ESPN+ now has more than 2 million subscribers, and has helped the company generate a cord-cutting younger audience that is becoming increasingly disinterested in any type of traditional linear TV subscription.

“College sports will I think be a big part of” ESPN+, says Burke Magnus, ESPN’s executive vice-president of programming and scheduling, upon reaching the agreement with

“We think it’s a great time for the have-nots of the sports industry because they don’t have to be lost in the shuffle anymore. We see lots of opportunity in the middle and long tail.”

Mark Floreani, | co-founder and chief executive, FloSports

the American Athletic Conference. “It provides the opportunity for conferences of all shapes and sizes to have really deep-branded comprehensive environments in that product where their fans can have accessible and affordable access to high-quality content in a comprehensive way, and well beyond just football and basketball, which tend to be or have tended to be the bell cows, if you will, on linear television.”

Mike Aresco, commissioner of the American Athletic Conference, says its ESPN deal is so important as to

potentially challenge the status quo of college sports.

“This agreement positions us well in the changing media landscape and moves us closer to our Power Six goal,” he says.

Stadium, conversely, works on an advertising-focused model where it also gains carriage fees from some pay-based streaming providers such as Sling. But Stadium has focused its efforts on providing viewers free access through its own digital channels and free streamers such as Pluto TV to supplement a presence on over-the-air TV.

But in each of those situations, individual games from smaller colleges generating as little as hundreds of viewers remains within the bounds of the economic models. And each of the programmers say they have been able to steadily expand their reach beyond the core audience of alumni, and family and friends of the participating athletes.

“We’re seeing a lot of increasing boost around viewer discovery,” Coyle says. “A good game is a good game, regardless of who’s playing, and if you help bring viewers into that, they’ll stick

around. And I would presume for a lot of what we'll do, we'll actually reach a bigger audience than what they might otherwise get on cable."

Heightened flexibility

In addition to new levels of exposure, particularly for under-served sports, the OTT platforms have afforded new levels of flexibility both on and off the field for smaller college conferences.

On TV, the smaller conferences have often shunted to less attractive kickoff and tip-off times and days, such as weeknight and late-night weekend windows, in order to get those timeslots at all. Operating game schedules so heavily at the mercy of TV has been received poorly by many of the conferences.

"Why are we playing at 8:15pm? Why is a basketball game tipping after 9 o'clock?" asked the Mountain West Conference's commissioner Craig Thompson last year. The conference is currently in the midst of negotiating a new media-rights deal, and given its prior forays with Stadium, FloSports and placing some live games on

Facebook, some type of prominent streaming component is heavily expected in that next pact.

"We're not the only league that does that, everybody plays late. We have been told directly by our television partners, the later you play the more value you bring to us," Thompson said.

But Coyle says a fundamental part of Stadium's basic pitch with conferences that he meets with is returning that control back to the colleges.

"We're willing to be very flexible with kickoff and tip times," Coyle says. "That's not something we're dictating."

The other major piece of flexibility comes from game inventory. In nearly all of the deals between the streaming players and the smaller conferences, the agreements are not exclusive, allowing the conferences to slice off pieces of their schedules to air on linear TV, either as additional rights agreements or as time buys.

Even the Colonial Athletic Conference, despite its aggressive play with FloSports, will retain the ability for both the conference itself and its individual member schools to place

some games on linear TV, including a package of basketball games on the CBS Sports Network.

"That ability to do both and maintain that flexibility was really key to all of this," D'Antonio says. "We believe we are set up well for the future, and we're sort of a taking a step off the ledge [toward digital]. But we do still have a good number of fans on linear TV, too. It's really the best of both worlds."

That type of flexibility is going to be important for the streaming players going forward. As major entities such as ESPN and CBS increasingly emphasise their digital assets, the smaller digital-only players won't be able to compete for future rights packages strictly on financial terms.

"We certainly don't want to get into a cheque-writing contest with the likes of an ESPN or a DAZN, and we don't need to go to a conference and ask for the whole [schedule]," Coyle says. "But what we want is a solid package of games that gives us consistency in scheduling and something to rally around. We get that, and we're in good shape." ○



(Mitchell Layton/Getty Images)



The dawn of a new era

The Fiba Basketball World Cup in China promises to be the ultimate showcase for the sport. Fiba describes its efforts to re-boot both the event and the series of qualifiers that lead up to it.



Kobe Bryant and Yao Ming have been appointed as Fiba World Cup Ambassadors (*Fiba*)

On August 31, the Angola and Serbia men's basketball teams will tip off in Foshan, China. When they do, they will not only be opening the 2019 edition of the Fiba Basketball World Cup, but also beginning a new era for the sport worldwide.

The Fiba Basketball World Cup promises to be the ultimate showcase for the sport, with matches set to take place in world class venues across eight Chinese cities. China is a market where basketball occupies a special place in the hearts of local fans, and it is one of the nations outside North America where the sport is more popular than football.

However, Fiba's ambitions go way beyond simply boosting the sport in China. The stated objective is for the event to be 'the most talked-about, most viewed and most shared' sports

event of 2019. This is a crucial step on the road to becoming one of the top five premium sports properties in the world.

That may sound like a big ask but the folks at Fiba are tightly focused on their goal and this year's Basketball World Cup has been engineered to give the governing body the best possible chance of succeeding.

From the structure of the event and its qualifying competition, to the way it is being promoted in China and worldwide, this is a World Cup transformed to bear all the hallmarks of the properties it sees as its natural peers in world sport.

It seems as though every element of the Fiba Basketball World Cup has been reviewed and, where necessary, renewed.

The event will feature 32 teams – up

from 24 – from the Americas, Asia, Europe and Africa, all competing for the ultimate prize in international basketball: the Naismith Trophy. In addition to this, seven teams will confirm their qualification for next year's Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

With this in mind, we can be assured that the Fiba World Cup 2019 will deliver a spectacle that both fuels and feeds off the fan passion which national team competitions generate so well.

Feeding the passion

The bond between national teams and their passionate fans is something that Fiba recognised as being central to building the future of the sport, and which guided its plans to re-boot the World Cup and its qualification process.

In turn, that is why China 2019 marks the next staging point on a



The Chinese national team ahead of a Fiba World Cup Qualifier (Fiba)

Outstanding results

Fiba's secretary general Andreas Zagklis confirmed that the switch has delivered on every level.

"In the 16 months between November 2017 and February 2019, the Fiba Basketball World Cup 2019 Qualifiers project was a big success for basketball. It brought national team basketball back to the fans, during the season," he says.

"There were countries where fans had not seen their team play a competitive game at home in a decade or more.

"More than 150 of the games of the Qualifiers were sold-out and the teams had the chance to identify new talent and help create deeper rosters. From the outset, establishing new stars had been an objective of the new competition system."

The success is borne out by research from the respected sports consultancy Wasserman, which was tasked with monitoring and evaluating the Qualifiers against three aspects: attendance, coverage and fan reaction.

Their research shows that the 420 games attracted 1.7 million fans to 157 arenas around the world, resulting in 157 sold-out games and an average arena occupancy of 68 per cent. The format attracted big crowds on all continents with, for example, 23,500 watching the Philippines play Australia in Manila, 12,167 in Helsinki for the clash between Finland and France, 11,000 for the African game between Angola and Egypt and 10,550 for Brazil versus Chile.

Significantly, live TV coverage in more than 150 markets was supplemented by a global social media reach of 2.2 billion, with 14 billion impressions and 13.6 million engagements across all Fiba platforms, as well as a total of 429 million video views. As the study shows, Fiba is succeeding in putting basketball firmly in the public eye and keeping it in front of mind in the media.

The traction was boosted by Fiba's "This Is My House" digital campaign, which itself delivered 4.4 billion social

journey which began back in November 2012. This significant date is when Fiba announced the introduction of a new qualifying system designed to breathe new life into the tournament by creating a clear and extended path to the finals and fresh opportunities for fans to engage with their national teams along the way.

While there were some who railed against the proposal, the vast majority of the basketball family embraced a new system that was already known to fans of other sports.

Other team sports, such as football, have routinely organised qualifying tournaments over the course of a year. But the concept was new to hoops.

In basketball, qualification had traditionally been determined by the finishing positions of national teams in continental championships held during the summer off-season.

Fiba concluded that this presented a number of significant obstacles to its mission to develop and promote the game, and consequently to grow its fanbase around the world.

First, qualification to major tournaments was taking place through the ranking of the previous major tournament. Given the fact those events, like for example EuroBasket or AfroBasket, are played in a limited number of venues, that meant that

many national teams seldom played official games at home, a situation which deprived federations of the opportunity to build bonds between their players and the public and reduced the opportunity to generate revenue to support and develop the sport in their territories.

The consequence was that national teams didn't enjoy the same visibility in their home countries as teams from other sports because of a lack of regular home games.

Visibility of the Fiba Basketball World Cup was also limited because it was scheduled in the same year as the Fifa World Cup and the Winter Olympic Games.

Player welfare and availability was also a concern. With players called on every summer they experienced a level of 'wear and tear' that made their participation in some tournaments uncertain.

Also, the calendar offered no development potential for most national federations, as the same countries won all the major competitions. Fiba's response was to create a World Cup qualifying competition in which national teams competed at home and away in groups in a schedule that included in-season windows to capitalise on media interest.



The Fiba World Cup stops off in Paris during the trophy tour (Fiba)

media impressions and contributed to significantly increasing the awareness of the Qualifiers.

Critically it was not only the committed basketball fans who enjoyed the Qualifiers. More than half of 'casual' fans engaged thanks to a shared excitement about following their national team. Wasserman reports that over 63 million fans who do not watch other basketball games made a point of following the Qualifiers, resulting in significant fanbase growth in all areas.

This delighted Secretary General Zagklis.

"The Qualifiers were the biggest event we have ever put in place in our 90-year history. We took care of a centralised TV production of all games, working hand in hand with the 80 national federations that participated in the Qualifiers and our five regional offices. And, of course, we now have in front of us a World Cup where every game counts, either in the battle to be crowned world champions or to qualify for the Olympics. All of this will provide a great opportunity for our national member federations to grow," he says.

Creating excitement

Naturally, building awareness and interest by revamping the qualifying competition counts for little if the momentum is not maintained and built-upon in the lead-up to the event. In this respect, Fiba has rewritten its playbook to introduce a series of fresh initiatives.

These include the appointment of a trio of iconic Fiba World Cup Ambassadors whose association with the event gives it a credibility and aura that underscores its scale and global standing.

In China, sport personalities do not come any bigger or more revered than Yao Ming, a national hero who led China in two previous World Cups and three Olympic Games, had a stellar NBA career and is now Chairman of the Chinese Basketball Federation. Yao, who also fronted the bid to host the competition, is a media magnet in his home country and abroad.

"I am very excited that China will host the Fiba Basketball World Cup," he says.

"We are looking forward to seeing many star players from around the

world and witnessing fantastic games. We will organise and promote a Fiba Basketball World Cup that will delight basketball fans and attract even more people to follow our great sport."

He is joined as an ambassador by the basketball legend Kobe Bryant.

Bryant, who won five NBA championships and two Olympic gold medals in a 20-year career, is a global sporting hero who transcends basketball and whose star burns particularly



The Fiba World Cup mascot Son of Dreams (Fiba)



The USA team won the last edition of the Fiba World Cup in Spain in 2014 (Fiba)

brightly in China where he is the most followed NBA player on social media. In short, he is an ideal ambassador for an event which needs to impact on both local and international audiences.

The trio of ambassadors is completed by the German Dirk Nowitzki, who was a star performer at Fiba competitions for the better part of two decades (1999-2015) and led his country to its best-ever result at the World Cup, a third-place, in 2002. In this competition, he was named the tournament's MVP and was its top scorer, averaging 24 points a game.

More than a draw

Between them, the ambassadors have helped elevate the World Cup to the forefront of basketball fans' and the media's minds worldwide. This was seen in action at the glittering draw held at the Shenzhen Bay Sports Centre, which represented another major step forward in the repositioning of the event as a truly major property.

For the first time, the World Cup Draw, presented by Wanda, was designed as an event in its own right. A sell-out 8,000 crowd packed the arena to learn the fate of the 32 teams and enjoy an evening that included a performance by the multi-platinum-selling US singer-songwriter Jason Derulo.

"This was the first-ever draw in the history of our sport that was made into a full-scale, stand-alone event

and probably ranks as one of the best attended draws in sports history," says Zagklis.

"The thousands of fans present joined the representatives of the 32 national teams, as well as basketball dignitaries and, of course, World Cup ambassadors Kobe Bryant and Yao Ming and was watched by millions around the world on TV stations, YouTube and Facebook. It really proved how much excitement and anticipation is building up ahead of this first-of-its-kind World Cup."

The trophy on tour


Building the buzz has seen another first with the launch of the Fiba World Cup Trophy Tour, presented by Aeroflot. The coveted Naismith Trophy set off from Beijing on May 23 – 100 days before the start of the event – on a round-the-

world trip, which will take in major cities from Buenos Aires in Argentina through New York and major European capitals, to Dakar, Amman, Tehran, Manila, Melbourne and Christchurch before returning to China via Russia.

Like the Tissot countdown clocks in every host city and other promotional events, the World Cup Trophy Tour is a statement of intent to elevate the Fiba World Cup into the very top tier of world sports properties – the events the world stands still for.

But Zagklis is clear: "our priority is to deliver a top-quality basketball event that can be enjoyed by fans all over the world and help grow the popularity of our sport.

"Following the €265m economic impact generated by the World Cup in Spain in 2014, we are very confident this edition will reach unprecedented levels, because of the improved exposure through the Qualifiers, the number of participating teams – which results in a larger market – together with the increased number of games (92 instead of 75) as well as the bigger venue capacities.

"China is a country that has both a huge passion for, and a large following of, basketball. We fully intend to offer the very best that our sport has to offer and there is no better way of doing this than by having our biggest World Cup, THE sporting event of the summer, take place in their country." 



Andreas Zagklis, secretary general, Fiba, and Dirk Nowitzki with the World Cup trophy (Fiba)

AOC builds the value of the Olympics beyond the duration of the Games

AOC's commercial programme is focused on giving partners maximum exposure

"Holistic approach" to growing participation helps to boost commercial returns

Creating athlete content is one of the best ways to help partners leverage their sponsorships



Australian Olympian Jaclyn Narracott addresses a crowd of young Australians during this year's SportAccord Convention on the Gold Coast

Adam Nelson

The five rings are still very powerful with Australians," Matt Carroll, chief executive of the Australian Olympic Committee, tells *SportBusiness Professional*. "The Olympic brand still means something, it's still something partners want to be affiliated with in a sport-mad country like Australia. But people have to perceive the value of the Olympics beyond just the Games."

Carroll was appointed to the role in early 2017, at what he describes as a "difficult time" for the AOC, with the body accused of fostering a "culture of bullying". One of his first moves was to

engage Australia's Ethics Committee to conduct an independent investigation into the culture at the organisation; its review concluded that the body had been failing to "celebrate the best of the Olympic ideals".

Since then, he has focused on promoting those ideals through all of the AOC's work – from the top-level athletes to promoting grassroots participation and growing the commercial programme – throughout the calendar. Indeed, Carroll argues that for a National Olympic Committee, these elements shouldn't be viewed as independent strands, but rather as cohesive parts of its overall mission.

Exposure throughout the cycle

One of his primary objectives on joining the AOC was to boost its commercial profile throughout the four-year Olympic cycle. While the body's partnership programme was performing "reasonably well", as Carroll puts it, all NOCs are subject to "the fluctuations of the cycle", with partners focusing their efforts and investments on the Summer and, to a lesser extent, Winter Games.

The Summer Olympics is always going to offer brands "their biggest ray of sunshine", says Carroll, "and we didn't want to discourage our partners from building their campaigns around that, because it's such a visible, high-profile event. But we felt like we had

to take it away from just being about the team, to help our partners activate against our other brand assets, the things that we're doing all throughout each year, and throughout the four-year period. They're paying a lot of money to be an official partner of the AOC and for that they expect more than just a two-week window of exposure every couple of years".

Offering exposure to sponsors in off-years as well as Games years has become increasingly important, with the economic environment in Australia meaning companies have "tended not to go too large on their sponsorships anymore, because they want to be seen as spending shareholder's money responsibly. We've found that we really have to offer value from our sponsorships, but we try to do that in ways that are beneficial to everyone".

While he declines to give precise valuations on deals, he says that the lowest-value partnerships begin at "just under AUD\$1m [\$690,000/€610,000]" and scale up to "multi-millions" annually for the biggest deals. The total revenue target for the 2017-2020 Olympic cycle is AUD\$110m, which Carroll says the AOC is set to exceed, "depending on a few sponsorship opportunities that we are currently in discussions over". That is an increase of AUD\$22m over the 2013-2016 cycle.

Boosting the profile of other Olympic-related events, particularly among a younger audience, has been crucial to growing the value of those deals and reaching that revenue target. For last year's Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, the AOC sent skateboarder Noah Fuzi to produce a series of YouTube documentaries about the Games and the athletes who were performing there. Vitamins and supplements brand Swisse sponsored the series, "and loved it, because it was something different, and helped them target a completely different audience. It gave them far more exposure than they'd usually have got at that time, [because there's] usually a bit of a drop-off after the Winter Olympics".

Swisse will again sponsor a similar series in Tokyo, and Carroll says content pieces "that use the athletes and get close to the athletes" are

becoming increasingly a focus of how partners want to leverage their AOC sponsorships.

"It's one of the best ways we can help them to use our brand and image," he says. "Channel Seven produce our coverage, they do a great job of that, so we don't get access to the Olympics themselves. But what we do have is world-class athletes that we can give them to work with."

"Our primary role is to grow participation in the sports and educate people about the sports."

Matt Carroll | Chief executive, AOC

Participation underpins growth

"Our primary role is to grow participation in the sports and educate people about the sports," Carroll says. "Those things are genuinely as important as taking a team to Tokyo or selling big sponsorships – mainly for all the good reasons about the benefits of playing sports, but also because everything else that we do follows on from building strong participation."

"The only way to get talented athletes is to

have a strong participation base, creating the pathway that connects grassroots to performance athletes. If the AOC isn't working to build the participation base, then down the line, we significantly reduce our chances of success elsewhere, both at the Games in terms of medals and with our commercial programme, because sponsors will drift away without those success stories to leverage. Then, of course, the more commercially successful we are, the more we can put back into building a participation base and being even more successful at Games."

The AOC is focused on celebrating participation as much as medals, he says – something that has filtered through to how sponsors choose their athlete representatives. "A medal can be won on the day, but you never really know what



Matt Carroll, chief executive of the Australian Olympic Committee

is going to happen, so you don't build a business model on that," he notes. "So we celebrate just getting there, an athlete just being at the Olympics, and that's a value our sponsors share. We've seen that a number of the ambassadors they choose are from a much more diverse spread of sports than what they've been doing in the past, they're not necessarily those who have the best chance of winning."

Sponsors have been very keen to get involved with participation and community programmes, he says, again as a way of not only leveraging their sponsorships throughout the cycle, but interacting with a younger audience than the Olympic Games themselves often attract.

Telecoms firm Optus joined ahead of the Rio 2016 Games on a ten-year deal, described at the time as 'one of the biggest in AOC history'. It has since leveraged that investment by becoming the title sponsor of the AOC's schools programme, Olympics Unleashed, which has already reached over

40,000 primary school children across Queensland and New South Wales. This will be rolled out into secondary schools across the winter of 2019.

"If the AOC isn't working to build the participation base, then down the line, we significantly reduce our chances of success elsewhere."

Matt Carroll | Chief executive, AOC

"Again, we're using the athletes, getting them into classrooms so that the kids can enjoy their stories, which is a very, very powerful message," Carroll says. "It's also a way for us to really bring the sports back into the fold and encourage people to get involved in a diverse range of sports from a young age. We have [World Championship gold medal-winning canoeist] Alyce Burnett and Jaclyn Narracott [who

competed in the skeleton for Australia at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics] involved, and that's really given a boost to the awareness of those disciplines."

Evidence for the commercial programme's success, Carroll claims, can be seen not just in the financial statements' bottom line. He also points to the fact that, despite the negative press that surrounded the AOC at the time, all of the new partners which signed up to sponsor the team through Rio 2016 stayed on, encouraged by the platform Carroll was building.

"We're talking with our partners more regularly," Carroll says. "It's not about breaking the cycle as much it is extending the cycle, so that we don't end up doing all our renewals and new business in the first year of an Olympic cycle. By making the sponsorship broader than just the team, giving the sponsors the opportunity to activate every year, having conversations with them whenever we have the opportunity to do so, we're building a more robust and future-proof programme." ○



Community and schools programmes have formed an increasingly important part of the AOC's work, with Optus sponsoring Olympics Unleashed



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USTA hosts Fortnite World Cup finals to introduce new audiences to US Open venue

Arthur Ashe Stadium will stage three-day finale of competition based on popular video game

Surrounding area at Billie Jean King National Tennis Center to be transformed into fan festival

Hosts hope tournament will lead to further non-tennis events at facility, as well as new visitors



(Mike Hewitt/Getty Images)

Bob Williams

The United States Tennis Association's successful bid to host the inaugural Fortnite World Cup finals at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, New York, is part of a wider strategy to introduce the refurbished facility to a new and younger audience.

From July 26-28, the 23,000-seater Arthur Ashe Stadium, the showpiece venue of the US Open tennis grand slam, will stage the finale of Epic Games' new tournament based on its transformative online video game Fortnite, which has approximately 250 million registered players worldwide.

The three-day event will feature the top 100 solo players and top 50 duo teams, who have qualified from 10 weekly online tournaments which began in April, as well as a pro-am event. The solo champion winner will earn \$3m

(€2.7m) out of a \$30m purse, with each participant guaranteed at least \$50,000 in prize money. Approximately 60,000 fans are expected to attend.

Publisher Epic Games had explored hosting the Fortnite World Cup finals in New York, London, Los Angeles and other undisclosed cities. After contacting Epic and entertainment conglomerate Endeavor – which is overseeing the logistics and operations of the event – and then showing organisers around the National Tennis Center, the USTA won the right to stage the event. The hosts will receive a rental fee, though terms of the deal have not been made public.

Last year, the USTA completed a five-year, \$600m redevelopment of the National Tennis Center, which includes a retractable roof over Arthur Ashe, a new Grandstand Stadium, and a rebuilt Louis Armstrong Stadium.

The organisation is now looking to showcase – and further monetise – the

facility to a wider audience by hosting non-tennis events. It is hoped that the Fortnite World Cup finals will lead to further hosting opportunities.

“We’ve always felt that when we finished our transformation of the site that it would not only primarily benefit the US Open experience, but that it would afford us the opportunity to... introduce a new group of folks to our campus,” Danny Zausner, the National Tennis Center’s chief operating officer, tells *SportBusiness*.

“So if we have the opportunity to host other events outside the US Open period that doesn’t interfere with our [youth] tennis programs, we are keen to attract them. With two retractable roofs now, while we can’t do things over the wintertime because we’re not a climate-controlled facility, there are windows in the spring and fall [autumn] where we think we are the perfect facility for certain types of events,” Zausner says.

The USTA venue strategy differs from

typical indoor arena operations.

“We are not Madison Square Garden. We are not going to bring in 25 concerts in that time frame,” Zausner says. “But we think we are the perfect festival grounds for someone who is looking to host an event in multiple venues at the same time. All of that is built in here. I see us being able to do a series of events each year but there is a tremendous amount of work that goes on with gearing up and gearing down from the US Open [in late August-early September] and nothing can interfere with that.”

Demographic appeal

The particular interest from the USTA in hosting the esports competition lay not only in Fortnite’s extensive global reach, but also its young demographic.

According to Forbes, the average age of fans attending the 2017 US Open was 42, with 65 per cent aged between 25 and 54. Only four per cent were under 18. By contrast, a 2018 survey conducted by market research firm Newzoo, based on gamers in 16 countries across the Americas and Europe, found that 53 per cent of Fortnite players were aged between 10 and 25.

“We know that Fortnite has an enormous worldwide appeal to youth, and while not every kid in the United States has a tennis racket in their hands, most have a controller in their hands playing Fortnite,” Zausner adds.

“If there are 20,000 people here on site in each of the three days and they come to the home of the US Open and see this incredibly cool complex and it invigorates them, like people who come to the US Open who don’t usually pick up tennis rackets but play for the first time afterwards...we just look at this as an opportunity to introduce tens of thousands of new folks to the site and hopefully to the sport of tennis,” he says.

While the USTA is the host of the event, Endeavor is organising and producing the tournament finale on behalf of Epic, after successfully managing the Fortnite E3 Pro-Am in Los Angeles last June. As such, the USTA’s US Open sponsors have no rights to activate during the Fortnite World Cup finals.

The entire footprint of the Arthur

Ashe court will be transformed into a multi-layered stage. Large screens will be added to the stage to enable fans to see the action but the four screens in the upper deck of the arena will not be in use.

The venue will not be at its full 23,771 capacity due to the need to take out seating to install lighting and special effects equipment throughout the arena, while courtside seats will have restricted views.



“If you think of the traditional tennis court there are no obstructions on the court outside of the net and the umpire chair,” Zausner says. “In this case you have this massive stage that is rising x-number of feet out of the ground so some of the courtside seats, which for tennis are the best, you won’t be able to see from them. There is also a tremendous amount of lighting and special effects so they will end up killing seats in the stadium to house [this equipment].”



(Eric Ananmalay/ESPAT Media/Getty Images)

Outside of Arthur Ashe, the area from the East Gate where most fans enter the complex up until the entrance to Arthur Ashe near the South Plaza will be transformed into a Fortnite experience.

Activations at the Fortnite Fan Festival include the opportunity to meet 20 Fortnite characters like Tomatohead and Brite Bomber; in-game attractions like the Pirate Ship and Fortnite Mini Golf; the chance to dine at in-game eateries such as Durr Burger and Sofdeez Ice Cream Shop; and swag bags containing exclusive, limited-edition collectible items. There will also be the opportunity for fans to mingle with professional players.

“It will be like you are in the Fortnite game. It will be like a 3D version of the game, like you are walking through the game and participating in it,” Zausner says.

To cope with the tech requirements of the event, the USTA has brought forward its annual plans to upgrade the National Tennis Center’s Wi-Fi capacity.

The USTA will promote the event on its social media channels but will not live-stream the competition. “We are very fortunate to host the event, but we are not the co-promoter that allows us to really dive as deep as one would like to, if we were trying to be greedy about it,” Zausner says.

On the possibility that more large-scale events will follow the Fortnite World Cup finals at the National Tennis Center, Zausner says: “That would be a lovely thing to come out of this.” ○

Queensland looks to the future

Queensland is reflecting on hosting the “best SportAccord ever” as it puts plans in place for a bright sports event-hosting future.



The epic bike leg of the Cairns Ironman Asia Pacific Championship, Tropical North Queensland (*Korrupt Vision*)

Having welcomed the sporting world to Gold Coast for a SportAccord that has been hailed as the best yet just a year after hosting the Commonwealth Games, Queensland is now ready to build on solid foundations by looking to the future.

SportAccord, which was secured for the Gold Coast through a partnership between Tourism and Events Queensland, Tourism Australia, Gold Coast City Council and Destination Gold Coast, attracted 1,700 of the world’s most high-powered sporting executives for the annual gathering.

“There is no doubt this has been the best SportAccord ever, with delegates extremely impressed not only by the facilities on offer in Queensland but the relaxed lifestyle and the beautiful scenery of the Gold Coast,” SportAccord managing director Nis Hatt said.

“Many delegates have left the Gold Coast with the strong impression that Queensland is capable of hosting their future events and I’m sure we’ll start seeing the outcomes of the conversations had here in the weeks, months and years to come.”

New SportAccord President Raffaele Chiulli added: “Sport is in the DNA of the

people in Gold Coast and Queensland and I am sure that SportAccord is just the beginning of a long-lasting relationship.”

Representatives from around 500 different international businesses, federations and rights-holders attended the week-long event at the Gold Coast Convention Centre, but the impact of hosting SportAccord on the Queensland economy is likely to be long-term.

Tourism Industry Development Minister Kate Jones has indicated that, with Aus\$60m in major events having been secured through last year’s edition of SportAccord, which took place in Bangkok, she is hopeful that hosting SportAccord this year will deliver even more.

“We invest in major events because they pump millions of dollars into our economy and create local jobs. This was the first time Australia has hosted the world’s foremost sporting events conference,” she said.

“Hosting world leaders like International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – SportAccord has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show the leading decision-makers in

international sport everything we have to offer.

“Since 2015, we’ve more than doubled the value of our major events calendar which will this year generate \$800m for Queensland. We hope to secure up to \$100m worth of events for the state as a result of hosting SportAccord.”

Hosting credentials

Last year’s acclaimed Commonwealth Games also highlighted Queensland’s event-hosting credentials to a wide audience.

Commonwealth Games Federation president Louise Martin said: “The Commonwealth Games certainly shone the spotlight on the whole of the state and the well-proven capabilities of Queenslanders to stage outstanding sporting and cultural events. The Gold Coast, Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns all shared the Games hosting duties and delivered remarkable results.”

For the Gold Coast alone, the impact of sport on the local community has been dramatic, aside from establishing a pool of volunteers who have an appetite to support any future events on the calendar.

According to Tom Tate, City of Gold

Coast Mayor, direct investment of more than Aus\$2bn, significant free-to-air publicity and a wider package of more than Aus\$10bn committed to projects before and after the Games have helped to transform the city's outlook. The ITU World Triathlon Grand Final, international Twenty20 cricket and the FAI World Parachuting Championships were among the events to land in the city following the multi-sport event, with the 2020 World Bowls Championships and the 2024 ILS Lifesaving World Championships in the pipeline.

However, the impact stretches well beyond Gold Coast and, after having hosted one of the world's largest multi-sport events last year and then the most prestigious annual gathering in sport this year, the question for Queensland in terms of its event-hosting aspirations is: what's next?

The state is seeking to secure more new high-value major events, those which will drive significant levels of interstate and international visitation and therefore contribute to the Queensland economy.

A perfect example came within days of SportAccord, when the first-ever National Rugby League Magic Round took place in Brisbane, attracting a significant number of out-of-state visitors.

"We back events that support local jobs and help to grow our tourism industry. The Magic Round did just that," Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said.

"There were some quality games throughout the round but the real winner was Queensland – with around one quarter of attendees coming from interstate and overseas. This has provided a huge boost to our tourism industry."

Almost 135,000 people packed into Suncorp Stadium over four days, with another 3.8 million watching the games on television, underlining the huge interest in the landmark event.

Jones added: "On day one, New South Wales declared they would try to poach the event off Queensland. This is a testament to the event's success. But the Magic Round isn't going anywhere – with a three-year deal in place to keep the

fixture in Queensland.

"Brisbane boasts the country's best rectangular stadium which is located right in the middle of a world-class entertainment precinct. This allows fans to enjoy their footy and experience the very best of Brisbane's outdoor dining culture and lifestyle."

Queensland experience

The trajectory with regard to events in Queensland is certainly positive. Whereas only five years ago, Queensland's Events Calendar generated about Aus\$300m per year for the state, this year the calendar is expected to deliver around Aus\$800m.

While the extent to which a major event will attract domestic and international visitors is paramount, Queensland is also on the look-out for events that showcase the state's many and varied experiences to a global audience and engage with the local community effectively to leave behind genuine legacy.

In addition, Queensland has made no secret of the fact that events that provide a "synergy" between the sport and the state will be of particular interest.

A deep partnership between the rights-holder, local government, national and local sports organisations, as well as Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ), is the goal.

TEQ chief executive Leanne Coddington has previously said that

endurance events, including marathons and triathlons, provide a natural fit for Queensland, with the state's outdoor lifestyle, climate and natural environment enabling win-win scenarios with rights-holders across triathlons, marathons and other road races, cycling events, mountain biking and water-based sports such as surfing, sailing, swimming and life-saving.

An example of the success of this approach can be seen with the Cairns Ironman Asia Pacific Championship.

Now in its 11th year, the event was rated at No.1 for overall satisfaction in the 2018 Ironman Athletes Choice Awards.

Situated at the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and within easy reach of the Daintree Rainforest and tropical islands, the event, which boasts a stunning backdrop, has become known as the Ironman in Paradise.

With arguably the most spectacular cycling course in the world, competitors race up the Captain Cook Highway hugging the coastline from Cairns to Port Douglas. From reef to World Heritage-listed rainforest, and a run along the stunning Cairns boardwalk, the race finishes in the heart of the city.

With the next edition taking place in June 2020, the Cairns Ironman Asia Pacific Championship will provide another platform for a sport-obsessed state to promote its appeal to a global audience. ○



Eleven times world champion Kelly Slater is always a standout in the WSL Championship Tour's season opening event at the iconic Snapper Rocks on the Gold Coast (World Surf League)

Kermode defends his ATP achievements following council coup

ATP council – made up of player and tournament representatives – voted not to renew contract

Outgoing president defends record, pointing to prize money increases and travel grants

Players voted to launch ATP Cup instead of partnering with ITF to launch team event

Ben Cronin

Judged by the standards of most sporting organisations, the ATP Tour appears to be a model of democracy. Its board of directors, made up of player representatives and tournament organisers, and overseen by president Chris Kermode, is designed to carefully balance the welfare and needs of the tour's athletic talent with the commercial demands of those who provide them with a platform to play.

Look a bit closer, however, and you see that like many a system established with the best of egalitarian intentions, this governance structure isn't immune to the bizarre caprices of its voters. A prime example was the surprising decision the ATP Board took at the Indian Wells tournament in March not to renew Kermode's three-year contract as the Tour's president.

With just sixth months of his current tenure to go, the decision puts Kermode in a strange state of limbo. The resignation in May of Justin Gimelstob, the player representative who was thought to have led the calls for his departure, looked like it might clear the way for the board to reverse its decision. If Kermode is holding out hope for a further three-year extension, he makes it clear he is in no mood to beg.

"People have asked, if I would put myself back into the mix and my answer is that the board know where I am," he tells *SportBusiness*. "There was a decision taken by the board in March in Indian Wells not to renew, and I respect that decision and the process. I'm really fully focused on continuing to the end of the year."



(Red Photographic Ltd)

Financial support

Kermode's detractors, who are thought to include world number one Novak Djokovic, argue that he put the needs of tournament organisers ahead of the players during his time with the organisation and that he offered little financial support to those battling it out in the lower tiers of professional tennis.

"I never really understood that," he says. "The tour is financially stronger than it's ever been. The commercial

revenues have increased more than 100 per cent since 2008 [from \$61.3m (€64.3m) in 2008 to \$144.4m] and prize money will almost be \$114m in 2019, which again is a 100-per-cent increase since 2008."

Narrow the figures down to Kermode's 5-year tenure and prize money on the ATP Tour has increased by 62 per cent. To the argument that not enough of this money is reaching the lower rungs of the game, he points to a 45-per-cent

increase in the pot at the lower level ATP Challenger Tour in the last five years and the mandating of free accommodation at these events to reduce the costs faced by players. Under his leadership, the Tour has also started to offer travel grants to players ranked between 151-300 in singles, and between 75 and 150 in doubles, to help them work their way up the professional ladder.

“There’s no question that the income distribution in professional tennis is heavily weighted from top to bottom and it’s something that we are in the process of looking at and addressing,” he says. “The prize money increases which have been directed towards the first rounds, and qualifying rounds, not only at grand slams in recent years, but also at the ATP Masters 1000s and ATP 500s are a reflection of that. For instance, this year, the qualifying rounds at Masters 1000s and 500s have gone up by approximately 80 per cent compared to last year.”

ATP Cup

Should the board not decide to reverse its decision, Kermode will leave during one of the most transformative phases in the ATP Tour’s recent history. After 12 extremely successful years at London’s O2 Arena, the tour’s headline event, The Nitto World Tour Finals, will move to Turin from 2021 until 2025. January next year also sees the launch

of the ATP Cup in Perth, Australia, a new national team event that poses a direct threat to the International Tennis Federation (ITF’s) Kosmos-funded Davis Cup revamp.

He maintains that the decisions regarding both events were also taken with the player’s interests in mind. In the case of the ATP Cup, he says the organisation had parallel discussions with the players at Wimbledon last year in which the tour advanced the idea of the new event alongside the alternative of a joint team event with the ITF. It is claimed the player council voted for the ATP Cup, because, by the very nature of the ATP constitution, they will own 50 per cent of the new event. Kermode argues that this makes it more likely that the leading players will decide to play in the ATP event rather than the Davis Cup because the proximity of the two events in the calendar will make it difficult to play both.

“I’m very confident that a huge majority of players are going to play the ATP Cup because they said they wanted it, they’re a part of it, they are a 50-per cent owner of it,” he says.

“The big thing for us was if we’re doing new events, what we didn’t want to do is create additive events because the calendar is quite full. We start in January and finish in November [at the World Tour Finals] at the O2 [Arena]. If you start putting in big events

throughout the calendar, players can only play so much and will then choose to not play something else.”

To understand how likely it is that the players will have signed up for the ATP event by the September 13 deadline for entries, it’s important to understand the stake they have in its success and the way revenues are distributed throughout the ATP Tour. Any commercial surplus at the organisation is divided up between its tournaments and players – in the latter case in the form of prize money and an equal pension contribution to the top 125 players.

“We’ve reduced the number of minimum years of credit required to qualify for the pension from five years to three, meaning that many more players will be able to reap the rewards of the pension than previously,” says Kermode. “The player pension contributions in 2018 reached a record \$64,000 per player – a growth of more than 300 per cent in the last 10 years.”

If the players’ motives prove to be less altruistic, they will also have to weigh the \$20m prize pot being offered by the Davis Cup against the \$15m to be won at the ATP Cup. The ATP Tour is also able to promise 750 ranking points to the winner of its event where the ITF is not.

Although Kermode says the ATP “will continue to work closely with the ITF across a number of different areas in the



(Red Photographic Ltd)

sport”, the chances of any compromise between the two organisations looks remote, now that the ATP has aligned itself so closely with Tennis Australia. The national federation will lead sponsorship sales for the new event – which will take place in Perth as a lead-in event to the Australian Open – once the ATP Tour’s existing partners have been offered the rights. Under the agreement, the federation is paying a “sanction fee” to the ATP and will take on responsibility for delivering the event and paying the \$15m prize money. Kermode says it will be entitled to all of the revenues up to a certain threshold. After this, revenues are shared with the ATP. “It also allows us to partner strategically with a grand slam,” says Kermode. “Tennis Australia have got a good history; they’re tried and tested.”

The tour’s host broadcaster and media agency ATP Media will lead global sales of the media rights to the tournament.

“In terms of broadcast deals, we’ve secured agreements which provide huge exposure across all of North and South America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the majority of Europe,” says Kermode. “We’ve got free-to-air coverage in quite a few areas, including Japan, China, the Middle East, and the levels of media rights that we’re in discussion with many broadcasters about, I think, reflect how important this event is going to be.”

World Tour Finals

For the time being, the ATP Tour’s golden goose will continue to be the season-ending World Tour Finals. For this reason, the decision to move the event to Turin was a difficult one.

“There was a broad conversation – almost a philosophical conversation – about moving or remaining in London,” he says. “There were two schools of thought. One was that the event has historically moved around the world, the first one being in Tokyo, and it then did a long stint at Madison Square Garden in New York. From then on it moved around to numerous locations. There’s another school of thought that said for an event to be successful it needs to build roots in certain places.

“It was not a decision we took lightly by any stretch of the imagination,

because with our partners AEG at the O2 it has been the most successful indoor tennis event in the world ever.”

Kermode says he knew to expect “offers from various regions in the world” that would be more lucrative than the one from London, but that he was surprised to find two European bids at an equal level. Given that the ATP’s shortlist consisted of Singapore, Tokyo and Manchester alongside Turin and London, it’s not difficult to ascertain which cities he is talking about. As reported by *SportBusiness* at the time, Turin won because it was able to provide stronger financial guarantees than the London bid, which was subject to fluctuations in the sponsorship market.

The winning package, put together by the Italian Tennis Federation and Sport e Salute SpA in partnership with the Italian Government, is reported to be worth £65m (€75m/\$84.7m) over the five-year contract. This will allow the prize purse for the event to increase from the £9m (£6.95m/€8m) paid by London last year to a record \$14.5m (£11.2m/€12.93m) for the first event in Italy.

Aside from these prize money increases, Kermode says he would like to be remembered for promoting the next generation of players through the ATP Next Gen Finals which launched in 2017. He says the series, which was developed to prepare and protect the sport against the inevitable drop in interest when players like Federer and Nadal retire, has succeeded in bringing

these players through.

“Where I’m just so confident tennis will still retain that level of interest is that the Next Gen players that are coming through are really exciting, different personalities,” he says. “They all play different styles of tennis and they’re also from a geographically diverse spread across the world, you’ve got players coming from Australia again, and the States – we’ve always had Europe – and you’ve got South Americans, you’ve got Asians.”

Kermode would also like to be recognised for eliciting one of the first media partnerships with Amazon and points out that the tech giant’s involvement with the Tour began with the first Next Gen Finals in 2017.

“I’m proud that the ATP has been at the forefront of innovation in the sport. We’ve since built a much wider partnership with Amazon for the ATP Tour rights, and they’ve subsequently added the US Open as well as the WTA rights to that. In more general terms, I believe that one of our advantages is the level of content the ATP Tour is able to offer for 11 months of the year and I believe that was a compelling proposition for them.”

Perhaps the next crop of talent that he so readily promoted will have more of an appreciation for these achievements than the current one. As Kermode says, the ATP Board knows where he is. ○



Since winning last year’s ATP Next Gen Finals, Greek player Stefanos Tsitsipas has moved from number 15 to number six in the ATP player rankings. The Next Gen Finals were the first major tennis event to be shown on Amazon Prime Video. (Julian Finney/Getty Images)

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Japan: a platform for judo's ambitions



The International Judo Federation is seeking to use the 2019 Judo World Championships as a vehicle for driving interest in the sport in Japan and beyond whilst testing out facilities and operations ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games.

(IJF)

Judo has well-established, powerful links with Japan, stretching back generations.

So, with the 2019 World Judo Championships starting in Tokyo on August 25, less than a year before judo is once again thrust into the spotlight in the same city at the 2020 Olympic Games, it would be easy to assume that developing the sport in Japan will be the sole focus of the International Judo Federation (IJF) in the coming months.

However, in aiming to maximise the impact and legacy of the two major events that will take place in the Japanese capital in the coming months, the IJF is adopting a truly global outlook.

“There is an intricate link between the local and the international level,” the IJF’s media director, Nicolas Messner, says.

“The World Championships take place one year prior to the Games, in the very same venue as in Tokyo 2020, which is also the venue where judo made its debut in the 1964 Olympic Games.

“The event will attract a lot of Japanese judo fans, as well as people from all over the world. It will have a powerful local impact as well as an international dimension, with one feeding the other one.

“We have also launched side events to spark interest, including national teams promoting the event to the

public. All these efforts constitute a build-up for the Olympic competition, where judo will shine and hopefully conquer new audiences.”

Roots

Judo’s roots in Japan are deep-rooted. In preparation for the World Championships, the IJF has been working closely with the All Japan Judo Federation and the Kodokan Judo Institute, which was established by the sport’s founding father, Jigoro Kano, in 1882.

“Even today, the IJF is very much attached to the original philosophy of the sport, which is meant to create the conditions of a better society and

is based on a strong moral code,” Messner adds.

“Going back to Japan for the 2019 World Championships and next year for the Olympic Games is an important milestone for all judo lovers around the world. Within that framework, working with the All Japan Judo Federation and with the Kodokan is a guarantee that everything will run as smoothly as possible.

“Japan is used to organising major judo events and has a very professional team of experts and volunteers who will make the upcoming events big successes.”

Japan certainly has considerable event-hosting experience when it comes to staging the sport’s most high-profile competitions.

Tokyo hosted the first two editions of the World Championships, in 1956 and 1958. After the Japanese cities of Chiba and Osaka staged the event, it returned to Tokyo in 2010, the most recent edition to take place in the country.

Tokyo has also hosted an annual IJF Grand Slam Series event for men since 2006 and women since 2007.

Meanwhile, the unprecedented success of Japan’s judo team has helped to boost public anticipation for the World Championships. Japan easily topped the medal table at the 2018 edition in Baku, Azerbaijan, with eight golds among a total of 17 medals.

Momentum

However, Japan’s success in the sport in recent years has come at a time when judo’s expansion worldwide has gathered irresistible momentum.

The number of competing nations at the World Championships has doubled over the past quarter of a century, and the results of this development are now starting to be seen in the medal table at major events.

The IJF’s head of marketing and media, Vlad Marinescu, underlines the opportunity to use the local enthusiasm for the sport in Japan through the World Championships to drive further

expansion worldwide.

“Judo has become a truly global sport,” Marinescu says. “During the Antalya Grand Prix this year, we saw in the total of 14 categories, 14 different countries winning gold medals, confirming judo as a universal sport.

“We are expecting participation from more than 125 countries at the World Championships and will have the event shown in more than 190 countries, including live coverage, news and highlights, as well as global webcasting.”

The support of the local public in Tokyo will be crucial to the success of the event and how it is viewed around the world. With that in mind, the IJF and the local organisers of the World Championships have been busy stoking interest in Japan and beyond with a series of campaigns.

“Our media and marketing team has been active across all spheres, highlighting and promoting athletes on their road to Tokyo,” Marinescu adds. “An example is the ‘Throw to Tokyo’

competition, where the judo public can upload their version of Ippon in five categories for the chance to win a trip to Tokyo, with the public voting on their favourites. More than 1,000 videos were submitted.”

Appetite

With more than 50 million participants worldwide across all age groups and demographics, judo is a sport that benefits from its inclusive approach.

At the World Championships, the understandable focus will be on satisfying the appetite for the sport from its younger followers.

“Young people and young judo fans represent the majority of the judo population and will for sure be massively represented at the World Championships, but we will also see coaches, judo teachers and families attending the event,” Marinescu says.

The IJF has not only been keen to enhance expectations and interests from the fans’ perspectives, though.





The athletes – as well as the sport’s followers worldwide – have benefited from the IJF’s efforts to establish a calendar that has increased interest and anticipation ahead of the World Championships.

After the IJF’s groundbreaking opening Grand Prix of the year in Tel Aviv set the benchmark, spectators have flocked to events on the World Judo Tour, with a record number of nations and athletes competing.

With a total of 10 destinations on the Grand Prix calendar this year, as well as six Grand Slam events, the World Championships and then the Shenzhen Masters in China from December 13-15, the packed 2019 World Judo Tour calendar is proving irresistible to judokas and fans alike.

“The World Judo Tour, which includes 18 globally-broadcast events in 2019, has been fundamental in

providing a base for a high-level competition as well as the ability of branding heroes and the championship, from across the world throughout the year,” the IJF’s financial director Igor Kun says. “This allows the judo fans and the public to follow with interest results and future rivalries leading up to the World Championships and continuing afterwards.”

Ticketing

This interest has translated into encouraging ticket sales for the World Championships, with Kun underlining the IJF’s close cooperation with partners.

“We expect the event to be at full capacity,” Kun says. “Ticket sales started in April and, so far, approximately 30 per cent of the tickets have been sold. There is a lot of interest also from abroad, so we expect to have

a great atmosphere in the venue.

“The IJF, alongside the athletes, the local organising committee, all national federations, commission members, partners, sponsors and suppliers are working in close synergy to ensure a successful 2019 World Judo Championships in Tokyo, to provide the best experience, a high level of competition, services and operations for the benefit of all stakeholders, the judo community and fans.”

Whilst impressive ticket sales are anticipated, media and marketing interest in judo’s showpiece event is also expected to be very healthy.

“The World Championships is the flagship event of the IJF,” Marinescu adds. “As such, it is with this event that we have the highest levels of activations and media presence. We are working closely with partners to ensure the best possible engagement, exposure



and activations during and around the World Championships.

“Year after year, all IJF events attract an increasing number of media companies. As a consequence, media exposure has been growing exponentially over the past few years.

“As it is the World Championships, prior to the Olympic Games, and because it is in Japan, we expect that the media interest will be massive in Tokyo this summer. We are closely collaborating with all media partners in order to ensure maximum exposure.”

Innovation

To build on this interest, the IJF is determined to apply a proactive

strategy, with innovation at its heart.

New engagement methods, underpinned by the IJF’s digital platforms, will help to enhance the experience for followers of the World Championships.

“Separating spectators in-venue and out, we are aiming to implement technology for adding value to the experience of all viewers,” Messner says.

“In the venue we will be implementing filters for social media platforms, dedicated hashtags and interviews with the public. Outside the venue, Live.ijf.org will be not only streaming all tatami all day to include all matches in HD, but at the same time, for users, we have the ability to

add favourites to follow – athletes, categories or countries – and will send notifications for upcoming contests to watch live or on-demand.

“The IJF website as a platform for the judo community will feature more articles, stats, live transmissions, interviews and behind-the-scenes content.

“Social media will also play a major role in promoting the event and increasing the popularity of the sport with dedicated schedules for live behind-the-scenes content, as well as highlights for categories, ippons [points], athletes and countries being pushed out each day. Our target is to maximise the experience of all judo fans.” 

Judo comes home to Nippon Budokan

The 14,500-capacity Nippon Budokan, the host venue for the 2019 Judo World Championships and the judo competition at the 2020 Olympic Games, is a historic facility for the sport.

“Nippon Budokan was the venue where judo started as part of the Olympic programme in 1964 and is where judo will be featured next year at Tokyo 2020,” International Judo Federation media director Nicolas Messner says.

“This will represent a strong link between the past, the present and the future of judo. We are using the World Championships as a test event for Tokyo 2020, specifically using the same venue, workforce and timing.”

According to the IJF, the World Championships, whilst being a major event in its own right, will also give the event’s organisers the opportunity to ensure various operational aspects work perfectly ahead of Tokyo 2020.

“Testing most functional areas with a top-level judo event should generate a great benefit in terms of confirming synergies between the different areas come Games time,” Messner adds.

“Following the World Championships, keeping true to the roots of the sport, the venue will be renovated, inaugurating it with the Olympic Games 2020 judo competition.”

As Messner explains, the chance to



(Atsushi Tomura/Getty Images)

stage an event of the scale of the World Championships in the same venue as the Olympic competition, with the two showcases just months apart, will offer tremendous benefits.

“Having the opportunity to be present in the Olympic host city one year prior to the Games with a major IJF event such as the World Championships – which is the flagship event of the IJF – is crucial and will definitely help a lot in terms of preparations for the Tokyo Olympics,” Messner adds.

“In the past, a test event was always

organised in the Olympic city, one year in advance, but it was always a competition that was reduced in scale, just to test out some of the logistics for the Games.

“This year, it will be a full-scale competition with the exact same format and number of categories as Tokyo 2020. Following this experience, we will analyse aspects for the future, but we can already see the benefits across the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the IJF and national federations.”

Budapest builds on lessons from failed Olympic bid



City is looking to engage younger people who were supportive of the 2024 Olympic bid

Budapest has focused on international competitions and showing its flexibility as a host

Economic impact on the Hungarian capital is a key driver of the bidding and hosting strategy

Bradley Rial

Reputations are rarely enhanced when an Olympic bid falters before entering the final straight. However, Budapest has been different.

Whilst the Hungarian capital's backers could not hide their frustration and disappointment just over two years ago, when dreams of hosting the 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games were dashed, there is little question that Budapest has leveraged the experience of the bidding contest to its advantage.

"There was a certain amount of regret that we were unsuccessful, of course, but we learned a lot," says Balázs Fürjes, state secretary for the development of Budapest and major international sport events, who served as chairman of the Budapest 2024 Olympic bid. "We used

the experience to help bid for other events and to increase our reputation in the sports scene.

"It has led to improved relationships with international federations, society in general and the media. It is crucial that we know our strengths and weaknesses – in particular, to be always mindful of and working on our weaknesses."

Lessons

Although Budapest has no immediate plans to bid for a future edition of the Games, the influence of the Olympic movement still looms large in the city's event-hosting landscape.

Two of the Games' most high-profile international federations – Fina and the IAAF, representing aquatics and athletics respectively – have certainly put their faith in the city.

Within five months of the 2024

Olympic bid's collapse, Fina had not only staged its 2017 World Championships in Budapest to great acclaim, but had also committed to a return to the city for its World Championships (25m) in 2024. In December last year, the IAAF announced that it would bring its showpiece biannual World Championships to Budapest in 2023.

World Championships in other Olympics sports such as judo, wrestling and table tennis have also taken place in the city since the plug was pulled on the 2024 Games bid in early 2017.

However, it is the arrival of the inaugural Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) World Urban Games later this year that is arguably the most significant strategic capture of all – especially in the context of the 2024 Budapest Olympics bid's post mortem.

Outsider

Realistically, the city was always a rank outsider when it was up against the juggernauts of Paris and Los Angeles in the race for the 2024 Olympics.

When more than 260,000 people signed a petition against the bid and backed investing the money that was due to be ploughed into the Games into “hospitals and schools” instead, vital political backing – which had kept the bid alive whilst the likes of Hamburg and Rome had earlier crashed out – wavered fatally.

However, the scale of public opposition was debatable. Those who added their names to the petition accounted for only about three per cent of the country’s population. Local polling figures collected three months before Budapest pulled out of the contest suggested public support for the 2024 Olympics bid had reached 63 per cent in the city – exactly the same percentage recorded by eventual Games host Paris in the International Olympic Committee’s Evaluation Report.

The Budapest poll, carried out by research agency Kód Kft in December 2016, also found that whilst there was perhaps understandably greater scepticism from older, more conservative people, 71 per cent of 18-to-29 year-olds supported the bid. With this in mind, the GAISF World Urban Games is a significant attempt to build on this appetite.

Urban life

With sports such as 3x3 basketball, BMX freestyle, breakdancing, parkour and freestyle roller skating lined up for the inaugural Games, which will take place from September 13-15, the event provides Budapest with the opportunity to engage directly with the youth market.

Perhaps tellingly, although Budapest initially lost out to 2028 Olympics host Los Angeles for the World Urban Games, GAISF opted to move the event to the city earlier this year after claiming its proposed sports programme was “more in line” with its vision. As a host city contract had not been signed with Los Angeles, GAISF was able to switch the event – and Budapest will have a chance to build on the momentum by also

hosting the 2021 edition of the Games.

“We will look to use the Games to leverage the city and to appeal to the youth audience,” says Fürjes, who adds that the event will be the “Olympic-style party of the year, bringing people to sport and sport to people”.

Again, direct links with the Olympics are conspicuous, and not just in the language or the association with GAISF, an influential organisation within the movement. Both 3x3 basketball and BMX freestyle will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo 2020 Games, with breakdancing to follow in Paris 2024. For many, this year’s World Urban Games will provide a first look at these sports.

“Such sports, which may previously have been seen by some as subcultures, are now more widely accepted as urban sports,” Fürjes adds. “It is all about appealing to the youth and about education.

“How can we further educate everyone about the appeal of urban sports? What is parkour, for example? How can we bring sport to the people and people to sport? The exciting challenge is in getting this message across – and, as much as possible, prior to the September opening of the Games.”

Flexibility

Hosting the 2019 World Urban Games will not be the first time that Budapest has demonstrated its flexibility by stepping in at relatively short notice to stage a major event.

The 2017 Fina World Championships were arguably the largest sporting event

Budapest has ever held. The fortnight-long event attracted some 500,000 spectators, with an additional 500,000 taking to the streets and sampling the city’s fan zones.

The city was actually scheduled to host the event in 2021, but this was brought forward in March 2015 after Guadalajara in Mexico withdrew amid funding concerns.

“Budapest said it would deliver and it did. Fina officials now say the 2017 championships were the best ever,” says Fürjes. “Moreover, that event served to renew other infrastructure in and around the city, all of which is now in wide use.”

Construction work on the new Duna Arena, the centrepiece for the event, was brought forward and accelerated so that the building project was delivered in less than two years, and Budapest’s efforts were rewarded.

According to professional services firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, the total anticipated income derived from the impact of the event from 2017 to 2022 is estimated to be \$600m. The championships also contributed \$300m towards Hungary’s GDP in 2017, the equivalent of 0.25 per cent. Some 16,500 jobs are thought to have been created through the event.

Statistics have shown that money spent by tourists in Budapest in 2017 was significantly higher than the year before. “With higher earners visiting Hungary and Budapest, this offers proof that sport can drive income to the city,” says Fürjes.





Picture-perfect

The opening ceremony for the event, which took place on the Duna Arena's neighbouring River Danube, served to highlight Budapest's aesthetic qualities, with high-diving events at the championships held on the river itself.

"It goes almost without saying that a hugely successful event such as Fina 2017 increases the awareness of Budapest," says Fürjes. "Breathtaking photos of the high-dive event, for instance, staged immediately on the Danube River, across from the Hungarian Parliament Building, were published around the world.

"The cascading effect of such an event – the enhancing effect of not just being known as but, further, labelled as a reliable partner – can lead to the attraction of foreign investment into the city and country."

Budapest is hoping that the use of major events to accelerate wider redevelopment, generating a positive economic impact, will be in evidence again in relation to the IAAF World Championships in 2023.

In looking forward to the event, which will take place at a new 40,000-seat National Athletics Centre before the capacity is reduced to 15,000 following the conclusion of the championships, Fürjes cites the London 2012 Olympics as a template.

"The development of the East

London neighbourhood of Stratford in accordance with the 2012 Games can perhaps be thought of as a kind of benchmark, because that neighbourhood is now blossoming with housing, retail and possibility," he says. "In Budapest, there is a similar possibility with an urban brownfield site just south of the traditional city centre turning green by 2023."

In keeping with its compact approach, Budapest has planned for all hotels and competition venues for the event to be within a 15-minute travel time.

Promotion

Fürjes also describes the city as "uniquely affordable", safe and photogenic; something that will be showcased when the Giro d'Italia arrives in Budapest next year.

As Active Hungary's Government Commissary Máriusz Révész said when race organiser RCS announced in April that Budapest would stage the start of a Grand Tour cycling event for the first time: "The Giro is not only a sporting event but also a great promotion for the territory."

Fürjes admits that, in some ways, Budapest is "still in search of recognition" and feels that "there could hardly be a better event" than the Giro to open people's eyes to the city and its attractions.

Budapest is an increasingly popular

tourist destination, thanks to landmarks such as the Parliament Building, quaint municipal parks, Christmas markets and the music and cultural Sziget Festival, as well as the annual Formula One Grand Prix, which takes place in the city's northern outskirts and has secured a place on the calendar until at least 2021.

In 2018, 31 million guest nights were registered across Hungary – a year-on-year increase of one million – while Budapest Airport plans to open a new terminal by 2024 to accommodate a rapid influx of foreign visitors following a double-digit rise in passenger numbers last year.

Placed in the heart of Europe, the Hungarian capital is relatively easy to access from most major cities on the continent. However, the city authority, which works hand-in-hand with the national government on event bidding, is exploring any opportunities to attract visitors from further afield as well.

The World Table Tennis Championships, which took place in the city in April, is a prime example, with the event's huge Asian audience promoting Budapest to potential new visitors from the east.

The event was broadcast to 265 million viewers in 145 nations and attracted some 80.5 million YouTube views. The Championships also proved popular on social media, with 27.6 million Facebook impressions, 20



million Twitter impressions and 23.5 million Instagram impressions. In China alone, the event generated 50.4 million post views and 500 million impressions on social media website Weibo.

Strategic balance

The balance of world championships, youth-orientated competitions and events that are strategically aligned with Hungary's broader tourism and investment goals, is no accident.

Viktor Orbán, who has been Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010, has been a powerful force behind bringing more events to the country and, in particular, its capital.

"Most events are funded by the government, which views sport as a strategic pillar for the country and society," says Fürjes.

In a further boost to the city's sporting infrastructure, and its appeal to visitors from across Europe, Budapest will host four matches at its new Ferenc Puskás Stadium during the Uefa Euro 2020 football tournament. The 68,000-seat venue is due to open later this year.

Budapest is likely to be a popular option for fans seeking to explore a new destination in a tournament that is taking place across 12 European cities.

Whilst nine of the host cities have been categorised as Cluster A locations by football's European governing body Uefa, and will have ticket prices starting

at €50 accordingly, Budapest – along with Baku and Bucharest – has been allocated to Cluster B, where ticket prices will start at just €30, offering a more affordable option.

For Fürjes, Euro 2020 is just the latest evidence of Budapest's focus "on quality over quantity and attracting the biggest sport events in the Olympic movement and the world of sport".

He adds: "The aim is to position Budapest as a global sports capital and to be known as a trusted, reliable host of major sport events. We keep on hearing that sport is something that is putting Budapest on the world map and making it known around the world. Budapest is not considered an underdog now, as it was in the Olympic race." [O](#)

Notable events:

Formula One Grand Prix (annual)	2019 European Maccabi Games
EHF Handball Champions League Final Four (annual)	2019 GAISF World Urban Games
2014 European Water Polo Championships	Uefa Euro 2020
Red Bull Air Race (2015-2018)	2020 European Water Polo Championships
LEN Water Polo Champions League Final Six (2016 and 2017)	2020 European Aquatics Championships
2017 Fina World Championships	2020 European Open Water Swimming Championships
2017 World Judo Championships	2020 Giro d'Italia Grande Partenza
2018 World Wrestling Championships	2022 European Handball Championships (with Slovakia)
2019 ITTF World Championships	2023 IAAF World Championships
2019 Fina Champions Swim Series	2024 World Swimming Championships (25m)
2019 Uefa Women's Champions League Final	

2019 Sport Industry NextGen Leaders hear calls for improved diversity



(Sport Industry NextGen)

With the Fifa Women's World Cup in France attracting more eyes than ever before to the women's game in 2019, it is fitting that this year's Sport Industry NextGen Unlocked event in London focused on how to provide a platform to take women's sport to the next level.

Taking place in Shoreditch's Village Underground, the event welcomed the latest class of 30 sport business leaders under the age of 30 to be inducted on to the Sport Industry Group-operated programme, and introduced a number of industry experts to give their answers to the simple question: what's next in sport?

Two high-profile players from the women's game – Chelsea's Erin Cuthbert, who played in this year's Women's World Cup in France with Scotland, and Claire Rafferty, who retired from her football career at

the end of the 2018-19 season, having featured for England at the previous two World Cups – were on hand to offer their own answers, and give a rallying call to this year's NextGen intake, urging them to “be the change” in the industry.

“Everybody wants to be an industry leader, because there is a gap in the market for women's sport,” said Cuthbert. “I think it's a great opportunity.” The World Cup, she said, would hopefully provide “a platform for the women's game to be recognised and treated seriously”, particularly now that brands such as Visa are starting to get involved with women's football and sensing the huge marketing potential.

“I think brands are starting to get ‘FOMO’, fear of missing out on a lot of opportunities, with the Women's World Cup,” said Cuthbert.

Rafferty reflected on the ten-year age gap between herself and Cuthbert and

the developments that have already taken place in such a short space of time, noting that “the difference between Erin and I is that her dream was visible. I didn't see any female professional footballers when I was growing up, but Erin always knew it was a possibility”.

And though an increase in representation has occurred “on every single level”, said Rafferty, she urged the NextGen Leaders to keep pursuing better visibility for women's sports.

“On a day-to-day basis, you see it on television, social media, an increase in presenters, representation on every single level. But we don't want to just settle for that, we want it to be the norm. The more we see it, the more normal it will become.”

2019 is the fourth intake of Sport Industry NextGen Leaders, with the programme having begun back in

2015. It is also the most evenly split in gender terms – a record 43 per cent of this year’s Leaders are women. Sport Industry Group says that the overall split of applicants was more even than in any previous year, representative of a changing landscape in the sector.

Former world champion boxer Carl Frampton also used his opportunity on stage at NextGen Unlocked to call for improved diversity in the sport industry, criticising his own sport’s increasing reliance on the pay-per-view model, which he says is shutting out boxing’s traditional working class audience.

“It’s a working class sport and some can’t afford to pay £20 to sit in their living room to watch a fight. It’s going the way of the pay-per-view market, where the working class can’t see it. I want it to be seen by more people,” Frampton told event host Radha Balani and Yahoo UK’s head of sport Raj Mannick, himself a former Sport Industry NextGen Leader in 2016.

“We’ve got so many stars and UK boxing is thriving at the minute with the likes of Anthony Joshua filling out Wembley and masses coming to watch it, but I would like to see boxing back on channels that are easily accessible for those that don’t have a lot of money.”

The Sport Industry NextGen programme is intended to offer coaching and development pathways to leading professionals aged 30 and under in the sport world. NextGen Leaders receive access to a year-long Leadership Package which includes money-can’t-buy training, personal development and networking opportunities, as well as coaching from a range of experts from across the sport industry and beyond.

Coaches for the 2019 include the likes of former New Labour spin doctor Alastair Campbell, Commonwealth Games Federation chief executive David Grevemberg and Jennie Price, former chief executive of Sport England.

The Leaders themselves, meanwhile, represent a wide-range of organisations that span the breadth of the sport industry, from tech start-ups to

international rights-holders, including AEG Europe, BT Sport, EA Sports, ESL, Facebook, F1, Hawk-Eye Innovations, Saracens Rugby Club, Sport England, Wasserman and more.

Sport Industry Group is now looking forward to the 2020 edition of the NextGen programme and will begin welcoming applications on July 16.

“Interest in Sport Industry NextGen has grown exponentially year-on-year and we continue to be blown away by the quality of the applications,” says Alex Coulson, managing director of

Sport Industry Group.

“As we enter the fifth year of the programme, our alumni network is already developing into a real ‘who’s who’ of the sport industry in the UK. We created the programme to support both the young Leaders themselves and the wider industry by investing in the talent that will determine its course and impact over the coming years.” ○

To apply to be part of the Sport Industry NextGen programme in 2020, visit sportindustry.biz/nextgen.



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Postgraduate Rankings 2019

SPORTBUSINESS' ANNUAL SURVEY OF THE
WORLD'S BEST POSTGRADUATE SPORTS
INDUSTRY COURSES



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Welcome to the SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings 2019

This year is not only the most expansive and wide-ranging edition of the SportBusiness Postgraduate Rankings to date, but also sees some of the biggest changes to the format since we began this project back in 2012.

As ever, our aim is simple: to provide students and course leaders alike with the most reliable and respected rankings system for postgraduate sports management courses across the world. That task, however, has become increasingly complicated with each passing year, as the sector has grown and expanded at a rapid rate.

For 2019, we have made significant alterations to our methodology to ensure the rankings keep up to date with the latest developments in sport business education and remain the most in-depth and detailed in the industry. We would like to offer our sincerest thanks to this year's advisory panel, who provided feedback on how we could adjust our criteria to improve the reliability, validity and credibility of the rankings.

"One of the things we were concerned about was ensuring we were comparing apples with apples," says Bill Sutton, founding director of the Sport and Entertainment Management MBA Program at University of South Florida and a member of the SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings advisory board. "We worked hard to create a level playing field; that the questions were written in a certain way everyone understood the criteria. We were trying to make sure everybody understood how they were being evaluated and making sure those standards were fair.

"When talking about employment, are you talking about full-time employment or are you talking about an internship? There's a big difference there. We wanted to make sure that if the question was asking you how many students were employed full time after graduation, that you were answering how many people were employed in a full-time job, not in



internship. And we thought that was a really important criterion to stress."

As such, under the new criteria, internships that lead to a full-time job in the sport industry contribute a full point to a school's score, while those that don't are awarded half points.

Based on input from the advisory panel, we adjusted and clarified the diversity criteria, adding a measure for the number of students from a minority ethnic background while reducing the weight given to gender and international students. Both SportBusiness and our advisory panel felt this was a better way of measuring diversity across courses as it is seen in 2019.

Furthermore, we no longer award points to courses which offer teaching in more than one language.

The course-leader survey and peer-review section remain a core component of the rankings. While student feedback and employment outcomes comprise the majority of the scores, we understand the importance of peer review and how

courses are viewed across the industry by those with the greatest understanding of the sector.

"It's great that faculty members participating in the survey have an opportunity to be part of the process," says Sutton. "I think that was really important. Each year that we've been part of this, we've all learned something. We've learned more about the process in the equity of the process. And you contribute to the process. So it's been a very good educational process for all of us on the advisory board."

Finally, we are now providing visibility of the alumni response rate, to offer full transparency on the number of graduates our figures are based on. We require a response rate from a graduating class of at least 20 per cent, or 15 alumni responses, for a course to qualify for inclusion in the rankings.

"These rankings are really crucial to prospective students," concludes Sutton. "We live in a world where you can access everything and students need

the opportunity to access feedback from neutral parties and look at standards and criteria that help them make a decision as to where to go to school. It's important that we have a standard we're held to and that people can see that we're working to improve."

And the winners are...

The University of Massachusetts, Amherst has followed up consecutive second-place finishes in 2017 and 2018 by topping the rankings for the first time.

UMass improved on its performance in almost all of our criteria in 2019, with particularly strong showings on diversity – a third of its students come from a minority ethnic background and over a quarter from outside the US – while it also received top marks on the course leader measure, demonstrating the high esteem in which the course is held by other educators across the sector.

Ohio University falls to second place for only the second time in the eight-year history of the rankings, having placed top in every other year. Its performance once again in 2019 is a testament to the consistency and strength of its Master of Sport Administration course, the world's oldest postgraduate sports administration degree.

The Fifa Master, at the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES), is the only other course to have finished in first place in the overall rankings, in 2014, and returns to the podium this year with a third-placed finish. Its dominance in the

European rankings continues, with its seventh victory there in eight years.

The Russian International Olympic University's move up one place into tenth also means that there are now two European schools in the top ten, against just one last year. Once again, eight of the top ten are US-based, however, as Australia's Deakin University – the only entrant from outside the North America and Europe – dropped out of the top ten.

In the online rankings, Ohio once again showed its strength in the field and ability to evolve with the times, with its Professional Master of Sport Administration claiming the top spot.

Over the following pages you will find interviews with course leaders from the top three ranking courses as well as the usual breakdowns of the overall top 40 and the best performing schools from North America and Europe.

There is also insight from representatives of the likes of New York University on creating a future-facing sports administration degree, Liverpool and Coventry on the growing sports education sector in the UK, and Centro de Formación Fundación Valencia CF and Real Madrid Graduate University on the benefits of their connections with the LaLiga giants.

As well as our advisory panel, SportBusiness would like to offer our thanks to all course leaders and alumni who participated in this year's surveys and contributed to maintaining the preeminence of these rankings. [O](#)

How the PGR score is calculated

Student satisfaction: A maximum of 40 points is derived from quality of alumni support (10pts), quality of teaching (10pts), quality of support (10pts) and quality of extra-curricular support (10pts).

Employed within six months of graduation: Up to 25 points are awarded based on the proportion of the course's 2016 alumni who, six months after graduation, have gained full-time employment in the industry or industry-related companies; were interns in the sports industry which led to a full time career; or enrolled on a related PhD.

Course leader: A maximum 10 points comes from course leaders, who selected their top five postgraduate courses.

Value: a maximum of five points based on how valuable the course has been in the career of students.

Usefulness: A maximum of five points based on how often graduates use the skills taught on the course and how useful the skills and knowledge taught in the course has been in performing their current employment.

Diversity scores for domestic/international student ratio: Up to four points are awarded based on the split between students from within and outside the course's home country.

Gender ratio: Up to four points based on the split between male and female.

Ethnic minority ratio: Up to four points based on the proportion of ethnic minority students on the course.

Salary: Up to two points based on average salary three years after graduation.

Work placement: One point if a work placement/internship is part of studies.

The advisory panel

Our sincerest thanks go out to the following, whose help and input has been invaluable in defining and compiling the 2019 SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings.

Bill Sutton

Founding Director, Sport and Entertainment Management MBA Program at University of South Florida

Jess Dixon

Associate Professor & Graduate Coordinator at the University of Windsor

Steve McKelvey

Associate Department Chair & Graduate Program Director at Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Rui Biscaia

Senior Lecturer in Sport Marketing & Deputy PG Course director at the University of Coventry

Scott Rosner

Academic Director of the Master of Science in Sports Management at Columbia University

The top 40 Postgraduate sports business courses

Rank	Course Provider	Course	Class size 2015/16	Response rate	Course duration (months)
1	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	MS Sport Management and MBA/MS Sport Management	22	55%	12-21
2	Ohio University	Masters of Sports Administration	27	48%	22
3	The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES)	The Fifa Master	32	56%	11
4	University of South Florida	MBA/MS in Sport & Entertainment Management	27	89%	21
5	George Washington University	Master of Science in Sport Management	18	78%	15-24
6	San Diego State University	Sports MBA	19	47%	18
7	University of Central Florida	DeVos Sport Business Management Program	27	85%	17
8	Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Sport Leadership	MEd/MBA Sport Leadership	44	75%	12-18
9	Temple University	Master of Science in Sport Business	30	27%	24
10	Russian International Olympic University	Master of Sport Administration	71	25%	10
11	Columbia University	MS Sports Management	69	36%	12-16
12	University of San Francisco	Master of Sport Management	99	49%	23
13	Georgia State University	Master of Science in Sport Administration	45	22%	18-24
14	Ohio State University	Master of Science in Kinesiology, Sport Management	21	48%	12-24
15	University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino	International Master in Strategic Management of Sports Organisations, Events and Facilities	25	44%	12
16	University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center	MBA in Sports Business	16	69%	18
17	Florida Atlantic University	MBA Sport Management	5	80%	23
18	ESBS – Centro de Formación Fundación Valencia CF	Master in International Sports Management	17	71%	9
19	Deakin University	Master of Business (Sport Management)	63	27%	24
20	Real Madrid Graduate University	MBA Sport Management	25	68%	10
21	University of South Carolina	Masters of Sport and Entertainment Management	62	34%	12-15
22	Coventry University	MSc Sport Management	37	49%	12
23	University of Liverpool Management School	MBA Football Industries	31	52%	12
24	AISTS	Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology	41	39%	15
25	University of Stirling	MSc in Sport Management	29	24%	12
26	Florida State University	Master in Sport Management	61	39%	12-24
27	University of Ottawa	Master of Human Kinetics Concentration in Sport Management	16	50%	16
28	University of Tennessee	Master in Sport Management	39	74%	21
29	Ball State University	Master of Sport Administration	16	44%	18-24
30	Ulster University	MSc Sport Management	15	67%	12
31	University of Connecticut	Master of Science in Sport Management	24	29%	24
32	University of Louisville	MS in Sport Administration	20	65%	18-24
33	University of Bayreuth	MBA Sport Management	35	20%	24
34	Sheffield Hallam University	MSc Sport Business Management	32	41%	12
35	Seattle University	Master in Sport Administration and Leadership	15	67%	21
36	Ca' Foscari University of Venice	Master in Sport Business Strategies	36	81%	12
37	University College Dublin	MSc in Sports Management	20	65%	12
38	West Virginia University	Master of Science in Sport Management	23	30%	12-24
39	Johan Cruyff Institute	Master in Sport Management	89	17%	10-12
40	AMOS	Master of Business in Sport	63	49%	24

Work placement	Average age	Female students	Foreign students	Ethnic minority students	Employment (at 6 months)	Quality of teaching score	Job support score	Extra-curricular support	Alumni network score	Value score	Usefulness score	Peer review score	Total score
Yes	25	41%	27%	31%	91.67	100.00	99.03	100.00	100.00	100.00	98.02	100.00	94.72
Yes	23	43%	13%	9%	92.31	100.00	100.00	99.10	100.00	98.46	96.34	90.00	90.73
Yes	28	36%	71%	43%	94.44	89.90	68.79	82.49	98.05	86.67	77.12	80.00	87.72
Yes	25	60%	11%	42%	81.25	93.48	92.15	93.96	94.58	87.50	83.63	70.00	85.29
Yes	24	40%	37%	25%	89.29	96.66	94.05	89.16	95.59	91.43	85.80	20.00	82.73
Yes	26	53%	16%	42%	88.89	98.70	84.07	95.00	98.70	93.33	96.56	10.00	82.36
Yes	26	42%	8%	42%	86.96	90.14	88.98	90.36	91.37	80.00	76.76	40.00	81.66
Yes	24	55%	11%	41%	90.91	95.73	92.03	93.81	96.09	86.25	90.89	0.00	81.35
Yes	24	35%	19%	22%	100.00	95.61	71.04	81.89	83.96	70.00	76.64	70.00	80.58
Yes	24	33%	38%	52%	96.88	96.88	74.67	90.55	92.32	77.33	78.25	10.00	80.44
Yes	25	25%	30%	51%	88.00	87.00	81.67	79.00	93.39	83.20	78.24	40.00	80.18
Yes	24	35%	11%	44%	84.69	96.39	92.21	88.71	93.27	86.12	88.63	20.00	79.97
Yes	24	58%	13%	53%	90.00	93.16	91.49	94.33	92.66	90.00	87.50	0.00	79.54
Yes	23	43%	0%	24%	95.00	96.49	83.00	91.99	89.33	86.00	86.79	20.00	79.47
Yes	26	25%	5%	0%	90.91	97.87	100.00	94.85	98.94	96.36	95.67	10.00	78.49
Yes	26	30%	26%	22%	95.45	84.54	73.78	62.58	80.32	70.91	71.10	70.00	78.09
Yes	27	31%	16%	31%	87.50	97.08	88.75	97.08	91.68	75.00	78.87	0.00	78.03
Yes	27	23%	48%	40%	92.31	93.33	89.87	79.58	78.46	87.69	82.60	0.00	77.72
Yes	27	23%	80%	n/a	88.24	90.97	64.11	80.68	91.85	83.53	80.81	50.00	77.04
Yes	28	30%	90%	5%	85.29	94.66	81.24	81.67	86.24	88.75	87.20	20.00	76.50
Yes	24	42%	13%	6%	76.19	96.58	84.17	87.58	90.57	82.00	86.37	50.00	76.36
Yes	25	9%	95%	69%	91.67	94.25	79.91	83.70	82.59	85.56	81.28	0.00	76.30
No	32	0%	90%	45%	87.50	90.10	70.62	78.65	96.46	80.00	71.65	20.00	76.04
Yes	31	30%	97%	38%	71.88	90.55	81.56	79.55	89.89	87.50	77.11	20.00	75.35
Yes	27	40%	56%	20%	100.00	96.66	71.67	73.07	72.14	85.71	72.48	0.00	75.26
Yes	24	39%	7%	34%	83.33	91.94	79.23	85.75	86.18	77.50	75.89	30.00	74.81
Yes	23	50%	10%	10%	93.75	95.61	76.25	79.38	84.59	87.50	84.67	10.00	74.63
Yes	26	61%	0%	22%	82.76	94.21	81.07	83.21	93.68	77.14	77.76	10.00	73.65
No	25	50%	10%	20%	92.86	92.86	76.43	90.23	84.27	74.29	83.33	0.00	73.47
Yes	24	33%	50%	0%	70.00	98.83	87.66	90.32	86.00	94.00	93.69	0.00	73.17
No	25	25%	19%	48%	78.57	94.99	84.06	79.51	91.90	71.43	82.14	10.00	72.37
No	23	37%	7%	33%	80.77	93.45	77.55	81.28	79.62	73.85	77.93	20.00	71.97
No	30	40%	10%	10%	85.71	90.23	71.67	79.51	93.31	82.86	76.02	10.00	71.85
Yes	25	19%	52%	n/a	76.92	93.98	74.75	83.61	80.00	81.54	85.35	10.00	69.81
Yes	25	33%	7%	13%	85.00	93.16	73.51	74.83	85.66	68.00	80.24	0.00	69.38
Yes	25	22%	0%	0%	84.48	89.82	85.62	84.53	80.74	80.00	72.00	0.00	68.79
No	28	32%	35%	26%	69.23	92.94	76.41	83.20	87.17	78.46	71.06	0.00	68.76
Yes	23	45%	9%	17%	71.43	87.14	77.61	81.67	91.19	85.71	67.52	0.00	68.28
No	28	17%	45%	8%	76.67	84.77	61.43	69.99	86.89	65.33	74.68	40.00	67.48
Yes	20	22%	7%	0%	85.48	86.34	72.15	72.16	73.82	77.42	72.55	20.00	67.32

UMass's MBA/MS in Sport Management prioritises diversity of people and experience



The University of Massachusetts, Amherst's MBA/MS in Sport Management has become just the third course to take the top spot in these rankings since we began them back in 2012. **Steve McKelvey**, graduate programme director, and **Janet Fink**, department chair, tell Adam Nelson how a focus on attracting a diverse student body and offering an assorted range of learning and workplace experiences have helped propel the course to first place, and how they intend to build on their success to develop an even stronger course in future.

University of Massachusetts Amherst

What are the USPs of the course at UMass?

SM: The McCormack Department has several unique program elements that we highlight to potential entrants into our program, especially when contrasted with the set of programs that our applicants are typically applying to. First is our program being housed in a nationally-ranked and on-the-rise business school. As a result of being within the Isenberg School of Management, our curriculum is grounded in core business

and management best practices, while our students can access courses and resources that will help them become well-rounded managers and leaders. Many of our students access on-ground courses in topics beyond just sport management. Hence our trademarked slogan: 'The Business School for Sport Business.'

One obvious selling point is our vast and unparalleled alumni network. Being the second-oldest program in the world, we have over 40 years of alumni who have reached the pinnacles of almost every industry segment. McCormack alumni currently include four MLB general managers, one NBA general manager, over 30 college athletic

directors and conference commissioners, the commissioner of the PGA Jay Monahan...it goes on.

How do you help your graduates get work?

SM: Our digital alumni database lists over 3,000 alumni working in the sport industry. We have purposefully built out a successful 'Graduate Mentor Program', whereby every grad student is paired with an alumnus in an industry sector that aligns with that student's particular career interests, serving as a fertile source of job and internship placements, as well as career and personal development. We can typically attribute almost half of the job placements to

students networking with our alumni.

These relationships and proof points of success support another one of the hallmarks of our curriculum, and that is our deep and long-standing belief in experiential learning. Many of our courses entail working directly with sport organisations on real-world issues and challenges. One of the pillars of this commitment to experiential learning is the 10-year relationship we have between our Sport Marketing class and Octagon.

Early each fall, Octagon provides the class with a marketing brief on behalf of one of their clients that challenges the students, working in teams, to develop an integrated sponsorship marketing plan to present to Octagon's clients. Our so-called "Octagon Bowl" culminates with a visit to Octagon's headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut where the student teams present in front of a panel of Octagon executives who provide critical feedback and insights to each of the presentations before selecting a winning team. Octagon is just one of the many sport organisations that our graduate students get to interact with, and learn from.

This past year, students have worked directly with executives of the Harlem Globetrotters, UMass Athletics, the Minnesota Timberwolves, Twitter, Major League Rugby, the Oak View Group, Farmers Insurance, Fenway Sports Management and Fuse Marketing. Each year brings a new and diverse collection of experiential learning projects. Many of these serve as extended interviews and create lead-generation opportunities for our job-seeking students.

Another point of pride and distinction for our program is our diversity, not only in terms of the personal backgrounds and nationalities of our cohort, but also their career interests. Having a student from India pursuing a marketing position within Major League Soccer; sitting next to a student from California seeking to get into Major League Baseball's General Manager's track...this diversity provides a vibrant environment for learning, growth and exploring the full breadth of the sports and entertainment industry. Each year, just over a quarter of our students come from other countries.



Steve McKelvey | graduate programme director



Janet Fink | department chair

Our MS class is typically quite small – approximately 22 students – so our classrooms benefit not only from an intimate, discussion-based pedagogy, but also from the variety of perspectives and career aspirations our students offer in support of a robust learning environment.

The final elements potential students should consider is that we hold arguably the most attractive funding package of any graduate sport management program and support a ratio of almost one PhD faculty member to every 2 grad students, which results in many independent study projects.

You performed strongly in graduate employment rates. How have you worked to improve this?

JF: We have always had a strong focus on working hard to get students jobs upon graduation. From the time they begin, Steve discovers each student's area of interest and matches them with an alumni mentor in that area in order to begin networking. Throughout their time at UMass, Steve and other faculty work closely and consistently toward connecting students with industry professionals.

Where do the majority of your students come from? Are they straight from undergraduate programmes or have they come back to school later in their careers?

SM: The majority come from the United States with a good mix of educational and sport backgrounds. In any year,

about half of the incoming class has some kind of business degree, and the rest have a liberal arts degree. The common denominator between them all is strong critical thinking and communication skills, which we are able to get a good handle on through the application and on-campus interview process. Although it's a misconception that real-world experience is required for our program, the truth is that we do prefer it. My personal opinion is that graduate studies are most beneficial and appreciated if the student has some real world perspective to apply and reflect on. As a result, our average age for each incoming class is around 25.

What are some of the areas you're looking to improve and the challenges you expect to face?

JF: We regularly discuss ways we can increase diversity in our programme – both in terms of female students and students of colour. Steve, along with our development folks, recently secured a significant donation that we can use to enhance our diversity. Also, soon we will be announcing a partnership that Steve developed which will also help us reach our goals.

We also recognise the importance of analytics in the industry and recently hired a new faculty member with expertise in sport analytics. This addition, along with numerous recently-hired faculty throughout Isenberg with an analytics focus, will substantially enhance our programme offerings in this area. ○

Ohio's Master of Sports Administration balances tradition with innovation

Ohio University's Master of Sports Administration course has topped these rankings on six occasions and has never finished outside the top two. Now in its 53rd year, the world's longest-running sport business postgraduate degree has built its reputation on a remarkable consistency and ability to incorporate new teaching into its traditional ways. Programme director **Matt Cacciato** and incoming chair of the Sports Administration Department **Jim Strode** tell Adam Nelson how a collegiate culture and an alumni network dating back over six decades help to keep the school at the top.



What do you think is behind Ohio's continued impressive performance in the rankings?

MC: It's the consistency we have internally. It really is one of the things that we can't emphasise enough, the fact that we're going into our 53rd year and we have alumni from the initial class that are still actively involved in the industry and in turn want to be involved with us. So interacting with our alumni as well, and then kind of our outside partners.

We have one of the original faculty, from the first year of the course, Dr. Higgins, who is still teaching on an emeritus basis. He's very close with the programme and the students, he started teaching in 1971. So he has had seen most of our years, and has relationships with the students as well as our alumni, and is a beloved figure. The presence of calm and consistency that he brings, even for me, being able to sit with him

and his advice when I first started, as the director, and he's been able to do that consistently over the programme. So that's in our, that's in our DNA, the poise that I think we have and we've been able to carry from year to year. The tradition is important.

And then I would say that the current faculty is critically important. The passion that they have, the expertise that they bring and the leadership that we are led by.

Jim, having just arrived at Ohio, what were some of the factors that convinced you it was a good fit for you?

JS: My impression is that it really starts with the people. When you look at the 15 faculty members in sports administration, we've got such a wonderful combination of a world-class researchers coupled with folks that have exceptional experiences in the sport realm. So being able to not only bring the theory to the classroom, but also being able to connect it with practice, I think is a separating factor.

There's no doubt that it's not just the faculty. We also have done an exceptional job of being able to attract some of the top students from all over the world to our programme. That has really helped us build our brand, based on the connections that we have with our alumni. Certainly, the experience that people have in Athens [Ohio, where the college is based] has been exceptional, and our alumni want to continue to give back and continue to pay forward into our programme. My impression certainly is that the connections that are made between the faculty and our students are for a lifetime.

Looking at the current climate of Ohio University sports administration, I couldn't be more excited to be joining such an excellent group of faculty and students. There was no doubt that when looking at the right fit for me, OU's reputation was certainly a key factor in making that decision.

How important is that network of alumni to the impressive employment figures seen by Ohio?

MASTER IN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS MANAGEMENT

#1 THE BEST
SPORT BUSINESS
MASTER OF SPAIN

2017
2018
2019

*According to SportBusiness Postgraduate Ranking 2017, 2018 & 2019



Type of learning:

Face-to-Face

Blended

Online

Language:

English

Spanish

esbs-spain.com

formacion.valenciacf.com



MC: It's absolutely important. I would say the networking that comes off of that, with so many years of established excellence. We've been the premier programme for a long time, we kind of always looked at ourselves as having that foundation. And then just the word of mouth, we get a lot of people coming to us who are friends of the programme who have worked alongside some of our alums and had heard of the program. So not only are they willing to help and engage, they look for our expertise and various projects along the way. And they will often recommend people to our programme just because of their knowledge of our abilities.

What are some of the changes you've made to the programme over the last 12 months, and will be looking to make over the coming years?

MC: From a curriculum standpoint we are trying to follow the market and embrace the trends that we're seeing. We know that esports is incredibly popular and important and of great interest to prospective students as well as current students in all of our programs. So we've embraced that. We've been able to add to our curricula in a timely manner, aided by our alumni that work in these areas. We have alumni of our program who have really been at the forefront of esports. These are all graduates that are in their late thirties now and were [working in esports] in the very early days, and we are able to bring them in and gain their perspective and tap into their contacts.

Analytics is another one, we've been able to introduce that as part of the curriculum and kind of grow that alongside the college of business and their offerings in analytics, and then customise that for our sports programme based on, alumni in the field. So we've got a number of our alumni, for instance, that are owning and operating agencies who have been working on the quantitative side of sport for a number of years. So we have their input and their counsel as we develop new curriculum.

JS: Absolutely: data analytics and how we use information, how we try to meet the needs and wants of our consumers. That is critical. And,



Ohio University's MSA class of 2019

of course, we also need to be very cognisant of the ethical considerations when it comes to data. When we look at trends and we look at the future of using big data and social networks and where we collect our data, I think it's imperative that we also have that moral lens when we use that information.

At OU, we want to make sure that we're not just necessarily training people for the skills of the job, but we also want to make sure that they're doing it in the most morally responsible and ethical way. Whether it's data analytics or marketing or management or operations, we want our students to take a critical look through that moral lens.

What are the areas you're both looking to improve and the challenges you expect to face?

MC: We know there's competition and it's ever present and I think it's an important part of the ecosystem

and what drives us. We're competitive and want to do everything we can to maintain our premier position. We don't want to take anything for granted and we can't rest on our path. We always need to be innovating and pushing forward. Recruiting new talent is a big part of that on the faculty side. And I think we've done that with the addition of Jim. So we're recruiting talent, retaining our faculty talent, and then staying engaged and listening to the marketplace.

JS: We want to make sure that we're always providing the best opportunities for our students. Keeping our network alive, keeping our connections alive, putting our students in the best position to succeed. And that takes work. I'm excited to be able to join the team and bring my energy to help continue the wonderful experiences and opportunities for our graduate students. ○



Matt Cacciato | Programme director

Jim Strode | chair of the Sports Administration Department



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South Carolina

The Fifa Master at the International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES)



Students of the Fifa Master playing football against staff at Fifa headquarters

The Fifa Master, at Switzerland's International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES), placed third in the 2019 rankings, the first non-US course to finish in the top three since topping the list itself in 2014. Ahead of the 20th anniversary of the course, **Vincent Schatzmann**, general secretary, and **Dr Kevin Tallec Marston**, academic projects manager, spoke to Adam Nelson about how CIES has built on solid foundations over the last 12 months, and explain the changes that should see it go from strength to strength over the next 12.



You maintained your place as the top course in Europe and moved into the top three worldwide. What are the strengths of the Fifa Master that have helped you to this position?

VS: First of all, we have the trust and support of Fifa for more than 20 years. With three strong universities (De Montfort, SDA Bocconi and Neuchâtel), CIES coordinates an international partnership which is unique in higher education and key to the success of the Fifa Master programme. Concretely speaking, there are three pillars in what we do, in terms of our core business. It's recruitment, it's the course itself, and it's the job-placement alumni services. Those are the three main areas where we are continuously improving, and I would say that in the last two to three

years we have really put an effort into developing the academic journey that is the Fifa Master.

KTM: In terms of recruitment, we have been able to increase the number of scholarships that we offer, which has been of great benefit, specifically for the Asian region. We have struck up a partnership with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). As a result, they have been willing to support five students every year, Asian students working in Asian football who will come to do the course and then go back and work in Asian football. This has been a boost for us to be able to offer more scholarships which in turn strengthens our recruitment.

VS: The other major milestone is that this year we are going into our 20th year; the 2019-20 academic year will be our 20th anniversary. We've started, and are currently undergoing, a full curriculum revision which means revisiting the content, the structure of

the modules, the teaching, the visits, all the way down to the level of how we do our exams. And we've started in the last year to introduce a couple of new topics that are important for understanding the dynamics and trends in the industry. In our process we surveyed quite a few sports organisations to get a better idea of the hot topics we needed to be teaching.

For example, we've included new sub-modules on human rights and sport, equality and inclusion, CSR and sustainability. In parallel, we worked with our professors to ground our course in the most up to date research. We have tweaked the law module to be more about the law and governance of sport, bringing in a lot of industry speakers, key people from organisations and stakeholders in order to talk about the good governance of sport. Based on listening to the industry and anchoring our teaching in the latest research, the curriculum has been fundamentally

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rethought, in order to provide an updated academic and challenging intellectual experience for the class.

You performed strongly in graduate employment rates. How have you worked to improve there?

VS: On the placement side, there are a number of different things. Our career services have been strengthened by iWorkInSport, which is the job fair that is organised in Lausanne every year, and we are now in the third year running.

KTM: That has really grown and while we do not own the project, it's a CIES-supported endeavour, and it has now begun to offer something that benefits not just our course but other courses in the industry, across Europe, even Columbia University actually sent students to the job fair here. That has opened many opportunities for interviews and jobs for the current class and even for alumni who are one, two, three years out and looking for a change. It's a fabulous opportunity to connect recruiters in the industry and our students.

And then our alumni association is obviously very active creating regional groups. For the first time in 20 years, we really have the critical mass to have enough people in different regions around the world where we can actually have operating regional subgroups, people using various social media tools to create regional networks.

We have WhatsApp groups for the alumni in Asia, in South America, North America, et cetera, and even for different topics. For example, we have a sports law WhatsApp group who exchange regularly on all of the key issues, debate topics in sports law, and to post recruitment notices. We also have a closed Facebook page where Alumni can exchange ideas, and a dedicated Fifa Master Alumni website (www.fifama.org).

VS: It just leverages 20 years of putting people in the industry. It gives us an opportunity to keep our community connected, using platforms that didn't exist 15 years ago, something which also helps to bring supply and demand in terms of the hiring/networking market to a centralised place where everybody can find everybody.



Dr Kevin Tallec Marston | academic projects manager



Vincent Schatzmann | general secretary

What kind of opportunities do your graduates usually get?

VS: One of the big changes in the last two years is that we have strengthened our links with Fifa, especially in recruiting our students. We have six people who are taking an internship at Fifa each year, plus two or three more taking permanent positions. In general, we also noted more and more people joining international- and national-level sports organisations.

KTM: Another huge change is how many alumni are now involved with startups, becoming entrepreneurs, creating their own opportunities. MyCujoo was founded by a Fifa Master alumnus. For several years that we have been doing an entrepreneurship day, in which some of our alumni who created their own startup or company come back and provide insight into what it is to be an entrepreneur and how you could start your own business, which is interesting

for current and future students because we have some very successful alumni.

VS: On the same topic, we will participate, with the whole Fifa Master class, in The SPOT in Lausanne. It's a convention focused on startups in sport, with a lot of them focused on the federations based around Lausanne, offering their services there. The motto is: Stimulating progress in sport by bringing together original ideas and the latest innovations from both inside and outside the sports industry. We want to give this flavour to the students – they don't have to just go work at the official federations and sports clubs, but there is a whole sector of startups providing services directly to the client.

What are some of the emerging industry trends that you will work into the revised 20th anniversary curriculum this year?

KTM: The key question of human rights is a big one. The broader issues of equality, inclusion, digital and analytics – those are big topics across sporting organisations. Then, the whole commercialisation and professionalisation of women's sport is another topic that we have spent time on.

For example, we organised two fantastic days in Leicester right at the beginning of this academic year with specialists in women's football and women's sport from media, from federations, from clubs, and from leagues, with roundtable sessions with five different speakers from different aspects of the industry, to debate with the students about the commercial potential of women's sport and the challenges to professionalize this important half of the sporting world.

VS: Obviously the governance question is a huge one. Anyone following football politics in the last few weeks will have heard about the potential reforms in European football competitions. We had a stakeholder day about three weeks ago with people from those organisations, to discuss and talk rather openly with the class. Being able to debate with these organisations and having them connected to the theoretical and academic side in the classroom is an incredible opportunity for our students. ○

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Top 15 North American Courses

Rank	Course Provider	Course	Class size 2015/16	Response rate	Course duration (months)
1	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	MS Sport Management and MBA/MS Sport Management	22	55%	12-21
2	Ohio University	Masters of Sports Administration	27	48%	22
3	University of South Florida	MBA/MS in Sport & Entertainment Management	27	89%	21
4	George Washington University	Master of Science in Sport Management	18	78%	15-24
5	San Diego State University	Sports MBA	19	47%	18
6	University of Central Florida	DeVos Sport Business Management Program	27	85%	17
7	Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Sport Leadership	MEd/MBA Sport Leadership	44	75%	12-18
8	Temple University	Master of Science in Sport Business	30	27%	24
9	Columbia University	MS Sports Management	69	36%	12-16
10	University of San Francisco	Master of Sport Management	99	49%	23
11	Georgia State University	Master of Science in Sport Administration	45	22%	18-24
12	Ohio State University	Master of Science in Kinesiology, Sport Management	21	48%	12-24
13	University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center	MBA in Sports Business	16	69%	18
14	Florida Atlantic University	MBA Sport Management	5	80%	23
15	University of South Carolina	Masters of Sport and Entertainment Management	62	34%	12-15

Top 15 European Courses

Rank	Course Provider	Course	Class size 2015/16	Response rate	Course duration (months)
1	The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES)	The Fifa Master	32	56%	11
2	Russian International Olympic University	Master of Sport Administration	71	25%	10
3	University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino	International Master in Strategic Management of Sports Organisations, Events and Facilities	25	44%	12
4	ESBS – Centro de Formación Fundación Valencia CF	Master in International Sports Management	17	71%	9
5	Real Madrid Graduate University	MBA Sport Management	25	68%	10
6	Coventry University	MSc Sport Management	37	49%	12
7	University of Liverpool Management School	MBA Football Industries	31	52%	12
8	AISTS	Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology	41	39%	15
9	University of Stirling	MSc in Sport Management	29	24%	12
10	Ulster University	MSc Sport Management	15	67%	12
11	University of Bayreuth	MBA Sport Management	35	20%	24
12	Sheffield Hallam University	MSc Sport Business Management	32	41%	12
13	Ca' Foscari University of Venice	Master in Sport Business Strategies	36	81%	12
14	University College Dublin	MSc in Sports Management	20	65%	12
15	Johan Cruyff Institute	Master in Sport Management	89	17%	10-12

Work placement	Average age	Female students	Foreign students	Ethnic minority students	Employment (at 6 months)	Quality of teaching score	Job support score	Extra-curricular support	Alumni network score	Value score	Usefulness score	Peer review score	Total score
Yes	25	41%	27%	31%	91.67	100.00	99.03	100.00	100.00	100.00	98.02	100.00	94.72
Yes	23	43%	13%	9%	92.31	100.00	100.00	99.10	100.00	98.46	96.34	90.00	90.73
Yes	25	60%	11%	42%	81.25	93.48	92.15	93.96	94.58	87.50	83.63	70.00	85.29
Yes	24	40%	37%	25%	89.29	96.66	94.05	89.16	95.59	91.43	85.80	20.00	82.73
Yes	26	53%	16%	42%	88.89	98.70	84.07	95.00	98.70	93.33	96.56	10.00	82.36
Yes	26	42%	8%	42%	86.96	90.14	88.98	90.36	91.37	80.00	76.76	40.00	81.66
Yes	24	55%	11%	41%	90.91	95.73	92.03	93.81	96.09	86.25	90.89	0.00	81.35
Yes	24	35%	19%	22%	100.00	95.61	71.04	81.89	83.96	70.00	76.64	70.00	80.58
Yes	25	25%	30%	51%	88.00	87.00	81.67	79.00	93.39	83.20	78.24	40.00	80.18
Yes	24	35%	11%	44%	84.69	96.39	92.21	88.71	93.27	86.12	88.63	20.00	79.97
Yes	24	58%	13%	53%	90.00	93.16	91.49	94.33	92.66	90.00	87.50	0.00	79.54
Yes	23	43%	0%	24%	95.00	96.49	83.00	91.99	89.33	86.00	86.79	20.00	79.47
Yes	26	30%	26%	22%	95.45	84.54	73.78	62.58	80.32	70.91	71.10	70.00	78.09
Yes	87	31%	16%	31%	87.50	97.08	88.75	97.08	91.68	75.00	78.87	0.00	78.03
Yes	24	42%	13%	6%	76.19	96.58	84.17	87.58	90.57	82.00	86.37	50.00	76.36

Work placement	Average age	Female students	Foreign students	Ethnic minority students	Employment (at 6 months)	Quality of teaching score	Job support score	Extra-curricular support	Alumni network score	Value score	Usefulness score	Peer review score	Total score
Yes	28	36%	71%	43%	94.44	89.90	68.79	82.49	98.05	86.67	77.12	80.00	87.72
Yes	24	33%	38%	52%	96.88	96.88	74.67	90.55	92.32	77.33	78.25	10.00	80.44
Yes	26	25%	5%	0%	90.91	97.87	100.00	94.85	98.94	96.36	95.67	10.00	78.49
Yes	27	23%	48%	40%	92.31	93.33	89.87	79.58	78.46	87.69	82.60	0.00	77.72
Yes	28	30%	90%	5%	85.29	94.66	81.24	81.67	86.24	88.75	87.20	20.00	76.50
Yes	25	9%	95%	69%	91.67	94.25	79.91	83.70	82.59	85.56	81.28	0.00	76.30
No	32	0%	90%	45%	87.50	90.10	70.62	78.65	96.46	80.00	71.65	20.00	76.04
Yes	31	30%	97%	38%	71.88	90.55	81.56	79.55	89.89	87.50	77.11	20.00	75.35
Yes	27	40%	56%	20%	100.00	96.66	71.67	73.07	72.14	85.71	72.48	0.00	75.26
Yes	24	33%	50%	0%	70.00	98.83	87.66	90.32	86.00	94.00	93.69	0.00	73.17
No	30	40%	10%	10%	85.71	90.23	71.67	79.51	93.31	82.86	76.02	10.00	71.85
Yes	25	19%	52%	n/a	76.92	93.98	74.75	83.61	80.00	81.54	85.35	10.00	69.81
Yes	25	22%	0%	0%	84.48	89.82	85.62	84.53	80.74	80.00	72.00	0.00	68.79
No	28	32%	35%	26%	69.23	92.94	76.41	83.20	87.17	78.46	71.06	0.00	68.76
No	28	17%	45%	8%	76.67	84.77	61.43	69.99	86.89	65.33	74.68	40.00	67.48

Ohio University's Professional Master of Sport Administration is the #1 online course



2019 is the first time the SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings has separately assessed online courses. While Ohio University slipped to second place in the overall rankings, its Professional Master of Sport Administration course came out on top in the online stakes. Adam Nelson speaks with **Greg Sullivan**, associate professor and programme director of the course, about what makes an online degree from Ohio University so valuable.



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How is the online course structured and what makes it stand out?

GS: We are aligned in many ways with the on-campus graduate program. We have the same student learning outcomes, the same objectives. What differentiates us is obviously that we operate primarily online, and our audience is a little bit different. We are seeking people who are currently working in the sport industry with a minimum three years experience. A lot of times they have much more than that, and they see this as an opportunity to

gain an Ohio University degree, without having to give up their careers.

I think that what differentiates us from other online programs is that we do actually a fair amount of face-to-face instruction in the form of seminars and residencies. We do them on campus here in Athens, but we also do them around the country. When we're at the National Sports Forum for example, we will have residencies that align with their conferences. So it's a little bit different in that we do rely on that opportunity for students to actually get together physically, as opposed to just virtually.

What backgrounds do the students come from?

GS: We think one of the values of being a graduate student in our program is the opportunity to learn from best principles and practices from other sport organisations that you can then apply within your own sport organisation. So we primarily cater to, and our programme is really focused on, people who are currently working in the sport industry. We see some career transitioners but not many.

And we've been really fortunate in that area. We have executives from all the major leagues, we have people from Olympic committees, we have students that work in intercollegiate sports, we're starting to see more students from the sport tourism industry. It really runs the

Rank	Course Provider	Course	Class size 2015/16	Response rate	Course duration (months)
1	Ohio University	Professional Masters of Sports Administration	23	74%	21

gamut. I don't know if there's an area of sport where we're not seeing some of our students coming from.

What is the geographical spread of your students?

GS: Our classes have grown to be more diverse each year. I think that's extremely important in our offering. We do have usually in each cohort a number of international students. This year we have a student from Denmark who has actually made every residency. He's affiliated with the Danish Olympic Committee.

That's always a focus, to make sure we have a well-rounded diverse group, because I think that represents the greatest learning opportunity too, to understand diverse viewpoints and different and perhaps better ways of doing the same things.

What skills do students learn from the online course that they couldn't pick up from their day jobs?

GS: We provide them with research-based information. We see one of our primary goals as being to kind of bridge that gap between theory and practice. So obviously our students are interested more in practice than they are in theory, but I think that they need to have an understanding of the wonderful research that's being done that will enhance what they do day-to-day.

In terms of the latest research in leadership, and positive leadership, students really enjoy learning about that. The latest research and practical applications of revenue generation and all its different forms.

We are really doing a wonderful job of introducing our students to the benefits of using analytics in the decision making process. Across the board, between leadership, and analytic marketing, and facility management, our students are learning things that they can actually apply in the workplace immediately, not just after they graduate, and I think that they see the benefit of that.

How do you see your alumni using their degrees after they finish?

GS: Primarily students use this as a career enhancer, so that if they are in an organization where graduate learning is really valued, it helps enhance their careers. And I think that our students do a really good job of using the Ohio University network to land normally within the same industry but at higher level.



Greg Sullivan | associate professor and programme director

What are some of the new ideas that you're incorporating into the course?

GS: Certainly in the area of data analytics, there is a huge appetite for that. On the marketing side, there is a strong desire to learn more about the impact of social media and assessing the latest trends and assessing return on investments in marketing and sponsorship and actually having a clear understanding of how that money is being spent and the value in that.

We've also done a really good job at introducing our students to things like esports. We've had seminars in esports and introduced our students to industry leaders there and the trends associated with that. We had a seminar recently where we introduced our students to all the changes in legislation, in sports gambling and sports betting and how that is going to change the landscape of

sports. So what we try and do is really stay on the cutting edge of what's going on in sports.

We do a really good job of using our Ohio University network and bringing specialists into the course that are actually working in those specific areas, such as gambling or esports, to make sure that our students have a really solid understanding of how it's going to impact their specific industry, their specific job and their specific role.

What are the challenges of online teaching and how have you worked to overcome them?

GS: With our students located across the United States and in some cases across the world, we always have timing differences. So some of our virtual sessions have to be timed so that they are as user-friendly as possible.

In the marketplace, there are a number of other programmes out there that are kind of selling a quick fix and not really challenging the students as much as we are. We have to kind of find ways to cut through the clutter to make people aware of the uniqueness and the competitive advantages of our programme. We try and stay at the forefront of the technological advances so that our learning environment is as rich as it possibly can be.

Certainly it's not as rich as a traditional classroom setting, but with the advances in technology, we're getting awfully close. So we use all of that technology so that students really feel like they are being engaged with. It's important for our students to stay motivated, because they're often working full time and acquiring a master's degree at the same time, which is a daunting task, to be sure.

So one of the things that we really try and stay cognizant of is not allowing students to feel like they're working in a silo. Technology enables us to make sure the students are able to feel connected, and I think that's an important motivator for them. ○

Work placement	Average age	Female students	Foreign students	Ethnic minority students	Employment (at 6 months)	Quality of teaching score	Job support score	Extra-curricular support	Alumni network score	Value score	Usefulness score	Peer review score	Total score
No	35	30%	14%	18%	91.18	95.98	81.86	86.96	98.62	71.76	80.32	90.00	82.74

NYU's MS in Global Sport prepares graduates for the next generation of sport



New York University's **Vince Gennaro**, associate dean and clinical associate professor of the Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport, tells Adam Nelson how the school's new MS in Global Sport will train the sport business students of today to work in the industry of tomorrow.



At New York University's Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport, a new postgraduate programme has been introduced to prepare the next generation of sport business leaders for the future of the industry.

While the school's long-running MS in Sports Business is well-regarded for its ever-evolving curriculum and international outlook, the new MS in Global Sport, which will welcome its first intake of students this September, is set to take that to the next level, with a programme that focuses on the emerging sectors and themes that are

set to drive the industry forward over the coming years.

"We have an ambition to be the global leader in sports business education," says Vince Gennaro, associate dean and clinical associate professor of the Tisch Institute. "We want to make sure that our students are coming out of the programme equipped with the absolute latest sport industry knowledge, because they're going to be the leaders of the sport industry in the years to come."

The low-residency MS in Global Sport programme sees students spend just four weeks out of a 16-month programme on-site, with the rest of the lectures and other materials delivered online, to allow a diverse spread of students to take part. Fifty per cent of those enrolled on the programme for

its first year are based outside the US, says Gennaro, while many are already in work – either in the sport industry and looking to improve their job prospects, or outside it and hoping for a way in.

"Everything we're doing on the course is built around four future-facing themes," says Gennaro. "Broadly, they are: globalisation; sports technology and innovation; the next generation of the sports consumer; and sport for social change. Of course, they're all very tied together. If you put them on a map, they would all touch and overlap, but these are the key areas we see as the future of sport business education."

International education

Gennaro says that even more important than the four core themes

is the fact that the MS in Global Sport does what it says on the tin and represents an international approach to the sport industry.

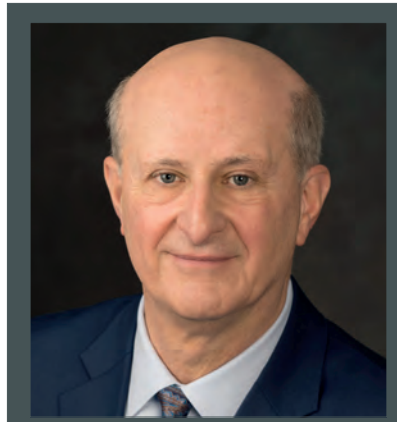
“One of the first things I did when I came in at NYU was I rebranded the department to be the Tisch Institute for Global Sport”, he says. “I wanted us to have a less US-centric curriculum and we’re clearly moving in that direction. But it’s also about acknowledging that the world has shrunk and is continuing to shrink. Just like I get up every Sunday morning to watch Premier League on TV in New York, we’re all interacting with each other all over the globe.”

Even if graduates have no intention of working outside the US, Gennaro notes that an understanding of the sport industry as an international phenomenon is still vital.

“If you want to work for the NBA today, you’d better have an aptitude for and an understanding of the global market, because that’s a large part of their focus and it’s only going to grow,” he says. “As US sports brands seek their growth, they’re also looking internationally. There’s no denying the importance of the global sports scene. So we’ve added a course in international sports law where we discussed the Court of Arbitration for Sport and get into things that you normally wouldn’t talk about it in a US-centric sports law course.”

As well as spending two of the four contact weeks on the programme in NYU’s campus in New York, students will spend a week at the university’s sites in Tokyo and Madrid, working with sport industry-insiders from other cultures. In the programme’s first year, students will work closely with the Japanese Olympic Committee and the local organising committee for the 2020 Games in Tokyo as they prepare for that event, “to really understand the levels of preparation and the massive amount of work that goes into something like that,” says Gennaro.

A partnership with Premier League side Chelsea has also been struck to offer students “a real good immersion into the UK sport scene” and boost their knowledge of international leagues and sporting structures, he adds.



Vince Gennaro | associate dean and clinical associate professor of the Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport

Sport for social change

That partnership also focuses significantly on another of the programme’s key themes. NYU students, from the MS in Sports Business and the MS in Global Sport, will examine Chelsea’s ‘Say No to Anti-Semitism’ campaign as a case study in how a large sport rights-holder “took a clear negative in terms of their fanbase and turned it around to shine a light on a topic,” says Gennaro. Graduates on the course will look at how Chelsea took fans who had been accused of antisemitic chanting on a trip to Auschwitz and at the efficacy of these kinds of schemes in educating people, and sport’s wider responsibility around social issues.

“This is completely driven by the younger generation and the consciousness they have for sports to play a role in the world, beyond just being entertainment,” Gennaro explains. “One of the things we know is that sport commands enormous attention – but the question of ‘how do you use that attention for good?’ is one younger people are increasingly asking.

“We held a conference where we brought in a climate scientist who pointed out that 81 per cent of Americans follow sports, but only 16 per cent of Americans follow science. So if you want to impact climate change, you do it by connecting with sports organisations and getting them interested in it, which I thought was

a brilliant idea and one I hope our students can learn from.”

Gennaro adds that he recently spoke with a student who was born and grew up in New York City, but had become an avid fan of Welsh football side Swansea City, now playing in the second tier of English football. “One of the reasons he gave for becoming a fan was how much Swansea do in the community,” says Gennaro. “He was even aware of the fact that they’re among the leaders globally in terms of wheelchair access at their ground, the kind of thing that to me, as a baby boomer, would just never be on my radar.

“The social conscience of younger fans is increasingly going to become a driver of the direction of the sport industry, in my opinion.”

The Gen-Z consumer

The evolution of audiences and demographics is as important a part of the programme as the evolution of the industry itself, says Gennaro.

“Traditionally we’ve seen gradual changes, but over the last decade we’ve seen a massive shift in the way sports are consumed,” he explains. “A lot of that is driven by ‘generation Z’, which is people under the age of 22 at the moment. The way they interact with and consume sports is dramatically different even to how millennials were doing ten years ago.”

The cornerstone of this, he says, is the gradual eroding of the long-established truism, ‘content is king.’

“I would question whether that is the case any more, and that’s probably the crucial lesson we want students to come away with,” says Gennaro. “We’re in an era where I don’t care how good your content is, if you’re not putting it on the right platform and you’re not meeting the convenience of the needs of Gen-Z, then you might be okay today, but you’re not going to be okay five or ten years from now when this is the dominant sport consumer.”

Gennaro explains that the Tisch Institute has partnered with Fox Sports to examine “the behavioural differences, the attitudinal differences, and even the underlying motivation of this segment of fans” in order to create what he calls “a science of fandom.”



NYU's Vince Gennaro (furthest right) speaking at Final Whistle on Hate: A Conversation on the Power of Sport & Social Responsibility, hosted jointly with Chelsea FC.

Findings from this research are integrated into the MS in Global Sport, giving students the latest up-to-the-minute findings.

“We’re not just relying on what’s out there in the literature,” he adds. “We’re creating it ourselves right here in New York, our students are meeting with industry leaders, not just to learn from them but to actually share insights they’ve had, actually coach them on things they might want to do.

“We’re seeing certain trends that I think are not as obvious to people. Ultimately we’ll establish a research center in this area and this’ll be one of our largest focus areas. It’s all around the future of fan engagement and how the shifting technology and generational shifts are impacting that.”

Esports and new technologies

Rapidly evolving technologies, across all sectors, are underpinning the dramatic changes seen in the sport industry, says Gennaro. In September, NYU will add three additional modules focusing on the business of esports and another three on sports analytics and data – areas he believes will define the industry in the decades to come. One of the courses, which will be integrated into both MS programmes, and which Gennaro says is “the first of its kind”, will examine the potential uses for blockchain technology in sport.

“This is where sport is headed

from every stand point, whether it’s technology that’s going to impact the selection of talent on the field or technology that’s going to impact the development of the emotional connection between the fan and the athlete or the club,” he says.

He describes esports as a “rather unusually structured industry” and says it is vital to educate students in its inner workings and how it differs from the wider sports industry. “I think it’s important that our students don’t just assume that they could learn traditional sports skills and go drop those into an esports organisation to go work for them,” he says.

“One of the new courses we’re launching is centered around the culture of esports events and event management. Putting on an NCAA football game or producing an NBA game is very different than producing an esports event. The culture of it is so different. The wants and needs of the attendees are so different. Their viewing practices, their buying behaviours are very different. So we’re making sure that we bring that into the classroom and give them a sense of that. We’re working with New York Excelsior, a professional Overwatch League team based in the city, to hopefully help our students understand a little bit of the psychology and sociology behind how esports became a phenomenon.”

Graduate value

All of this, Gennaro says, will ultimately add up to graduates who are much more prepared to deal with an ever-evolving industry and the changes that are certain to come in the near future. “We’re giving them a picture of what the industry will look like, so they’re ready to deal with it, and giving them the contemporary tools to be able to work with data, work with information, work with technology, use solid critical thinking skill on process very complex problems, and really have an impact on the industry,” he says.

Gennaro has already seen graduates from the MS in Sports Business who have, influenced by these teachings, gone into the industry and are now “taking on tough issues, motivating their organisation to do good.”

In some cases, he says, graduates have chosen specific work placements based on the values of the organisations, “just like how they’re choosing their sports affiliations based on the values of the athletes or the clubs.”

“We’re teaching them to be ethical leaders and have a moral understanding of the industry,” he says. “It wouldn’t be a successful programme if we just sent them out of the door with a good commercial understanding of the sports industry. We want to remind them every day that if you’re a leader in a sports organisation, or anywhere in a sports organisation, you have the power to affect positive social change.”

The ESA Diploma is helping to educate and unite the sponsorship industry



Peter Raymond, course director of the European Sponsorship Association Diploma, and **Andy Westlake**, the body's chairman, explain how the programme – now in its eighth year – fills a gap in the market and is helping to grow and unite the sponsorship industry.



The European Sponsorship Association Diploma is the world's first and currently only formal qualification for the sponsorship and sports marketing industry. Peter Raymond, the course director and founder, created the course after feeling its absence during his own storied career in sponsorship.

"Throughout my career, I wanted some training, some way to improve my knowledge across the industry, and it just wasn't available," Raymond

tells SportBusiness. "I was somewhat ashamed that our industry never had a formal qualification. Advertising did, PR did, but sponsorship had nothing, and I've always thought that was a real hole in the armour for the industry and its credibility."

Raymond describes his 35-year career in the business as "peaking" with his stint as head of international sponsorships at telecoms provider Orange, a role he left after eight years to establish his own consultancy. He eventually approached the ESA in 2009 with his idea for a training course that would offer a comprehensive overview of the entire sponsorship business – in Raymond's words, "a very

hands-on, real-life, practical guide to how to do well in sports marketing and sponsorship", as opposed to the "very theoretical" courses he tended to come across when looking at sports marketing offerings from colleges and universities.

Personal development programme

The course welcomed its first intake of students in 2012, and has since awarded over 350 diplomas to people from across the world of sports sponsorship. The majority of students come from within the sports industry, with employers placing candidates on the course as a means of career development. Forty-four per cent of

graduates from the course to date have come from an agency background, with a further 29 from rights-holders, although Raymond notes with interest that students from rights-holders have outnumbered those from agencies in each of the past two years.

The course is, however, open to all, including people from outside the industry and those independently seeking a way in. “Largely the model is for the employer to pay for their staff to do the course as part of their personal development programmes,” says Raymond, “but we do have a fair number of people who are either changing careers or coming straight out of uni and are dead set on a career in sports marketing”.

Andy Westlake, chairman of the ESA, describes the association’s overall goal as to “inspire, unite and grow the sponsorship industry”, and says that the diploma underpins that mission by helping to put “better, more informed, more educated people in the heart of sponsorship.”

Before the creation of the ESA Diploma, the only learning opportunities for the sponsorship industry were as part of a sports marketing or sports management degree, where “students have probably spent one or two days at most, looking at and learning about the world of sponsorship”, says Westlake. “So we felt that it was important to find ways to have better people working inside the industry, people that were fast-tracked, if you like, into a much higher academic level, understanding the nuances of an industry that is moving at 100,000 miles an hour.”

Flexible learning

Westlake himself was a strong advocate of the diploma even before he began working for the ESA. In his previous role as chief executive of CSM-owned agency Fast Track, he would place “one or two Fast Track employees per year” on the course, and it became “an important differentiator to have students on the diploma who could then bring that knowledge back into the agency”.

Those candidates would come from different stages of their careers,



Peter Raymond | course director, European Sponsorship Association Diploma

showing the flexibility of the diploma. “We used to send senior account managers and account director-level people who we knew were committed to putting the time in,” he says. “But also those people who we felt were the real rainmakers in the agency, who deserved an extra boost and an extra leg up to get to the next stage of their careers.” CSM continues to place employees on the diploma to this day.

The ESA Diploma runs for seven months, and while being a distance learning course open to anyone anywhere in the world, involves six monthly seminars held in London. These are filmed and distributed online for those students who are unable to attend the class. As the overwhelming majority of candidates are working while studying, the course is flexible and freeform, with only three deadlines over the seven months: one at the halfway point for the assignment questions for the first three modules,

one after six months for the final three modules, and the submission of the final project at the end.

That project is a “real-life marketing study”, says Raymond, which sees the students working with either a rights-holder or a brand on a brief – part of his efforts to make the course practical, not simply theoretical. The question for the final project is set right at the beginning of the course, so that students again have the flexibility to work on it across the seven months, or tackle it all in the final month.

360° perspective

Raymond describes the diploma as “deliberately testing”, written to push and challenge students, “because I always believe if you get a qualification, you want to feel proud of getting it”, and also because sponsorship, by its nature, is a much more complicated discipline than it might appear at first glance.

“[The ESA Diploma is] a very hands-on, real-life, practical guide to how to do well in sports marketing and sponsorship”

Peter Raymond | course director, European Sponsorship Association Diploma

“Sponsorship is a lot of different disciplines and it’s quite hard to see the big picture,” he says. “You have to pull together lots of strands to really see how it works and how it’s finessed. And there are different approaches, you must remember, for sponsors, rights-holders and agencies; all have different priorities and objectives. This course goes through all of them. So if you work for an agency, you’ll gain a pretty good grounding on what sponsors are looking for, and vice-versa. We give people that 360-degree look at the industry, so although they’re only in a small part of it, they get to see how all sorts of other strands come to be developed.”

But above all, Raymond says what the course gives students is confidence. “I know from the feedback we get at the end of each year that people enjoy the course, as well as learning an awful lot,” he says. “They can enter conversations they would otherwise have felt a bit excluded from, because they have a lot more to talk about and they know that they know how things work in our business, rather than thinking they know. I have little doubt that we’ve created something formidable.”

Over the seven graduating classes so far, Raymond says 80 per cent of students have come from England, Scotland and Wales, ten per cent from Ireland and ten per cent from the rest of the world – including Europe, Australia and America. An ambition of Raymond’s and Westlake’s is to grow that latter figure.

“We’re deliberately now beginning to want a slightly more international footprint, involving other overseas markets, so we can pull in more diverse content,” says Raymond. “We’ve appointed an agent in the US and one in South Africa to represent



Andy Westlake | chairman, European Sponsorship Association Diploma

us and we’ll be looking to make more appointments in the next 12 months. So we are actively looking to recruit more students from those markets and possibly looking at a kind of franchise model in how we’re going to achieve that.”

Raymond adds that the ESA will

always “keep control of the learning, and never let it be different in another country”, so that the qualification and the achievement remain the same, wherever the student is based. “We’re very aspirational about where we want to take the diploma, to the advantage of everybody.” ○

An academic track record: The growth of postgraduate sport business courses in the UK



The University of Liverpool

While the SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings tend to be dominated by schools from North America and continental Europe, those in the UK are growing in both number and quality. Bradley Rial talks to **Benoît Senaux**, principal lecturer in Sport Management at Coventry University's School of Marketing and Management, and **Kieran Maguire**, lecturer in football finance at the University of Liverpool, about how online courses have helped to drive the sector and the potential challenges posed by the UK's looming departure from the European Union.



In comparison with other subjects, business and administration comfortably has the largest number of university students in the UK.

Perhaps more importantly, unlike many other areas, its popularity is growing. In the 10 years through to the 2016-17 academic year, the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students in business and administration studies rose 7.3 per cent – an increase of about 23,000, according to Universities UK.

In order to exploit this expanding market, the number of related degrees has spiked, so it is perhaps no surprise that sports management courses have multiplied.

Emerging from the clutter are established postgraduate sports management course providers such as Coventry University and the University of Liverpool, which have nurtured stellar reputations on the back of unquestionably positive track records.

Track record

Coventry University's Sport Management MSc course is one of the longest-running of its kind in the UK. Launched in the late 1990s, the course seeks to introduce students to concepts and theories that allow them to analyse sports organisations and how they function.

The course has been a regular in the SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Ranking and was No.1 in the European table as recently as 2016.

“When we first launched just over 20 years ago, there were very few if any such courses around,” Benoît Senaux, principal lecturer in Sport Management at Coventry University's School of Marketing and Management, tells SportBusiness. “Now there is a growing number of courses – growth has followed the growth of the sport industry over the last two decades.”

Kieran Maguire, lecturer in football finance at the University of Liverpool, echoes the point that whilst there is an increasing appetite from students to learn about what is often perceived as a glamorous industry, there is also a greater demand from the industry itself for recruits with specific abilities.

“The market for postgraduate sports business education is growing as there is demand for talent from governing

bodies, sports clubs and sports media outlets for people with a skillset that can enhance the sport or club,” Maguire says.

The University of Liverpool Management School’s MBA Football Industries course was 28th in the worldwide SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Ranking in 2018, and eighth in the European table. The course focuses on leadership, strategy, organisations, innovation, international business and the global environment, as well as entrepreneurship and managing financial resources. It lists Celtic, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester City, the FA and Uefa as work-based project providers.

Changing with the times

The topics covered by sport business postgraduate degrees in the UK have evolved with the industry over the years, with Maguire noting the increasing legal, financial and compliance pressures in the sector that have to be taken into account.

As a result, areas such as governance, sustainability, event legacy and business analytics, as well as esports, have become increasingly important, Senaux adds.

“Authentic assessments are also growing,” he says. “It is important that we are providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in situations that are as close as possible to those they will encounter in real life.



Benoît Senaux | principal lecturer in Sport Management at Coventry University’s School of Marketing and Management

“At Coventry University, students engage in an intense two-day crisis management simulation, take part in a sport centre simulation, write a grant bid, prepare a hosting bid video and produce a sponsorship pitch.”

Online accessibility has changed the academic landscape, with the tutor-student relationship at some universities often forged via a computer screen rather than in class.

“Students want the benefit of a Netflix-style delivery model on demand to complement face-to-face learning, which still has a lot to offer in terms of groupwork, presentation skills, Q&A sessions and problem

solving,” Maguire says.

However, Senaux cautions that “very few courses or institutions know how to run proper online courses with real engagement” and stresses that one of the unique selling points of a successful postgraduate sports management degree is the opportunity to establish fruitful relationships with peers.

He adds: “In many cases, online resources alone are not replacing the physical experience, whether in class or through visits or field trips. One of the added values of postgraduate courses, especially in a ‘small world’ like the sport industry, is often for students to build their network and this is done primarily through interactions – potentially online.

“More important maybe is how new technologies can be used to enhance the students’ experience, whether it is through Skype sessions with international experts or online collaborations with students from other universities.”

Placements

Part of the networking opportunity is via work placements with prospective future colleagues or employers. With this in mind, Liverpool’s MBA Football Industries course offers work-based projects at a number of clubs and organisations within the game.

Coventry offers volunteering



Coventry University

opportunities throughout the year, for example on a match day with local Premiership rugby union club Wasps, or at the Coventry half-marathon or the Tour de Yorkshire cycling race.

Senaux adds: “We also offer summer internship opportunities or the possibility to do a year-long placement as part of the Master.”

In order to accommodate placements and vital on-the-job work experience, the timetable has to be structured accordingly.

For example, at Coventry, there are approximately 14 hours of formal teaching per week in the first year, leaving students free to pursue experience elsewhere.

Moreover, whilst students are expected to show initiative in exploring work opportunities, expert speakers are also brought in to offer valuable insights.

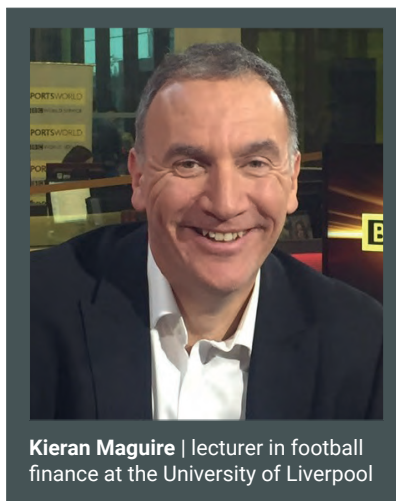
“We run a guest lecture week with 35 to 40 industry experts coming in and sharing their experience,” Senaux says. “We also provide industry visits and field trips allowing students to see how theory is put in practice.

“Our students visited Old Trafford and had a talk on the business side of Manchester United, but we also arrange a highly-subsidised international field trip to Lausanne every year, with talks from and visits to the World Anti-Doping Agency, the International Equestrian Federation (FEI), the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) and the Olympic Studies Centre.”

Expert insights

At Liverpool, recent speakers have included Deloitte Sports Business Group director Alan Switzer, Liverpool FC chief executive Peter Moore, UK Sport head of governance Jane Purdon, former FA executive Adrian Bevington and Jon Watts, sports TV director at UK commercial broadcaster ITV.

“Those delivering the course must also have both a practical knowledge of their chosen field, be it law, marketing or finance, and a passion for sport so they can use appropriate examples and illustrations of good and bad practice,” says Maguire. “Just trying to convert a management course into a sport management course by sticking a photo



Kieran Maguire | lecturer in football finance at the University of Liverpool

of Anfield or Lord’s on a standard brochure is not sufficient.”

Although students of such courses are of course targeting careers in the sports industry, Senaux is keen to stress the importance of encouraging the development of transferable skills across the business world.

“Our sport management courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, sit in the Business School, are business and management courses in their own right and have a very strong sport contextualisation,” he says.

“Every single one of our modules is sport-specific, but also develops strong business and management skills, whether that is through sport marketing and sponsorship, sport finance and business analytics, sport governance and strategic management or sport facilities operations management.

With a sizeable proportion of the UK’s postgraduate students coming from abroad, the elephant in the room for universities across the country is Brexit. Senaux acknowledges that the febrile political environment in the UK, sprouting from the UK’s vote to leave the European Union in 2016, has created a “very uncertain environment.”

“Strangely, post-referendum, we saw an increase in the number of EU applicants,” he says. “It could be an issue, but we do not know what the impact could be on the industry. Its contribution to the climate might not be positive.”

For Maguire, he believes that Brexit will make it “more difficult” for UK institutions to attract foreign students

and – as importantly – recruit staff.

Challenging environment

A more challenging environment, though, might not be a bad thing for a crowded postgraduate market.

Both Maguire and Senaux expect the proliferation of sport business and management courses in the UK to wane in the coming years.

Senaux says that a number of universities have launched courses “without necessarily having the resources (academic staff), industry contacts and critical mass (students)” to be sustainable.

“It is likely that a few of these courses will just come and go after a few years,” he says. “Regarding sport management courses, some of the less established and weaker ones could indeed be affected. This is probably a positive evolution in the long term as the offering has grown more quickly than the job opportunities in the industry, and some courses may have been launched without sufficient consideration and expertise.”

Maguire adds: “I expect the sector to plateau in terms of popularity. We are already seeing some courses disappear from weaker institutions and there will be a Darwinian process as students gravitate to those courses with better reputations.”

However, with so many options, how can students identify courses that are not about to disappear?

“Don’t be impressed by the venue of the course or a star name associated with it,” Maguire says. “Ask at an open day or impact session about the ‘afters’ in terms of proportion of students who go on to work in the industry, details of guest speakers from the sport who can give a hands-on guide to working in the industry and opportunities for placements or work-based projects within the sport.”

With annual university postgraduate tuition fees rising to nearly five figures in the UK, the process of selecting the right course is in itself a business skill; a test of a prospective student’s ability to carry out essential due diligence. In a crowded space, some institutions simply offer a more promising return on investment than others. ○



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Part of the club: Why Real Madrid and Valencia are investing in sport business education



Real Madrid graduation 2018

Spanish football giants Real Madrid and Valencia have both dedicated significant resources to partnerships with local educational institutions, helping to educate the next generation of administrators. Real Madrid Graduate School director **Emilio Butragueño** and **Jorge Coll**, director of the ESBS – Centro de Formación Fundación Valencia CF, explain the strategy behind the connections to Bradley Rial.



The global nature of the sports industry has been reflected in recent years by a proliferation of postgraduate sports management degrees with a truly international focus.

Amongst these, course operators have been increasingly teaming up with partner organisations at the heart of the sector – particularly professional football clubs.

In Spain, for example, Real Madrid and Valencia are two high-profile LaLiga clubs to have committed resources

towards academia, in partnership with educational institutions.

The Master in International Sports program at the ESBS (European Sport Business School) - Centro de Formación Fundació Valencia CF has been supported by Valencia for more than 10 years.

The Real Madrid Graduate School – Universidad Europea programme, meanwhile, stretches back to 2006 and was an initiative that was initially encouraged by Real Madrid president Florentino Pérez.

“Pérez’s extensive business knowledge revolutionised the way in which the club was run,” Emilio Butragueño, ex-Real Madrid striker and the current director of its Graduate School, tells SportBusiness. “Pérez’s arrival paved the way for a new and very successful management model

which involved maximising the club’s resources.”

Sharing resources

In such a partnership, the stature of the club helps to amplify the course to a wider audience.

However, Jorge Coll, director at the Centro de Formación Fundació Valencia CF, is keen to stress that sharing resources, rather than simply marketing the course, is the primary goal.

“It is not a collaboration between a club and a university or a sponsor; it is a strategic approach and a shared philosophy,” Coll says.

The Valencia-supported program, for example, comprises the club’s area directors as lecturers, while the club’s Foundation board members are among the course’s advisory committee, along with representatives of the ESBS

business school and professionals from the sports industry.

“The advisory committee is the core of the programme, allowing us to make improvements every year,” says Coll, who adds that the course has grown organically from within the sports industry, with sports executives at its heart.

One of the most conspicuous benefits for students in postgraduate courses that have such high-profile links with a sports organisation is the hands-on experience in a real-life working environment.

“The students enjoy the club facilities, they have classes in Mestalla Stadium or at the Foundation itself and there are internships and even work opportunities with the club,” Coll says.

Similarly, students of the Real Madrid Graduate School – Universidad Europea programme have access to the club’s infrastructure, including its Santiago Bernabéu stadium and the Ciudad Real Madrid training complex in Valdebebas.

“Each Master course also has a co-director who is a senior executive of Real Madrid, which adds a great value to the school’s students,” Butragueño says.

Global outlook

Mirroring the clubs’ international ambitions and business models, the programs adopt a global rather than domestic outlook. This is in the knowledge that those who wish to prosper in the sports industry often have to move abroad.

As an example, LaLiga’s Global



Emilio Butragueño | director, Real Madrid Graduate School

Network has stationed business development executives in targeted growth markets worldwide over the past two years. For students who seek a career in international sports administration, a spell on the banks of Lake Geneva in Switzerland is almost certain at some point.

To equip students with the skills required, Coll describes a “practical and global approach, based on experiences and case methodology.”

He adds: “Another key element is to get the best students to enrol with us. Admission processes are crucial to detect talent and we try to have the best in our program year after year.”

Butragueño says that students have to be able to adapt to “the needs of a global environment”, especially considering the industry’s “constant transformation.”

He adds: “For example, when I made my debut for Real Madrid in 1984, we travelled without a fitness coach; but this would now be regarded as quite extraordinary. We have to take on board changes and be fully prepared, with the finest professionals, to adapt and continue to be competitive. Education in this field should reflect the changes.”

Online resources

The course providers have also worked hard to adapt, with a greater emphasis on online resources – a particularly popular option for students who are already working in the sports industry and perhaps already have work-related responsibilities that force them to study remotely.

“The academic training offered by the Real Madrid Graduate School – Universidad Europea includes online courses, such as the Executive MBA in Sports Management or the Specialised Programme in eSports Business, which allow students to combine studies with other activities,” Butragueño says.

“This allows them to balance training and employment more flexibly. As a cutting-edge institution, we guarantee the same level of quality in training for all our students, either based on classroom or online teaching.

“On the other hand, the online platform offers an innovative training methodology that affords great flexibility and autonomy for students who can adapt their study plan to reflect their needs. We believe that it is essential to provide our students with an academic model that allows them to complete their studies based on a program that is most suited to their circumstances.”

However, Coll notes that face-to-face skills must not be forgotten in an industry in which relationships count even if, via the internet, “we can have access to the best professionals in the world, from our house, at any time.”

He adds: “We work constantly on the methodology of the online Master, with the aim of offering the student the best possible training from home.

“We work in a turbulent atmosphere that changes very quickly. Students must know the different tools at their disposal, from the ones that business science offers for management to the strategic



approach, but above all, they must acquire both personal skills and the use of new technologies to face a global and changing environment.”

Connections

The connections that can be established via these courses translate into enhanced career opportunities.

Real Madrid’s workforce includes 40 alumni from the school, while more than 90 per cent of students are employed in the sports industry within eight months of graduating, with organisations such as basketball’s NBA being just one destination.

Similarly, Valencia’s course opens doors in the broader sports sector, rather than just football. “The objective of the program is to train managers in the sports industry in general,” Coll says, referring to the latest figures from SportBusiness that show 88 per cent of students were in employment in sport within six months of graduating.

“Given the international nature of the program, we have students working in many countries around the world,” he adds. “We work with a mentoring system to facilitate the employability of students in the sports industry.”

The world of higher education, for a number of reasons, is changing – from rules regarding fees and attracting foreign students to the introduction of state-of-the-art learning facilities that reduce the need for face-to-face learning.



Jorge Coll | director, Centro de Formación Fundació Valencia CF

For programs that are operated in partnership with clubs, establishing links with other institutions further afield is a natural step.

For example, Real Madrid, building on its partnership with Universidad Europea, has previously worked with the likes of Harvard University.

“We reflected on the matter internally and decided that we should share our experience and knowledge with those who wished to become part of the sports sector,” Butragueño says.

“We started by considering who might support us in this venture and, as Universidad Europea shares our values, gives us international exposure and provides access to academic structures, we decided to undertake this project with them.

“We aim to continue to build on the success of Real Madrid Graduate School – Universidad Europea as a global reference, to extend international alliances and to further enrich the experience of all the students.”

He adds that such partnerships can provide a platform for significant growth.

“We are well aware that these kinds of programs often require a huge effort on the part of students and some of them are unable to come to Madrid,” Butragueño adds. “For that reason, we have to be able to reach to those places where there is extensive interest in learning from our professionals.

“As part of our effort to reach various parts of the world, we maintain agreements with prestigious international universities. For instance, we have an agreement with Columbia University in New York and the Beijing Sport University. These kinds of agreements help us to learn and expand in the world of sport and this has to be one of our objectives.”

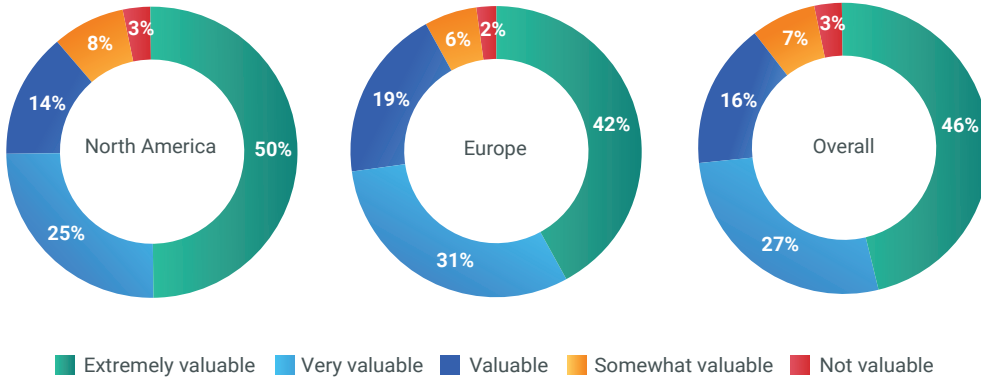
Meanwhile Coll believes the sector is on the cusp of a revolution as he highlights the challenge of continuously improving postgraduate courses to “adapt them to the reality of a global industry” in the context of a “very complex environment.”

He says: “I believe that the university model as we know it now will tend to disappear. We need specialised and practical centres that adapt quickly to the changing needs of the industry.”



PGR 2019 Data | Sports Masters in Numbers

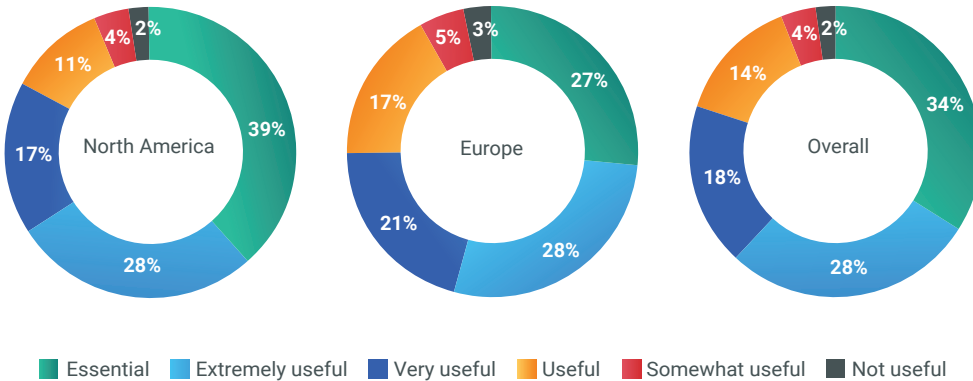
How valuable has the degree been in furthering your career?



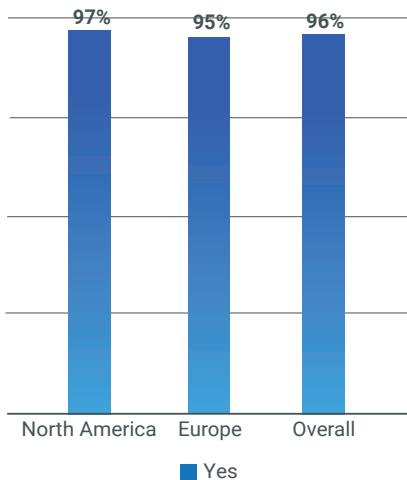
Average salary of graduates



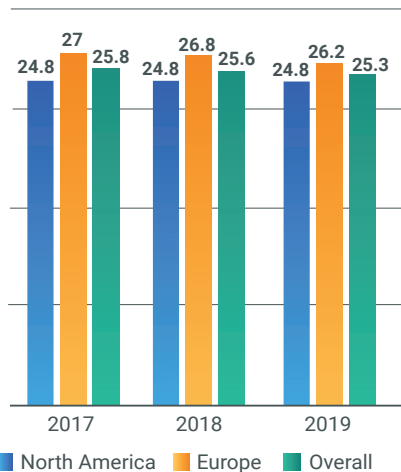
How useful have the skills and knowledge taught in your course been in performing your current position/employment?



Would you recommend your course?

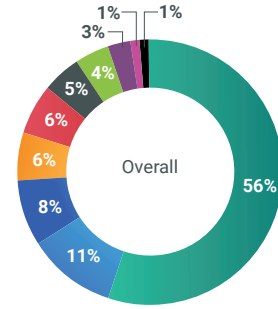
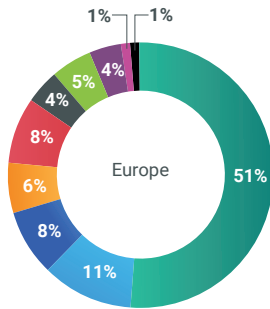
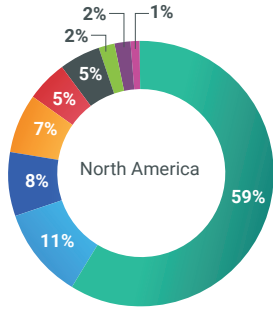


Average student age



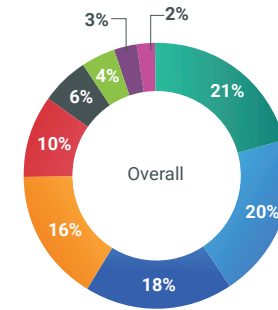
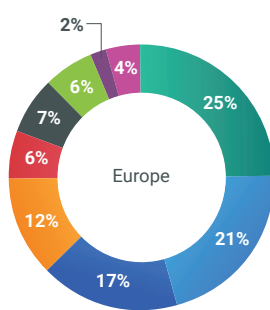
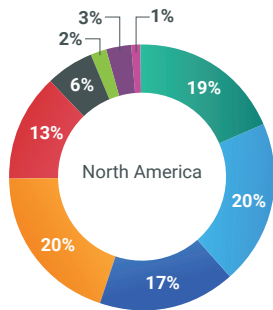
Career Prospects | Sports Masters Graduates

Employment status six months after graduation



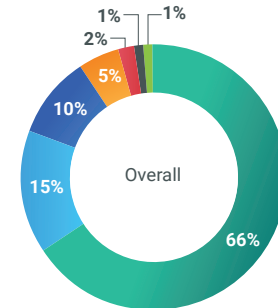
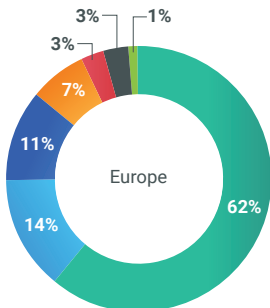
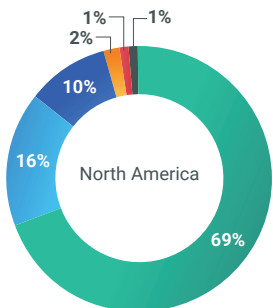
- Full-time employment in the sports industry
- Full or self employed outside the sports industry
- Internship within the sports industry that did not lead to a full time position in the same company
- Full-time employment in a non sports industry company but connected to sport (e.g. the marketing department of a major sponsor)
- Internship within the sports industry that led to a full time position with the same company
- Other
- Self employment within the sports industry
- Unemployed
- Internship outside the sports industry
- Enrolled on a full-time sports business-related PhD programme

Employment status before beginning course



- Student - other course
- Full or self employed outside the sports industry
- Full-time employment in the sports industry
- Student - undergraduate sports course
- Part time employment
- Full-time employment in a non sports industry company but connected to sport (e.g. the marketing department of a major sponsor)
- Unemployed
- Other
- Self employment within the sports industry

Respondents current employment status



- Full-time employment in the sports industry
- Full or self employed outside the sports industry
- Full-time employment in a non sports industry company but connected to sport (e.g. the marketing department of a major sponsor)
- Self employment within the sports industry
- Other
- Unemployed
- Enrolled on a full-time sports business-related PhD programme

Top Of The Class | All The Metrics

Top 10: Average salary

Rank	Course provider	Salary (\$)
1	Ohio University	83,925
2	George Washington University	81,250
3	The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES)	81,101
4	Columbia University	77,477
5	San Diego State University	77,255
6	University of Bayreuth	75,406
7	University of Connecticut	74,500
8	University of Liverpool Management School	71,725
9	University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center	69,991
10	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	67,054

Top 10: Graduates' choice

Rank	Course provider	Student Satisfaction Score
1	Ohio University	99.78
2	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	99.76
3	University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino	97.91
4	Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Sport Leadership	94.41
5	San Diego State University	94.12
6	George Washington University	93.87
7	Florida Atlantic University	93.64
8	University of South Florida	93.54
9	Georgia State University	92.91
10	University of San Francisco	92.64

Top 10: Peer review

Rank	Course provider
1	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management
2	Ohio University
3	The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES)
4=	University of South Florida
4=	Temple University
4=	University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center
7	University of South Carolina
8	Deakin University
9=	Columbia University
9=	Texas A&M

Top 10: Most useful/frequently used in current role

Rank	Course provider	Usefulness score
1	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	98.02
2	San Diego State University	96.56
3	Ohio University	96.34
4	University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino	95.67
5	Ulster University	93.69
6	Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Sport Leadership	90.89
7	University of San Francisco	88.63
8	Georgia State University	87.50
9	Real Madrid Graduate University	87.20
10	Ohio State University	86.79

Top 10: Most valuable in furthering career

Rank	Course provider	Value score
1	University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management	100.00
2	Ohio University	98.46
3	University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino	96.36
4	Ulster University	94.00
5	San Diego State University	93.33
6	George Washington University	91.43
7	Georgia State University	90.00
8	Real Madrid Graduate University	88.75
9	ESBS – Centro de Formación Fundación Valencia CF	87.69
10=	University of South Florida	87.50
10=	AISTS	87.50
10=	University of Ottawa	87.50

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