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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Games in cancelling
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to retain sponsor
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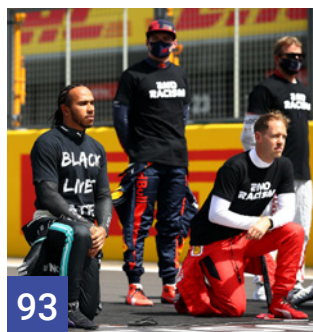
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10


**The 2020
SportBusiness
Postgraduate
Course Rankings**

From page 25


84

87

93

Worldview

- 4** Making commercial sense of the Messi transfer
- 6** The 'Babe Ruth' of arenas is doing his bit for spectator sport
- 7** Could IPL 2020 be one of the great Covid comebacks?
- 8** FFP: Strong leadership is now required by Uefa

Finance

- 10** Can new investors wake Serie A?
- 16** San Francisco 49ers ready to help Leeds
- 20** NWSL's Angel City sets sights on becoming global brand

25 The 2020 SportBusiness Postgraduate Course Rankings

Technology

- 79** MLB looks to get aggressive with virtual advertising

Sponsorship

- 81** Blast follows Riot Games in cancelling NEOM partnership
- 84** US Open retains sponsor portfolio with discounts and transparent communications

Media

- 87** Interview, Simon Green, BT Sport
- 89** Takeaways from the APOS media conference

Governance

- 93** Five ways sports organisations can increase diversity and inclusion

Hosting

- 95** Adelaide's sports hosting strategy

Venues & Facilities

- 99** Inside the Los Angeles Rams' new Sofi Stadium



Making commercial sense of a Messi move



(Manu Fernandez/Pool via Getty Images)

Whether it's the love of money or the love of football, the Lionel Messi transfer story had something for everyone.

According to some reports, City Football Group wanted Messi at Manchester City – with a move to the CFG-owned New York City lined up for the twilight years of his career – on a five-year contract worth £450m, and another £225m on the table in bonuses.

In the end, Barcelona and LaLiga made it abundantly clear the player could only escape his contract via a tortuous legal battle, so Messi is staying put, after all.

But how could City, or any club,

possibly have recouped the level of investment required to snag a superstar like Messi? While the footballing side of any move for the 33-year-old-genius is unquestioned, the commercial side requires scrutiny, particularly the notion that the acquisition of a superstar player can wash its face through commercial agreements.

The idea that Messi's wages could be financed through the power of extra shirt sales was shot down by sponsorship experts like Tim Crow, who tweeted that the lucky club would have to sell 220,000 shirts per week to cover his pay.

Like any other aspect of a kit contract, the royalty percentage is

negotiable and varies from contract to contract but will typically be between 12 per cent and 17 per cent of the wholesale price from manufacturer to third-party retailer. Moreover, some royalties only kick in after the minimum guarantee has been covered by the kit maker.

Clubs will also buy a substantial number of shirts from the kit maker for themselves for sale through their own outlets, both in physical stores and online, where the profit margin is much higher. Even so, it's still rare for a club to make more than 10 per cent on top of the upfront marketing and licensing fees.

More positively, outside his European

home, Messi is hugely popular in Asia and the US, and would widen any club's appeal in these markets. In the 2020 edition of the Mailman Group's Red Card Report, Juventus star Ronaldo was the most popular player online in China, based on 2019 data, with PSG's Neymar Jr. in second spot, and Messi in third.

Juventus has gained three new Asian sponsors in its 16-brand top tier – Konami, Cygames and Linglong Tire – since Ronaldo came on board, and Messi could have similarly driven greater spend by brands from the far east at City.

There is a limit to how far clubs can sweat their star assets, however. The player needs to train, play and rest before he commits to appearance days for club sponsors or his personal endorsement deals.

Cristiano Ronaldo, for example, is in demand by every sponsor at Juventus but can only be used in imagery with at least four other players from different categories at the club. If club sponsors wanted to use his image individually while wearing the Juve shirt, they would need to speak with his agents – CAA or Polaris – and the money would bypass the club.

Perhaps brand equity rather than revenue is a better marker of value for superstar players. At Juventus, the impact on brand equity can be loosely attached to the club's share price.

Before Ronaldo arrived in July 2018, Juve shares were worth €0.82 each. But

they rose to €1.47 by September 2018 and peaked at €1.54 in April 2019. The impact of Covid-19 has dragged them back to €0.92, but the near doubling of the club's worth in the nine months after Ronaldo joined is significant.

Some of this was driven by revenue growth. In the financial year covering the 2018-19 season, Juventus posted record revenues of €621.5m, an increase of €116.8m over the previous year, just the kind of extra money that City would have needed to pay for project Messi.

Yet the revenue growth line at Juventus stalled in the first half of the 2019-20 season – before Covid-19 struck – suggesting the increases in share value were as much a matter of perception as revenue generation.

Still, for City, with its coterie of former Barcelona executives – like chief executive Ferran Soriano and chief operating officer Omar Berrada – the acquisition plan would not have been coded in conventional terms.

Like Barcelona under Soriano, where he drove the club's globalisation, development of Asian and US markets, and positioning as a global brand with star players as global icons, City wants to be *mes que un club* – in this case an entertainment brand, one with a global reach via CFG's portfolio of clubs around the world. Messi could have been the key to this transformation. Sadly, for the City hierarchy as much as the City fans, we'll never know what a difference he might have made. ○



(Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images)

SportBusinessReview

Editor

Ben Cronin
ben.cronin@sportbusiness.com
+ 44 (0)20 7265 4232

Deputy Editor

Adam Nelson
adam.nelson@sportbusiness.com
+ 44 (0)20 7265 4234

US Editor

Eric Fisher
eric.fisher@sportbusiness.com

Senior Reporter and Analyst, Asia

Kevin McCullagh
kevin.mccullagh@sportbusiness.com

Head of Content

Richard Welbirt
richard.welbirt@sportbusiness.com
+ 44 (0)20 7265 4233

Editorial Director

Kevin Roberts
kevin.roberts@sportbusiness.com

Sub-Editor

Suzanne Swaysland
suzanne.swaysland@sportbusiness.com

Senior Designer

Alex Smith
alex.smith@sportbusiness.com

Designer

Jacklin Kuneva
jacklin.kuneva@wedodigitalsolutions.com

Production and Distribution Manager

Craig Young
craig.young@sportbusiness.com

Commercial Director

Paul.Santos@sportbusiness.com
+ 44 (0) 2072 654183

Subscription/Information Sales

Scott Longhurst/Laurence Burton
info@sportbusiness.com

Head of Media Sales

Robin.Hume@sportbusiness.com
+ 44 (0) 2072 654182

www.sportbusiness.com

Published by:

SportBusiness, a division of SBG Companies Ltd, Park House, 116 Park Street, London, W1K 6AF

T: +44 (0) 20 7265 4100

F: +44 (0) 20 7265 4220

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The 'Babe Ruth of arenas' is doing his bit for spectator sport

The sports industry is plenty prone to hype and hyperbole, both on and off the field. But even within that context, a recent description of Tim Leiweke, chief executive of Los Angeles, California-based stadium development company Oak View Group, still easily stands out.

"We're dealing with the Babe Ruth of arenas in Tim," said Jon Ledecky, co-owner of the New York Islanders, the National Hockey League franchise working with Oak View on the development of the forthcoming UBS Arena in Elmont, New York. "If there was a Hall of Fame for the number of arenas built, Tim would be No. 1."

Indeed, there is perhaps no other executive in sports currently making as much of an impact upon both the present and future of the entire industry than Leiweke. In addition to developing UBS Arena, Leiweke and Oak View are also in the midst of developing Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle, Washington, a new facility in Manchester, England, in partnership with City Football Group, and the Moody Center, a forthcoming multi-purpose venue in Austin, Texas, among numerous other projects. Each of those venues are slated to open between 2021 and 2023.

Despite a live event industry historically battered this year by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and still-prevalent fears about the safety of fans returning to games and events, Leiweke, through this set of development initiatives, insists that the sports and entertainment business will not only come back, but do so stronger

than ever, ideally buttressed by both the eventual arrival of a vaccine for the virus along with improved treatment procedures.

"We always felt that social distancing was a temporary moment, that it would pass – and hopefully quickly."

And Leiweke and Oak View Group have been able to financially back that fervent optimism through a series of large-scale naming-rights deals completed while much of sports sponsorship spending elsewhere remains on hold. The frothy sales run includes landing four large-scale naming-rights deals in less than a year, with more set to arrive in the coming weeks. The UBS deal for the Islanders in particular was pegged at about \$350m (€295m), while Amazon's unique, cause-based pact for Climate Pledge Arena will total as much as \$400m.

"We always felt that social distancing was a temporary moment, that it would pass – and hopefully quickly," Leiweke said. "By the time we get to October, November [of 2021] and start opening all of our new buildings, social distancing won't really be something we talk about."

But Leiweke, 63, is hardly assuming a passive stance on the pandemic and simply waiting for the medical research community to deliver a miracle.

Instead, he and his firm, a partnership with noted music industry giant Irving Azoff, are looking to


redefine how cleaning, sanitisation, and overall venue operations are conducted in the age of Covid-19, with those measures to form a key part of the new normal for live sports and entertainment going forward, with or without a vaccine.

Oak View recently formed a broad-based task force, involving a diverse array of other industry providers such as architects, commercial cleaning services, and concessionaires, to create a set of universal industry standards for building safety.

In addition to heightened cleaning procedures, a strong focus on recycling, and fundamentally rethinking elements such as air circulation, Leiweke has also been aggressive in implementing features such as grab-and-go concessions to reduce potentially contaminating touchpoints.

And in the case of Seattle and Climate Pledge Arena specifically, that overall approach dovetails directly with an ambitious environmental conservation goal to make that planned venue the industry's first fully-carbon-neutral arena, in addition to Amazon's intent to use the naming-rights pact to spotlight the global need to reduce greenhouse gases.

"We're doing a lot of thinking now about how we use technology, use design, use engineering, to make these buildings really focused long-term on health and wellness," Leiweke said.

"The virus certainly has our attention, and at times keeps us awake at night. But what I am 100-per-cent convinced of is we are going to end at the right place. This will pass. We need to have faith," he said. 



Could IPL 2020 be one of the great Covid comebacks?

Some great comeback stories are being written as leagues and federations around the world resume after lockdowns. Stories of ambition, hope, hope dashed, hope rekindled, races to borders, fight islands, ill-advised nightclub parties and more. It's blockbuster stuff, and I'm glad I'm only writing about it and not having to play a responsible role in it.

This year's Indian Premier League will undoubtedly have a claim to being one of the boldest, most ambitious returns – if it can pull it off.

It's the world's biggest annual cricket competition, a sports marketing phenomenon, and the obsession of several hundred million Indian fans – there is a lot riding on the IPL taking place: more than \$500m per year in global media-rights revenue for the Board of Control for Cricket in India; \$270m of ad revenues for domestic broadcaster Star India; and almost \$70m in sponsorship for its eight franchises.

India's failure to contain the pandemic meant a competition on home soil was out of the question, so the BCCI has moved the entire league to the United Arab Emirates. The move is not without precedent: in both 2014 and 2009, the IPL was held outside of India due to clashes with Indian general elections (security forces were not able to secure both events).

Nevertheless, shifting an entire league to another country is no small logistical feat, especially with Covid-19 containment measures to deal with. The league and teams are operating within 'bio-secure bubbles' designed to limit the potential spread of the virus.

Befitting the IPL's glamorous, money-



(Robert Cianflone/Getty Images)

spinning image, billionaire team owners have put their players and staff up at luxury hotels. The Mumbai Indians shared pictures on Instagram of the entertainment room at the St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort in Abu Dhabi.

Host broadcaster Star India has more than 700 production staff working on the event, across the UAE, India and other markets. It is also operating a bio-secure bubble at its Mumbai production centre, covering 400 staff on six floors.

However, as the tournament has drawn closer, cracks have appeared. Recently there was news that 13 of the Chennai Super Kings entourage had tested positive for Covid-19. This prompted the departure of star batsman Suresh Raina, who flew back to India at least partly out of concern for his health. Media reports said Raina was also struggling with the isolation of quarantine, compounded by a recent family tragedy.

A spike in Covid-19 cases in Abu Dhabi led the emirate to introduce testing at

its borders with neighbouring Dubai and Sharjah. The IPL teams and matches are split between the three emirates, and border controls create more logistical headaches. The BCCI has said this is the reason behind the slow release of this year's match schedule.

To add to the confusion, a positive Covid-19 test for one of Star India's staff led the broadcaster to halt flights of more staff from India.

BCCI president Saurav Ganguly did not sound full of confidence this week when, in the wake of the latest hiccups, he told the *Times of India*: "I hope the IPL will be conducted well. We have a long schedule for the tournament and I sincerely hope everything will go on just fine."

If the board, the league's franchise teams, and the UAE authorities pull it off, this year's IPL will be an inspiring testament to sport's ability to continue amid the current challenges, and will join the pandemic's pantheon of great comebacks. 

Inside track

Doug Harmer, partner, Oakwell Sports Advisory



FFP: Strong leadership is now required by Uefa

In light of the recent developments concerning CAS's decision to overturn Uefa's two-year Champions League ban on Manchester City, Doug Harmer, partner at Oakwell Sports Advisory, discusses the role of Uefa and navigating the fiscal challenges of a post-lockdown world



(Visionhaus/Getty Images)

The decision made by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to overturn Uefa's two-year Champions League ban on Manchester City is the latest high-profile reversal of its efforts to uphold FFP regulations. The reduced fine still acknowledged Manchester City had broken rules by its failure to cooperate with the investigation. More serious findings, true or not, were inadmissible due to Uefa's regulatory five-year limit.

Evidence that contributed to the initial ban – primarily the disguise of equity funding as sponsorship

contributions – was deemed insufficient to uphold all conclusions.

Uefa had already fallen foul of its own statutes of limitations before, with a similar CAS ruling in 2019 for Paris Saint-Germain. Then, the adjudicatory arm of Uefa's financial control body was found to have breached its own rules as any investigation re-opening had to be initiated within ten days of the ruling. Uefa took two months.

As Uefa doubles down on its commitment to FFP, the question remains: are procedural irregularities and conduct diluting the impact of

regulations? Or do the regulations themselves need revising?

Established in 2009, and implemented from the 2011-12 season, current rules were intended to encourage clubs in the Champions and Europa Leagues to live within their means and not pay excessive player salaries. Clubs' maximum losses were limited to €30m (\$34m) over three years, if €25m of the losses were covered by owners. The catalyst was a 2009 Uefa report showing that 50 per cent of European clubs suffered losses in the previous year, with 20 per cent of

those believed to be in financial peril.

Since the inception of the regulations, many clubs have fallen foul of them. From the lower tiers: Levski Sofia, FK Vardar, Maccabi Tel Aviv, Fenerbahçe, Besiktas, Trabzonspor and Galatasaray. From the upper echelons: AS Monaco, AS Roma, Inter Milan, AC Milan, PSG and Marseille.

Uefa's available sanctions include withholding prize money, transfer bans, and disqualification from European competitions. Manchester City was set to lose around £200m (€222m/\$254m) in Champions League payments and crucial squad/backroom personnel.

Whilst well-intentioned, FFP regulations have been heavily criticised for four main reasons: consolidating the haves/have-nots; not reflecting regional disparities; obliterating a competitive balance; and accelerating momentum to a European Super League.

The have/have-nots argument is clear. Tying regulations to revenue is seen to favour Europe's big clubs who have established commercial appeal and income streams. Arguably, Manchester City/PSG's strategy – investments and sponsorship linked to state ownership – was the only option available to break into the established oligopoly. Post-Covid-19, and with a disrupted broadcasting/media-rights landscape, uncertainty for smaller clubs and leagues becomes more acute.

By restricting amounts owners can inject, those with grander aspirations are stifled. In the words of a former Premier League chairman: "Universal financial regulation ensures teams are stuck in their 'rightful place' for good."

On FFP's failure to recognise regional disparity, each European league distributes revenue amongst its participants differently.

LaLiga's centralised model has increased overall income generated, and the subsequent flow to many clubs. However, Barcelona and Real Madrid's share is still double that of fourth-placed Sevilla. In the Premier League, distributions are more equitable, based on league position. However, income disparity between the leagues is enormous, with relegated Cardiff City generating £10m more in broadcast revenue than Italian giant AC Milan.

Competitive balance is also affected. There is a clear correlation between financial resources spent on players and a team's success. When owner/club ambitions are suppressed by financial regulations, competitions as a product become predictable and less engaging to consumers.

Finally, and perhaps most dramatically – the potential momentum to a Super League.

The Premier League generated €1.9bn in revenue from the current domestic broadcasting rights cycle, compared to the Bundesliga's €1.2bn. When the

market dictates the value of a league's rights and FFP places restrictions on clubs' spending, it is unsurprising that unrest exists at top European clubs. In leaked emails published by *Der Spiegel*, it was suggested a Super League of 18 clubs, with €500m per club, per season, would almost double Real Madrid's total broadcast income. Such a competition would either sit outside Uefa's jurisdiction, or transform the governance structure under which football currently operates. FFP would be dead and breakaway clubs could spend windfalls with little regard for clubs left behind.

Despite the criticism and these four compelling arguments, FFP has still contributed to making clubs more financially sustainable. Recent Uefa data shows European clubs made a combined profit of €140m in 2018 compared to losses of €1.16bn in 2009. No small feat.

The Premier League has experienced a material reduction in revenues spent on salaries – from 71 per cent (2012-13) to 59 per cent (2017-18). Despite recent losses at CAS, FFP was responsible for stopping and imposing sanctions (monetary and transfer caps) on both Manchester City and PSG in 2014 for egregious examples of sponsorship overpayments.

Critics may have labelled FFP toothless, but the fact Uefa has been prepared to go so far with one of Europe's most powerful clubs should at least make others take note. FFP has had a positive impact on the overall sustainability of European football. Is it perfect? No. But perfect should not be the enemy of good.

Uefa's willingness to review current parameters in the face of Covid-19 means there is an opportunity for collective and collaborative discussions with clubs as to changes required to ensure future best-practice.

To fulfil its obligations to all members, Uefa must review its administrative process and ensure there are sufficient resources (human and financial), to police the European club ecosystem effectively.

Now, more than ever, strong leadership by Uefa is required to navigate the challenges of a post-lockdown world. [O](#)



Ferran Soriano, Chief Executive Officer of Manchester City (Alex Livesey/Getty Images)

Serie A | Can new investors wake football's sleeping giant?

Ben Marlow, managing director of 21st Club in Asia Pacific, looks at the rise and fall of Italian Serie A, and considers the ways in which the league can rise once again



(Mattia Ozbot/Socrates/Getty Images)

Ben Marlow

Of all the existing speculation around football investment, private equity interest in Serie A's TV rights is perhaps the most eye-catching. There are as many as seven firms interested in investing in the league, with reported bids valuing the league at a little over £10bn (€11bn/13bn).

Sports investment has always been attractive to those who can afford it, as much for the kudos as for the uncertain capital returns. More recently, however, sports investment, and particularly football investment, is recognised as a *bona fide* opportunity to make money. Growth in revenue from media and commercial rights has diversified club business models, while new technology, social media platforms, gaming, betting, and eSports are presenting the industry with new ways to interact with fans and monetise their interest.

While football investment has historically focused on clubs, in other sports there has been notable growth in investments in rights-holders themselves – CVC Capital Partners' investment in Premiership Rugby and Liberty's investment in Formula 1 being notable examples. Football is now catching up through the interest in Serie A and Bridgepoint's recent interest in the Women's Super League. This approach makes sense for investors interested in capitalising on the attractive dynamics of a growing market, while also managing their risk.

Clubs are exposed to the vagaries of on-field performance, which can be hard to control. Football is a low-scoring sport where success is not always bestowed on the most-deserving teams – our models suggest that the better-performing team on the day wins only two thirds of the time, making results inherently volatile. Such volatility is unattractive to investors

seeking to limit risk, especially where something as material as relegation can undermine a club's ability to benefit from the market dynamics that attracted them in the first place.

Club success is also largely determined by the league that you're in – perhaps the only reason why AFC Ajax aren't consistently the European force of old is because they happen to compete in the Dutch Eredivisie, where they receive less than 10 per cent in media rights revenue than recently-relegated AFC Bournemouth did in the Premier League.

Where clubs need to win each week, leagues simply need to put on a show, regardless of who ends up as champions. Leicester City's unexpected triumph in the 2015-16 season was just as valuable to the Premier League as Manchester City's title in 2017-18, despite not being one of the global brands in the competition. The narrative of the Manchester club's sustained excellence in reaching 100 points is

no more compelling than Leicester's extraordinary defiance of the odds.

One risk that leagues face, outside of the current Covid-19 crisis, is the change to the broadcast market through the long-anticipated shift from linear to OTT platforms. But this may not be sufficient to deter investors who can probably make a reasonable bet that there will always be buyers for quality content from the world's most popular sport.

Similarly, the omnipresent concept of the European Super League remains a threat to Europe's 'Big 5', although the barriers to its implementation are significant enough to allay much of the nervousness that this possibility inspires.

The golden era

The success of the Premier League in growing its broadcast rights has shown what is possible when the product both captures the imagination of a global audience and is sold effectively. The Premier League's financial dominance of world football is absolute, with its broadcast deals worth nearly double that of LaLiga's, which is in second place.

But memories are short, and it's easy to forget that the Premier League was

founded less than 30 years ago, against a backdrop of hooliganism, Heysel and hopeless facilities, in an attempt to keep up with the then-giant of world football – Serie A. The Italian top flight was arguably even more dominant then than the Premier League is now.

In the 80s and 90s, 13 of the 20 Ballon d'Or winners played for Italian teams. And this wasn't down to one or two once-in-a-generation players – the awards are spread among 8 different players playing for three different clubs, none of whom are Diego Maradona who, despite being probably the greatest player of his generation, was ineligible for the award during his seven years at Napoli between 1984 and 1991 for being South American.

Serie A was home to football's all-time greats during this period – Platini, Klinsmann, van Basten, Maradona, Gullit, Mancini, Hagi, Vialli, Batistuta, Baggio, Weah, Del Piero, and the original Ronaldo to name a few.

It was not just the players in Serie A taking the plaudits. Italian teams were also dominant in European Football. Pick any random European or Uefa Cup final to watch between 1989 and 1998 and you have 55-per-cent chance of seeing an Italian team. Serie A was also highly competitive domestically –

during the same period there were five different domestic champions.

Dominance on the field was matched by financial dominance off it – by the summer of 1998 nearly half of the 100 most expensive deals in history involved an Italian buyer.

During the 80s and 90s, Italian clubs were the best and the richest, so what happened?

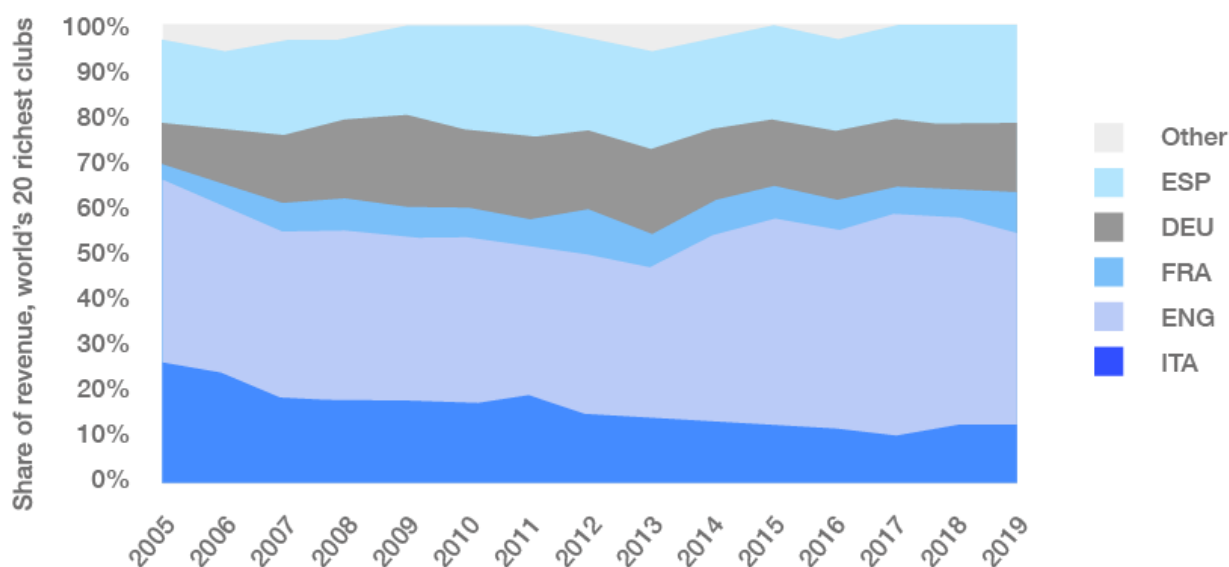
Decline & fall

There are myriad reasons behind the decline of Serie A to becoming one of today's 'also-rans' among the big five – corruption, crumbling infrastructure and a footballing culture tarnished by 'ultras' among them. But it was ultimately the timing of significant events from 2006 that created a storm that Serie A was unable to weather.

The damaging sequence of the Calciopoli scandal (where several Italian clubs were found to be influencing a selection of referees in their favour), the financial crisis, the introduction of Financial Fair Play (FFP), and a challenging broadcast environment served to bring an end to any hopes the league may have had of keeping pace with the growth of the Premier League and Spain's biggest clubs.

There is a strong correlation between

Share of revenue - World's 20 Richest clubs 2005-2019



Source: Deloitte



(Daniele Badolato – Juventus FC/ Getty Images)

a country's wealth and its football revenues, and the financial crash had a disproportionate impact on the Italian economy. Italy had the second-highest debt to GDP ratio among EU countries at 120 per cent, meaning that when the crisis hit and the cost of debt spiralled, Italy had to take on significantly higher repayments at a time when they could ill-afford it. Further borrowing was required to service the debt at even less attractive rates, creating a vicious cycle and consigning Italy to a longer period of recovery compared to many of its European counterparts.

While the crisis hit Italy harder than most, the specific context of Serie A's most famous clubs also made them more susceptible to the aftershock. The financial muscle of Milan and Internazionale was founded on the financial commitment of owners whose business interests suffered, curbing their appetite to lavishly fund their clubs.

Juventus – being listed and therefore more professionally run – was also vulnerable but for different reasons. The Old Lady had spent the 2006-07 season in Serie B, having been relegated

“FFP raised the drawbridge on the option for Italian clubs to buy their way back to the top.”

in the wake of the Calciopoli scandal. In the time required to rebuild both their league position and their reputation, the club lost ground to major European rivals – a revenue gap that they have since failed to close in part due to the wider economic headwinds facing Italy at the time.

Juventus were not the only iconic team to suffer. The scandal also implicated Milan, Lazio, and Fiorentina, and served to bolster the prevailing, damaging notion that Italian football – and Serie A – was habitually corrupt.

With less money floating around the economy for a prolonged period of time, and still reeling from their self-inflicted wound, Italian clubs struggled to recover fast enough to compete with the riches lavished on elite players and coaches by Europe's other footballing super powers – principally

Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Manchester United, as well as the *nouveau riche* Premier League Clubs.

The subsequent exodus of Serie A's finest did lasting damage to the competition's commercial and broadcast value, sabotaging its ability to keep pace with the Premier League's rise.

With Italian clubs having fallen behind in revenue terms, the timing of FFP then provided a moat for clubs that had managed to grow their revenues prior to its implementation in 2011. FFP raised the drawbridge on the option for Italian clubs to buy their way back to the top, forcing Serie A to reconcile their sense of entitlement to compete among Europe's elite with their own grim financial reality.

It is telling that Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Roman Abramovich all created so-called 'super clubs' outside of Italy prior to FFP's implementation, and we haven't seen it done since. FFP ultimately ensured that Serie A paid a heavy price for the failure of the global economic system and its own susceptibility to villainy.

As well as these wider market issues, Italian clubs have also had to battle to grow specific revenue streams.

Where broadcast revenues have driven much of the Premier League's growth, Italian football has faced a more challenging broadcast environment. Serie A has failed to replicate the rivalry between Sky and BT Sport that has driven much of the growth in the Premier League's domestic rights.

The Melandri Law has also played a part in limiting international growth – through restricting rights cycles to three years it has effectively removed any incentive for international broadcast partners to invest in building an audience. The Premier League's broadcast rights attract nearly three times more partners than Serie A.

The stadium infrastructure of Serie A clubs also limits their ability to generate matchday income. While the likes of Roma's and Fiorentina's stadium projects have spent years in a bureaucratic morass, Tottenham Hotspur have built and opened a new home regarded by many to be the finest in the world.

In contrast, few of the stadiums in Serie A are privately-owned, and most are creaking structures, offering a dated matchday experience and limited capacity for corporate hospitality. While the likes of Tottenham can look forward to significant matchday revenues once social distancing is eased, many Italian teams are struggling to break the glass ceiling imposed by their crumbling facilities.

The 2007 Deloitte Money League ranked Juventus as the third-wealthiest team in the world, behind the giants of Spanish football Real Madrid and Barcelona, but ahead of all English teams. That there are now six Premier League teams ranked higher than the wealthiest Italian team (Juventus in 10th) serves to illustrate Serie A's struggles in the years since Calciopoli broke.

Why now?

It is no coincidence that the investment opportunity has brought several parties to the table.

Italian football has too much going for it to be in terminal decline and there

is a strong case that Serie A may now be close to its nadir, meaning that with an effective strategy the only way is up.

Italy remains among Europe's biggest economies and most lucrative football markets, meaning league and club revenues remain considerable, relative to most other European leagues.

There is also significant, latent value in the Serie A brand. History matters, and the record of Italian teams in prestigious European competitions is enviable – teams from Serie A have featured in more European Cup finals than all other leagues barring LaLiga (just one fewer). Serie A also has a high number of different winners (second again, this time behind the English top flight). Historic success has created a number of the big-branded teams required to make a compelling domestic football competition.

There is also a practical reason for the timing. The current broadcast deal expires at the end of the 2020-21 season, creating urgency in ensuring that there is sufficient time to affect the auction for the next rights cycle. The impact of

Covid-19 on club finances has served to further increase the desire for haste.

A strategy for success

While the raw materials are there, a compelling strategy is required to make something of them. In a competitive tender process – which the Serie A investment clearly is – aside from the size of the cheque, the investors with the most compelling plan will stand out.

To that end, at 21st Club we have developed 'Football's Flywheel' to provide some structure to these strategic conversations. The framework aims to capture the key elements of making a long-term success of any league and to highlight the interplay between the footballing and commercial elements of league strategy.

The simple idea is that success breeds success – finding a way to increase the number of fans grows the value of the competition, which results in greater revenue from broadcast and commercial sales. When this revenue is distributed to clubs, you see greater investment in talent, resulting in better football and a





(Alessandro Sabattini/
Getty Images)

more compelling competition, bringing more fans to the table, and so on.

The logic is simple, but it can be hard to get the wheel turning. Like unscrewing a rusty bolt, you need good initial purchase and significant effort to wrest it from its position before it begins to turn with ease. The Premier League's initial purchase derived from its singular focus on maximising broadcast yield, while at the same time accommodating the rise of clubs like Chelsea and Manchester City to increase the overall competitiveness (and therefore watchability) of the league. Serie A will have to define what will provide their initial purchase.

Turning the wheel for Serie A

There has already been much sensible discussion around selling Serie A's broadcast rights more effectively and funding stadium development across the league, but there are also plenty of performance-related levers that a smart investor can pull that will help serve the same ultimate purpose – greater

broadcast revenue.

A key underlying principle of the flywheel is the influence the quality of the football has on rights values. Too often, growth strategies ignore the critical role that clubs play in the ecosystem, with leagues preferring to leave their clubs to their own devices. But where clubs can be encouraged to grow revenue more effectively and invest their resources in talent more efficiently, the league will ultimately benefit from a better, more valuable product – i.e. more entertaining football matches.

Finding ways to support clubs in investing more in talent that serves both the purposes of the clubs and the league would be a good start. According to our research about the efficiency of teams at turning resources into results, Serie A clubs are among the most wasteful of the big five. Addressing this will be both necessary and difficult, but there are successful case studies where clubs and leagues work together in service of their shared interests.

The Canadian Premier League, for

example, has partnered with 21st Club to provide its clubs with a technical scouting system both to identify undervalued talent from the global recruitment market, but also drive cost efficiencies through centralisation. While this exact approach is unlikely to fly in Serie A, the general principle of centrally procuring resources at preferential rates makes sense. It provides clubs with the tools necessary to make sound strategic and recruitment decisions, while also saving on cost.

It is this principle that underpins Football DataCo, an entity designed in part to provide access to market-leading data and technology services to Premier League clubs.

And it is not solely to serve player recruitment needs. Much of the products and services procured are to aid clubs in driving fan engagement and growing their fanbase – another key component in the flywheel, and a prerequisite to growth in the value of commercial and broadcast rights.

The turning of the tide may already be in evidence. Over the last four years, Serie A has accounted for 18 per cent of the best players across the Big 5 leagues according to our model, up from 13 per cent in the preceding four-year period (leapfrogging the Bundesliga).

Some of the world's most famous (and expensive) players now call Italy home – Christian Eriksen, Romelu Lukaku, Cristiano Ronaldo, Diego Godin, Alexis Sánchez, and Zlatan Ibrahimović, for example, have all recently moved to Serie A – signs that the financial muscle may be returning.

In particular, Ronaldo's move to Juventus has given the club new impetus to grow their commercial revenue, with the player's social following opening up the club to new markets in Asia and the Americas. Matthijs de Ligt is also one of the hottest young properties in world football, and his choice of Turin over Madrid or Barcelona bodes well for the league.

Likewise, Internazionale's purchase of Lukaku is another positive for the league. Aside from his obvious performance value – he was third-

top scorer in Serie A in the 2019-20 season – Lukaku also brings some commercial pull. He is represented by the sports arm of Jay-Z's commercial agency, Roc Nation, which specialises in finding players with both significant performance and commercial potential.

Inter have been particularly proactive at growing their social following over the last 12 months, having grown Facebook followers by around 70 per cent since last season, and have recently announced a new partnership with Twitter. More fans for Inter or Juve means more fans for Serie A, which ultimately bolsters rights values.

Recruitment is only one of the ways to access talent, and Serie A clubs have also fallen behind in their ability to develop players through their academy system – a fact highlighted by the insipid performance of the Italian National Team in recent times.

Our research into the transition of young players from youth to senior football has shown how important it is to grant young players opportunities early on in their career, and how poor Italian clubs are at doing it. While steps are being taken to remedy this – for example, Juventus have been granted a license to play a B team in Serie C – more could be done to help encourage the development of young, Italian players. Doing so would provide Serie A with reliable, cheap, and sustainable access to talent that would bolster the quality and efficiency of the league for the long-term.

Outside of talent, Serie A may also be ripe for competition restructure. Despite the title having been won by Juventus every season since 2011, the league is actually among the most balanced of the big five by some measures.

As of July 2020, the gap in our World Super League rating between the league's best team (Juventus) and its sixth-best team (Roma) was the smallest of the big five European leagues, providing the ingredients for one of the most compelling title races in Europe over the coming years. Only LaLiga, meanwhile, has a smaller gap between the league's best and worst team, which is mostly a function of the recent decline of its two biggest clubs.

Analysing what drives fans into stadia or into watching on TV can give leagues the confidence to try out more innovative formats that are specifically designed to attract more fans. Formats involving playoffs, for example, can create more points of interest throughout the league, reducing the number of dead rubbers and creating much-needed uncertainty in the title race.

While politically difficult to achieve, restructuring to make the competition more attractive to fans – and therefore to sponsors and broadcasters – ultimately serves the interests of the clubs through revenue growth.

The example given earlier of AFC Ajax struggling to live up to the tag of European football royalty was a principal motivation for bringing 21st Club in to review the format of the Dutch Eredivisie in 2018 – to grow broadcast revenues for the league and therefore the clubs. The success of format change in Belgium and Austria should give investors encouragement that a similar approach could help Serie A get closer to the Premier League over time.

Closing the gap

If you were standing in the Stadio Olimpico on May 22, 1996, you would have seen Juventus beat the then-defending champions of the previous year, Ajax, 4-2 on penalties. You would

have seen nine Italians selected to start by an Italian coach for Juventus and eight Dutchmen selected to start by a Dutch coach for Ajax.

At that point, it would have been hard to believe that 25 years later, Serie A, the dominant force in world football at the time, and Ajax, consecutive finalists and champions of the previous year, would be in the long shadow cast by the Premier League's growth, both struggling to maintain competitiveness among Europe's elite and to retain their best players in the face of financial inferiority. But that is precisely what has happened in the intervening years between that warm Rome night and today.

Serie A's current position is hard to fathom given that Juventus' triumph in 1996 was just one Italian success among many during those halcyon days. But those past heights should give encouragement to investors that the league may rise again. There remains enough in the Serie A brand, enough potential in their clubs and young players, and enough commercial and performance levers for a smart investor to pull to awaken this sleeping giant.

It is often said in sport that you learn more from defeat than victory – Serie A has had plenty of time to learn over the last twenty years. Perhaps any new investment will give the league fresh impetus to put those lessons into practice. ○



May 22, 1996. Juventus celebrate at the end of the Champions League final against Ajax. (Getty Images)

49ers ready to help Leeds United become “more of a global force”

NFL team “open” to increasing its investment in club following promotion to Premier League

Executives eager to help improve Leeds’ commercial fortunes and in-stadium fan experience

“The story is only beginning...there is a lot more to do,” says 49ers and Leeds executive Marathe



Leeds United were promoted to the Premier League for the first time since 2004. (Getty Images)

Bob Williams

The San Francisco 49ers are ready to play an active role in helping Leeds United become a Premier League force both on and off the field following the club’s promotion to English football’s top flight for the first time since 2004.

The National Football League franchise acquired a reported 10-per-cent equity stake in Leeds, via its commercial entity 49ers Enterprises, in 2018, which was worth around £11m (£12m/\$14m) at the time of investment.

As part of the partnership, veteran 49ers executive Paraag Marathe – who is

the president of 49ers Enterprises and the 49ers executive vice-president of football operations – joined the Leeds board of directors.

Marathe has weekly calls with Leeds majority owner Andrea Radrizzani, with whom he has a close personal relationship, as well as the club’s director of football Victor Orta and chief executive Angus Kinnear. He has also visited Leeds numerous times since 2018, along with 49ers Enterprises director Collin Meador and 49ers majority owner Jed York.

Now, following Leeds’ long-awaited return to the Premier League, 49ers Enterprises is exploring the possibility

of increasing its financial investment in the club.

Radrizzani, who is also the chairman and founder of multi-territory broadcaster Eleven Sports, has said he is open to additional external investment to help fund Leeds’ Premier League push, with talks with Qatar Sports Investments having failed to lead to a deal. It is unclear at this stage how much of the club Radrizzani is looking to sell or what additional stake 49ers Enterprises wants to acquire.

“We’re exploring the possibility of maybe becoming even bigger partners. It is something that we’re open to,” Marathe tells *SportBusiness*. “Hopefully

it works out and if he's [Radrizzani] looking for more and we're open to more then maybe we should try something."

49ers Enterprises will also look to continue to provide strategic advice in order to help improve the fan experience and layout of Leeds' home stadium Elland Road, aid the development of a planned state-of-the-art training ground, and further bolster club revenues through other initiatives.

It is also hoped that Leeds will play at the 49ers' Levi's Stadium, either in the International Champions Cup international pre-season tournament or in an exhibition game.

"The path and the story is only beginning, it's not the last chapter, it's now only the second chapter in a much longer book," Marathe adds. "Now it's about proving that we belong and trying to climb the ranks within the Premier League, so there is a lot more to do. It's directly correlated with how much we can grow the commercial side of the business in terms of how much more we can afford on the pitch."

Origin of the partnership

According to Marathe, 49ers Enterprises began exploring a strategic partnership with Leeds in around 2011. Marathe saw great potential in Leeds – a once great English club with a passionate fanbase that had become a shadow of its former self. However, a deal failed to materialise with the ownership group at the time.

"We had been circling around Leeds for quite some time actually, long before Andrea," Marathe says. "Being in the business of sport for so long, you sort of know what the powerful brands around the world are, the ones that carry a lot of passion and energy, and punch above their weight...and Leeds was always one of those clubs. We had been interested because it was a sleeping giant."

In the following years, Marathe got to know Radrizzani through a mutual friend and the Italian sports media executive visited the 49ers headquarters around 2015. The two sports industry executives became fast friends.

"We hit it off, there was a personal kinship before it evolved into a professional kinship. I gave him a tour



and we spent the day together and he told me that he had been looking at some clubs," Marathe says.

Two years later, Radrizzani took over Leeds and Marathe reached out to his new friend to inform him of 49ers Enterprises' coincidental prior interest in Leeds. A deal was quickly reached for 49ers Enterprises to become minority partners in the then-Championship club, in May 2018.

"We've long been fans and admirers of Leeds as a club and as a brand and I'm glad that two years ago it came to fruition," Marathe says. "There was such opportunity but not just from a club

standpoint – that the club can become bigger and have more revenue – but really because of the passion standpoint. The supporter base is so strong and powerful, it really reminds me of the 49ers fanbase, which is global and much more powerful than the average NFL club so it just struck a chord and struck a tone with us."

Global ambitions

Marathe is eager to make it clear that while 49ers Enterprises is keen to help Leeds as much as possible, it is Radrizzani who is the club's driving force.

"We are all eager, enthusiastic passengers on this train – but this train is being driven by Andrea...Andrea's vision, Marcelo Bielsa's coaching and Victor and Angus's leadership. Those guys have been phenomenal," he says. "One of the things that I really admire about Andrea is he never really says if, he just says when. He's always had that mindset since I've known him. He really willed this to happen."

Nonetheless, 49ers Enterprises has already helped Leeds' rise to the top in numerous ways since partnering with the club. This has included helping to bring in new players, via the club's capital investment, and enhancing pre-match hospitality initiatives at Elland Road.



Andrea Radrizzani (left) and Paraag Marathe. (Leeds United)

Notably, the 49ers played a small but significant role in the hiring of Marcelo Bielsa, the iconic former Argentina and Chile national team head coach, whose leadership has proven key in Leeds' return to the big time.

Marathe explains: "Prior to Andrea, Angus and Victor going out to find coach Bielsa, we had just completed our own search for our own head coach and [general manager]. We had put a process together which we looked at a little bit differently, where we looked for core traits first: vision, leadership, and someone who really stood as the face of the franchise that everyone – fans, players, coaches...even ownership – would look to for guidance.

"We found that with [49ers head coach] Kyle Shanahan. We documented a lot of that process and we shared that with Andrea prior to them going out to

"I'm excited to see if we can help Leeds really become more of a global force."

Paraag Marathe | president, 49ers Enterprises

get coach Bielsa," he says.

Perhaps it is not without coincidence that Leeds secured promotion to the Premier League just a few months after the 49ers won the NFC Championship game to reach Super Bowl LIV in Miami, Florida, in February, after five straight non-winning seasons.

The 49ers lost 31-20 to the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL showpiece game. But the team looks poised to again be a perennial contender as it was for much of the 1980s and 1990s en route to winning five Super Bowls.

The goal now is to help Leeds become a consistent contender in the Premier League and improve the club's commercial fortunes, both domestically and internationally.

"One fantastic thing about the way the Premier League [or the English Football League] works is that the club controls and owns its brand globally," Marathe says. "That is different from American sports with the 49ers where we only really control the brand within our local market and anything outside of the market the NFL as a whole controls all 32 logos.

"So this provides a huge opportunity for clubs like Leeds, as Manchester United has already demonstrated, that they can do things in Asia and South America...I'm excited to see if we can help Leeds really become more of a global force," he says. [O](#)





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First LA, then the world – Angel City sets sights on becoming global brand

Natalie Portman and Serena Williams among expansion team's 33-strong, female-led ownership group

The first NSWL team in California scheduled to launch in 2022; venue partner yet to be announced

Team's executives have high hopes that "the world will pay attention" to efforts on and off field



(Angel City)

Bob Williams

Angel City, the provisionally-named National Women's Soccer League expansion team in Los Angeles, is almost two years away from playing its first game – but the organisation is already demonstrating a global ambition that has not been seen in the league before.

Earlier this year, the NWSL gained its first major foothold in Europe when OL Groupe, the parent company of French women's soccer team Olympique Lyonnais Féminin, took over the Seattle-based Reign FC in a \$3.51m (€3.15m) deal.

OL Groupe became the first international majority owner of an NWSL team. A key part of the project is to expand the awareness of the

Olympique Lyonnais brand in the United States and that of the rebranded OL Reign in Lyon and in France.

To date, however, no NWSL team has expressed a determination to capture the attention of the global women's soccer community in the way that Angel City has from the get-go.

Angel City secured immediate attention, both nationally in the US as well as internationally, when the team formally launched in July. This was in large part due to the team's star-studded ownership group, which includes Hollywood actress and Oscar winner Natalie Portman as well as Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian and his wife, tennis superstar Serena Williams and even their two-year old daughter Alexis.

In the 33-strong ownership group, other investors include celebrities such

as America Ferrera, Jennifer Garner and Eva Longoria, as well as high-profile former US women's national team players including Julie Foudy, Mia Hamm and Abby Wambach, among many others.

The organisation's principal founders are Portman, technology venture capitalist Kara Nortman, media and gaming entrepreneur Julie Uhrman, and Ohanian, who has led the investment through his firm Initialized Capital.

The other partners are minor investors, who will help support and promote the franchise, as well as lend their experience and expertise in their respective fields. The expansion fee has not been disclosed.

Notably, it is one of the first female majority-owned-and-led ownership groups in US sports, alongside the upcoming Major League Soccer

expansion team in St. Louis, Missouri. The two-year-old Alexis Olympia Ohanian, meanwhile, is believed to be the youngest co-owner of a professional sports team in the States.

Angel City will be the NWSL's first team in California and, at present, its 11th franchise when it enters the league in 2022, following the arrival of Racing Louisville FC next year. Being based in Los Angeles will also give the league a valued presence in the country's second-largest media market.

The franchise does not have an affiliation with either of the local Major League Soccer teams, LAFC or Los Angeles Galaxy. This is in marked contrast to the majority of NWSL teams, who have direct ties to their local MLS and United Soccer League franchises, providing much-needed structural support in a league which has only begun to find its feet this season under the leadership of new commissioner Lisa Baird after years of instability and uncertainty.

Angel City is the provisional name of the team, which will be formally announced later this year, as will its venue partner. *The Los Angeles Times* reports that conversations have taken place between the team and LA Galaxy about the possibility of playing at Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson.



By joining the NWSL in 2022, Angel City will have almost two years to prepare for its launch by raising awareness among the local sports and corporate communities.

The organisation has made an immediate mark. As of late July, Angel City had 25,300 Twitter followers, more than double that of fellow expansion team Racing Louisville (10,500) and

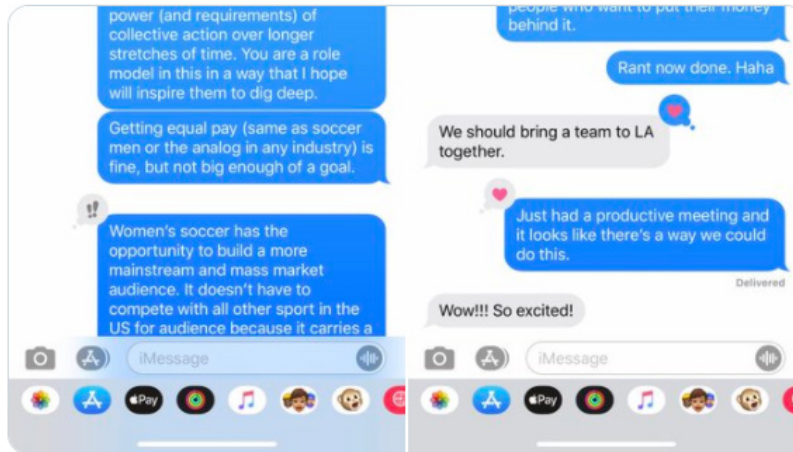


(Angel City)



Kara Nortman ✓
@karanortman

A year ago today, this conversation with Natalie Portman was the turning point for @weareangelcity. These texts pushed me to think that bringing a professional women's soccer team to Los Angeles could MAYBE, just maybe happen. Here we are. #WeAreAngelCity



8:06 pm · 25 Jul 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

144 Retweets and comments 1.4K Likes

not far behind the established Chicago Red Stars (28,400). Angel City also had 57,700 followers on Instagram.

According to Ohanian, Angel City will be a “lifestyle, apparel, and sports organisation”, indicating wider business plans. In a blog post, Ohanian said Angel City’s launch – which came with “zero marketing spend” – earned an estimated media value of \$31m across social, online news, print news and broadcast. Within 36 hours, Ohanian added, the team also gained more than 60,000 social media followers, 3.4 million native impressions and one million views, as well as a sold-out merchandise drop.

Meanwhile, the team has taken steps from the outset to develop community relations by partnering with the LA84 Foundation’s Play Equity Fund, which promotes access to sport for young athletes, particularly those of color.

SportBusiness spoke to Uhrman, who is the team’s president, about how the organisation came together and what its goals are in the short and long term.

“Our goal is to be champions on the field and off, and that extends way beyond the 11 players on the field.”

Julie Uhrman | president, Angel City

How pleased have you all been with the reaction to the launch of the team?

I’m overwhelmed and incredibly grateful. The amount of support for US women’s national soccer players, for the league, for the city of Los Angeles...and just the general joy that we’re going to bring the best athletes in the world to Los Angeles has been incredible. The outpouring from business people in different sectors to around the world is just something that we never anticipated.

What was the process of putting the organisation together?

The idea for this came a couple of years

ago with my founding partners Natalie Portman and Kara Nortman, who got to know each other through their work at Time’s Up [an organisation that was founded in the wake of the #MeToo movement and advocates for workplaces free of sexual harassment, assault and discrimination] and were introduced to the US women’s national team through Becca Roux, who is the executive director of the US Women’s National Team Players Association. Over the course of a year they had a number of conversations about pay equity, female empowerment and how to make a difference in the community.

All of that came together when there was a USWNT match in 2019 [a friendly against Belgium at Banc of California Stadium that April] when Natalie wanted to draw attention to the pay equity fight and all these incredible women athletes. She invited a lot of her friends who are also celebrities to come to the match. They continued to talk all the way through the 2019 Women’s World Cup, which the US women won. At the end of that Natalie said we should bring a women’s professional soccer team to Los Angeles and that the time is now.

Kara and I play in a women in tech basketball league over the summer and they asked me if I wanted to help them develop a business case to determine if it was financially feasible to bring a professional women’s soccer team to Los Angeles and then how we would go about it.

You have a unique ownership model, with 33 investors. Why did you decide to go down this route?

The intent wasn’t to go for 33 investors but as we started having conversations to find individuals that wanted to support the organisation and promote the organisation and help us build a platform and brand that should transcend the typical sports franchise IP – to really to be a global brand where we can entertain globally but also act locally – we found a lot of people who believed in our mission. They are like-minded in the idea that not only can we have an impact in our community but we can create a financially viable and

hugely successful business.

Everyone understood that women's soccer in the US was undervalued and that there's incredible growth opportunity, not only because the calibre of play is so high but the players are truly stars in their own right and activists and builders and exceptional athletes. Their passion and enthusiasm to want to join us just made us want to bring them along.

How important is it that the vast majority of these co-owners are women?

I think it's great. We have a group of women that are passionate about the impact on our community, shining a light on these incredible women athletes, and bringing something truly unique to the city of Los Angeles. We will be the only professional women's soccer team here so we can really unite the city in supporting a single club.

How is the project being funded – and are you in the process of gaining additional funding?

We think about this as a start-up, we set specific milestones and as we achieve those milestones we hope that it is reflected in the value of our company and we'll go out to seek additional investors, who can not only be impactful today but also set us up for the future. We anticipate continuing to raise money as we need it and as our ambitions grow.

How will you look to grow a fanbase?

Our goal is to be champions on the field and off, and that extends way beyond the 11 players on the field. We're creating a platform where soccer is the primary expression of our brand but building a strong supporters' community that works with us to help establish our brand, to show up to games, to act locally in our community is really important. The balance of this year is really building that strong support system and foundation with the supporters' group and really leveraging them and working with them to make sure we build this in the right way and in a way they can be proud of.

Will you specifically look to target the Hispanic audience in the area?

The soccer community in Los Angeles is incredibly diverse. There is a strong support from the Hispanic community and LGBT community, youth girls and boys as well as young families. Our intent is to build a brand and a value proposition and an experience that everyone can enjoy.

Why have you decided to go alone and not directly align with one of the city's MLS teams?

We have a very different approach to the market both from how we're funding it to this [being a] majority women-owned, women-run, women-led group...and we wanted to control our own destiny and set our own goals and missions from the beginning. We're just seeing this differently, we're writing our own playbook, which we believe is uniquely ours.

Have you started the process of looking for broadcast and commercial partners?

No, we have not started that process yet.

Just to clarify what is the name of the team, is it Angel City?

We call ourselves Angel City today affectionately to represent the City of Angels. We are going to work with our supporters' group to finalise our name. We want it to be very specific to Los Angeles and a lot of us are developing a strong emotional connection to Angel City as we speak. Angel City is the top contender for the name.

How important do you think it is for the NWSL to be in the Los Angeles market?

I think it's incredibly important. We have the opportunity to promote and engage our audience and the world by bringing the best athletes here. Los Angeles has a history of turning athletes into legacies and creating championship teams and we have every expectation that we will do that as well...and the world will pay attention. ○



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Editor:

Adam Nelson

Research team:

Chris Barnes
Mark Nervevna

Senior Designer:

Alex Smith

Published by:

SportBusiness, a division of SBG
Companies Ltd

T: +44 (0) 20 7265 4100

F: +44 (0) 20 7265 4220

Registered address:

Park House, 116 Park Street, London,
W1K 6AF

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POSTGRADUATE RANKINGS 2020

Contents

- 6 The Top 40**
- 8 #1 - Ohio**
- 12 #2 - UMass**
- 15 #3 - CIES**

Alumni profiles

- 21 Thayssa Plum, AISTS**
- 23 Felicia Ganthier, Columbia**
- 36 Razan Baker, Brunel**

Features

- 24 The balancing act | Universities attempt to address sport's gender gap**
- 28 Partnerships help universities bridge the gap between academia and industry**
- 32 How sport management courses faced the Covid-19 crisis**
- 45 SIGA University Network harnesses power of education to promote integrity within sport**

Research in focus

- 37 Joe Favorito, Columbia**
- 40 Louise Mansfield, Brunel**
- 43 AISTS**
- 41 Columbia University prioritises diversity and inclusion to support students through difficult year**
- 46 Top of the class**
- 48 Career prospects**
- 50 Postgraduate Report 2020: The complete data**
- 52 Regional Tables**

Welcome to the 2020 SportBusiness Postgraduate Rankings

It goes without saying that this year has been the most difficult edition of these rankings to produce. The sports and education sectors have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which will leave its mark on both for many years to come.

Nevertheless, our aim remains unchanged, and we believe we have produced the most comprehensive and detailed ranking of the world's best sport management courses in our history.

The goal, as ever, is to provide students and course leaders alike with the most dependable and respected rankings system for postgraduate sports management programmes around the world. That task gets a little more difficult and complex each year, as we continue to adjust and expand our criteria to ensure the fairest and most reliable outcome, and in 2020 we've made some significant changes to both the methodology of the rankings and the outlook of this report.

In terms of the content, given the events of 2020 so far, we have focused on the intersection of academia and the wider industry, with features on how universities are attempting to navigate the complex issues of race, gender and, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the coming pages, you will also find

interviews with some of the highest-profile graduates from the courses we survey, now employed by the likes of Fifa, the IOC and WWE, discussing how their studies helped to kick-start their careers and how their alma maters continue to support them.

We also take an in-depth look at some of the most impactful research being produced and published by the schools, to give a sense of how the sports industry still relies on work being performed in academia, and look at why universities are increasingly exploring partnerships with major sporting organisations. Meanwhile, top academics from across the sector give their views on the challenges and opportunities facing sport business education in the coming years.

As ever, profound thanks go to our advisory panel, who this year more than any previously have helped to guide the direction of our rankings, offering generous feedback on how we could adjust our criteria to improve the reliability, validity and credibility of the rankings.

And the winners are...

Ohio University's Master of Sports Administration programme has reclaimed its place on the top of the pile, marking the seventh time it has topped

our table in the nine years we've been running these rankings. Though it is the oldest sports management degree in the world, having been founded in 1966, Ohio's strength has been in its ability to modernise, and in its strength across the board, posting scores in the nineties in almost every criteria on which we evaluate.

The competition this time was closer than ever, with the gap between second and third particularly tight. The University of Massachusetts, Amherst may have lost the crown it won in 2019, but second place this year is a no less admirable achievement, while the course remained top in the Professors' Choice category, again demonstrating the esteem in which its MBA/MS Sport Management programme is held by course leaders across the sector.

CIES's Fifa Master holds on to its bronze medal placing, and is once again the highest-ranked European course. It scored highest or joint-highest in the key categories of Alumni Network and Career Value, showing the high regard in which graduates of the course hold it.

As the data table on pages 52 and 53 shows, UMass and the Fifa Master slightly out-scored Ohio in several categories, with both of them bettering the winner in the job support and alumni

The advisory panel

For the 2020 edition, we engaged the biggest advisory panel in the history of the rankings, taking guidance from course leaders at some of the highest-profile programmes across Europe and the US. Our sincerest thanks go to the following, whose help and input has been more vital than ever in shaping the SportBusiness Postgraduate Rankings.

Claude Stricker

Executive director of the International Academy of Sport Science and Technology (AISTS)

Jim Kahler

Director of sports gambling education at Ohio University

Kevin Tallec Marston PhD

Research fellow and academic project manager at the International Centre for Sport Studies

Scott Rosner

Academic director, Sport Management Program at Columbia University

Vassil Girginov PhD

Reader in sport management/development at Brunel University London and president of the European Association for Sport Management

Steve McKelvey

Department chair and graduate program director at the Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management, UMass

Scott Nestler

Academic director, MS in Business Analytics at University of Notre Dame

network criteria. Ohio's consistently high scores across almost all of our measures, however, ensured it came out on top. An extra one-quarter of a point overall would have seen CIES overtake UMass, while just over one point separated it from Ohio, demonstrating that while the latter may deservedly have claimed the top spot, the difference in quality between our top three is minimal. The three are also the only three schools to have ever finished in first place in the rankings.

George Washington University's Master of Science in Sport Management finished fourth overall, and is the third-highest placed programme in North America, coming in just behind Ohio and UMass.

Among the highest risers this year were both the MBA in Sport Management at the Real Madrid Gradaute University in Spain, in 10th place, and the Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology at Switzerland-based AISTS, which finished in ninth. Moving up nine and 14 places respectively, their performances mean there are now three Europe-based schools in the top ten.

Perhaps the biggest story of the rankings this year is the performance of European programmes in general, which make up 16 out of the top 40, the highest ever proportion of courses from the continent. The University of Liverpool Management School was the only institute with two courses in the top 40; its highly specialised Football Industries and Thoroughbred Horseracing Industries MBAs both performing strongly. Australia's Deakin remains the only representative from outside North America and Europe.

Methodology

For 2020, we have made some 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.

One of the biggest was a change to how we measure employability. Previously, up to 25 points were awarded based on graduates' employment status six months after finishing a course. After consultations with our advisory panel, we decided that this was too limiting.

For 2020, a maximum of 12 points are awarded based on this measure, with the remaining 13 available based on graduates' current employment status, three years after completing the course (the student surveys always go to alumni who finished their studies three years ago, with this year's being completed by the graduating classes of 2017). We believe this gives a much more rounded representation of the employability of alumni, as well as of the opportunities afforded to them.

We now award up to three points based on current salary, one more than in previous years, and have introduced a purchasing power parity to distinguish between salaries in different countries, rather than using a direct exchange rate, which occasionally led to unfair comparisons.

Two entirely new categories have been introduced to the student satisfaction scores, with up to seven points now awarded for ability to network with industry executives while studying, and the same number available based on a value for money judgement.

We removed the points allocated to schools based on ethnic diversity – a reflection of the difficulty in securing accurate data on this measure, due to the different ways in which it is recorded across different countries and institutions, rather than of decreased importance. Up to three points are still awarded for the ratio of international students on a course, as well as the ratio of female students. We have also begun awarding a single point for schools which have a strong ratio of international and female faculty members. [O](#)



Adam Nelson, editor, SportBusiness Postgraduate Rankings

How the PGR score is calculated

Number of points shown here is the maximum possible score

STUDENT MEASURES

Quality of teaching: **10 points**

Support in finding a job in the industry: **7 points**

Quality of extra-curricular support: **5 points**

Opportunities to connect with the alumni network: **7 points**

Ability to network with industry executives: **7 points**

Value for money provided by the masters program: **7 points**

Value of the degree in furthering career: **5 points**

Usefulness of the skills and knowledge provided by the programme in current position: **5 points**

EMPLOYMENT

Employment status at six months: **12 points**

Current employment status: **13 points**

OTHERS

Course Leader choice: **10 points**

Percentage of female students: **3 points**

Percentage of female teaching staff: **1 point**

Percentage of international students: **3 points**

Percentage of international teaching staff: **1 point**

Current salary: **3 points**

Work placement: **1 point**

The top 40 Postgraduate sports business courses

| Rank | Provider / Course | Total Score |
|------|---|-------------|
| 1 | Ohio University MBA/MSA and Master of Sports Administration | 91.38 |
| 2 | University of Massachusetts Amherst MBA/MS Sport Management and MS Sport Management | 90.40 |
| 3 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) The FIFA MasterAdministration | 90.22 |
| 4 | George Washington University Masters in Sport Management | 87.83 |
| 5 | Columbia University MS Sports Management | 84.98 |
| 6 | University of South Florida Vinik Sport & Entertainment Management Program | 84.01 |
| 7 | University of South Carolina Masters of Sport and Entertainment Management | 83.14 |
| 8 | University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business MBA in Sports Business Administration | 82.92 |
| 9 | AISTS Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology | 82.87 |
| 10 | Real Madrid Graduate School MBA in Sports Management | 82.85 |
| 11 | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Masters of Sport Administration | 82.62 |
| 12 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Sport Leadership Master of Sport Leadership Sport Management | 82.20 |
| 13 | Russian International Olympic University Master of Sport Administration | 81.56 |
| 14 | San Diego State University Sports MBA | 80.94 |
| 15 | Coventry University MSc Sport Management | 80.56 |
| 16 | NYU Tisch Institute for Global Sport MS in Sports Business | 79.85 |
| 17 | Sheffield Hallam University MSc Sport Business Management | 78.70 |
| 18 | University of Liverpool Management School Football Industries MBA | 77.96 |
| 19 | University of Vigo Master in Business Administration of Sport | 77.68 |
| 20 | Washington State University M.A. in Sport Management | 76.70 |

| Rank | Provider / Course | Total Score |
|------|---|-------------|
| 21 | University of Stirling MSc in Sport Management | 76.63 |
| 22 | Ohio State University Master of Science in Sport Management | 76.06 |
| 23 | University of Central Florida DeVos Sport Business Management Program | 75.82 |
| 24 | University of Windsor Master of Human Kinetics in Sport Management | 75.43 |
| 25 | Georgia State University Masters of Science in Sport Administration | 75.09 |
| 26 | Centro Formación Fundación Valencia CF ESBS Master in International Sports ManagementManagement Program | 75.01 |
| 27 | University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino International Master in Strategic Management of Sports Organisations, Events and Facilities Management | 74.21 |
| 28 | Temple University MS in Sport Business | 73.81 |
| 29 | University of New Haven MS Sport Management | 73.77 |
| 30 | Florida Atlantic University MBA Sport Management | 73.03 |
| 31 | University of Liverpool Management School Thoroughbred Horseracing Industries MBA (THIMBA) Administration | 72.89 |
| 32 | University of Ottawa Master of Human Kinetics Concentration in Sport Management | 72.02 |
| 33 | Ball State University Master of Sport Administration | 70.49 |
| 34 | University of Tennessee Master in Sport Management | 69.48 |
| 35 | Ca' Foscari University of Venice Master in Sport Business Strategies | 69.01 |
| 36 | Seattle University Masters in Sport Business Leadership | 68.71 |
| 37 | University of Bayreuth MBA Sport Management | 68.55 |
| 38 | Johan Cruyff Institute Master in Sport Management | 68.29 |
| 39 | University College Dublin MSc in Sport Management | 66.10 |
| 40 | Deakin University Master of Business (Sport Management) | 65.39 |

1. Ohio's Master of Sports Administration course reclaims top spot



Ohio University's Alumni Gateway (Ohio University)

The Master of Sports Administration degree at Ohio University has been running since 1966, the oldest and most prestigious postgraduate sport management programme in the world. In the nine years that *SportBusiness* has been operating these rankings, the course has claimed the number one spot on seven occasions, demonstrating its consistency and ability to change with the times. After the most difficult academic year in living memory, we spoke to **Jim Kahler**, who stepped down as the AECOM Center for Sports Administration's executive director in July this year, and his replacement **Matthew Cacciato**, who is also the director of the Master of Sports Administration course.

Steering Ohio back to the top of the rankings is quite a way to end what must have been a tricky year.

JK: Seven out of nine – it's not bad! It was sad that we had to go online in March [after the Covid-19 lockdown] and that the kids of this year didn't get their traditional send off. It's great to be back on top, but it's really a tribute to the class of three years ago [who submit the alumni surveys for the 2020 rankings]. I stay in touch with a lot of those kids and they're just a great group. And those are the kids that are coming

back and giving us consulting projects and serving as alumni mentors – part of the strength of this course is that the relationship doesn't end at graduation; it just gets started.

Your consistently high scores for the alumni network are a key part of your consistency in these rankings. What makes it so strong?

JK: I think they buy into our culture, and our culture is not for everyone. It's one of giving back and taking care of one another. It's a certain sense of

pride when you get admitted to the programme, and a certain sense of responsibility. The old saying, 'there's no I in team', – this is really how closely connected this network is, and it's based on pride and responsibility.

MC: The class of 2017 in particular is really strong in a number of different areas. One of the things they're leading right now is a group of them, along with a few of our 2018 graduates, all black, African-American alumni have got together to come to us and say, 'let's work on increasing our diversity

and inclusion and understanding these issues in these times together. Let us be part of the solution you put in place', and that is the best example of how our alumni can give back to us.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your plans for the coming year?

MC: It's a brave new world out there. Especially in sports, having as many students as we do, especially on the grad level at such a critical time in their career development, they've made the investment of time and money, to come to you and be a part of this, but we're hanging in there. They're really well spirited and our alumni network is stepping up and providing a lot of meaningful content and networking for them.

We're in a fortunate position that we've got great researchers, and we're going to supplement the experiential events that we're known for – the live sporting events where our students are in the middle of operations or marketing or other functions – those are gone, and we're going to replace that with research.

We're going to be much more research-focused and I think that a lot of new practices are going to come out of the data that our students can collect. So we're going to lead with research and collaborative teamwork around better understanding these complex issues: obviously Covid; but also the scheduling and the budgeting; the facilities and



Matthew Cacciato | executive director, AECOM Center for Sports Administration

mechanisms that are in place that need to be adjusted; and clearly diversity and inclusion and how that is part of everything going forward. We see an opportunity for us to publish more thought leadership, write more case studies and uncover data that can be part of the solution going forward.


What other changes can we expect?

JK: The big change is Matthew now taking over both as the programme director and as executive director of the AECOM Center. We're very fortunate to have him in those roles and I couldn't be more confident that I'm leaving it in the right hands.

What's new in the future is our jump into more executive education. The sports gambling education certificate is our first foray into online executive

education. When I decided it was time to step out away from the Center, I really wanted to hang on to this new baby called sports gambling and really look to become a leader on that, because as it opens up and becomes legalised here, it's going to have such a huge impact on the industry. It's going to mean jobs for our students, it's going to mean impact on sponsorships, impact on fan engagement.

It will be really interesting to see how professional teams use it to create a bigger connection with fans, and at the same time, we have to look at and have empathy for those people who get addicted to gambling, so there will be some work on that. I think college administrators are ill-prepared to deal with sports gambling because there just has not been enough training or education on it so far, and we now are up to 20 states where it's legal and it's forecast to be \$500bn industry. So I'm going to be overseeing our development in that area.

We're also talking about doing other topics in executive education, including a facility design course as part of our partnership with AECOM. There will be other topics – analytics keeps becoming a bigger part of what we do and the recruitment of Dr Liz Wanless is a huge step in that direction. Not only is she our analytics guru, but she is also the director of analytics at the College of Business, and that's something we're going to keep digging deeper into. 





Sports gambling education – the time has come

Earlier this year, **Jim Kahler** stepped down as executive director of the AECOM Center for Sports Administration at Ohio University after 15 years in the role. Starting in the 2020-21 academic year Jim will become the school's first director of sports gambling education, and writes here about the importance of strong education and partnerships as the betting sector continues to open up in the United States.

When the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) was overturned by the US Supreme Court, it created a gold rush within the sports gambling industry. The United States was behind many countries around the world when it came to sports gambling, and the opportunities and challenges for sports administrators only increased the need for executive education in this space.

Ohio University saw an opportunity to become a change agent when it came to sports gambling education, and quickly formed a strategic alignment with U.S. Integrity and Cyanna Education Services. Collectively, this group has formed a partnership under the name of *SportsGamblingEducation.com* and recently launched its first in a series of microcourses designed for sports administrators. Our mission was to allow individuals to obtain knowledge, gain confidence and in many cases enact change in and around this \$500bn industry.

Sports gambling will only continue to grow and impact the lives of many executives involved with professional and college sports. Multi-million-dollar sponsorship agreements have already positively impacted the bottom line for professional teams in the 20 states that have legalised sports gambling. Companies like DraftKings, William Hill, BetMGM and FanDuel have all invested heavily as sports gambling in the United States has come out of the dark ages and the days of bookies and offshore accounts.

Marketing executives have found a new instrument to engage with loyal fans as professional sports leagues have



all but embraced this new stream of revenue. The question now becomes: "How do we do this in a responsible manner?"

College athletic administrators need to get up to speed quickly and can no longer let sports gambling education sit at the bottom of a never-ending list of priorities. In 2012, the NCAA commissioned a study on sports gambling that showed 67 per cent of college students had gambled on sports. Today, athletic directors need to be concerned about how sports gambling will impact the mental wellness of their student athletes. Winning a game against your arch rival will be taking a back seat to: "Did you cover the spread?"

Ohio University is given credit for being the birthplace of sports business education, going back to 1966 when the university created the first ever Masters in Sports Administration Program. In 2005 the school founded the AECOM Center for Sports Administration to serve as a resource to solve the increasingly difficult issues facing the industry and serve as

a platform, bringing together various constituent groups associated with the Sports Administration Program. With sports gambling education becoming a necessity and no longer a luxury, the AECOM Center for Sports Administration drew up a game plan to meet this need and sought to find the right partners. Integrity will become essential for the sports gambling industry to continue to prosper.

Ohio University saw U.S. Integrity as the perfect partner, as the organization was founded on the core principal of offering "conflict-free services". They do not recommend any betting-related or risk-management actions and do not distribute event data to operators. Additionally, US Integrity has multiple relationships with licensed, regulated sportsbooks that provide the company access to real betting data. This direct-from-the-source data makes their monitoring system more accurate and provides a closer analysis of betting activity and any possible correlation to other events as a sign of suspicious activity.

Implementing an online education programme on sports gambling can be a real challenge, especially if you need to move fast and get a product to market during a pandemic. Cyanna Education Services has provided Ohio University with a host of services including assistance with course design, software, technology, video production and the ability to meet the expectations and needs that come with executive online education. Their experience in breaking down those brick-and-mortar walls has given us the opportunity to create asynchronous courses that line up with the busy schedules of our students. [O](#)

Emilio Collins, chief business officer, Excel Sports Management

Emilio Collins graduated Ohio University with a Masters in Sports Administration in 1996, and this year was named as the recipient of the department's Charles R. Higgins Distinguished Alumni Award for 2020. He is currently chief business officer at Excel Sports Management, joining the agency in 2017 after spending 16 years with the National Basketball Association, latterly as its executive vice-president of global marketing partnerships.

Why did you choose to pursue a sports management degree at Ohio?

I was an athlete at undergraduate level at Michigan State and, going to a 'Big 10' university, I started to get a lot of exposure to career opportunities in sports. I did a couple of internships in the athletic department at Michigan State, and just really fell in love with the idea of having a career in sports. There were actually two administrators the athletic department there who had both gone to the Ohio University programme, and they turned me on to it. And so at the time, I felt a clear interest in a career in sports, but didn't know exactly what it was I wanted to do specifically, which track I wanted to take in sports business. I felt going into the graduate programme would give me a lot more hands-on experience.

What were the main ways that you feel the programme at Ohio prepared you for a career?

I would say three things primarily. One was the coursework and giving me a really good sense of the entire landscape of the industry and determining the appropriate paths, looking both at the different sectors of the industry, from media companies to brands, to properties, to agencies in the various sectors across the industry and potential paths you can take, and also the types of work that you can do within each of those sectors and what will be most suited for you. So academically, there was really great exposure there and much learning about all sides of the business.

Second was the strong hands-on experience we had. The programme was always known for conducting a class project that was incredibly intensive.




It was an interesting time for me going into the programme because the class project had been taking place for about 20 years, it was a student Fight Night, and there was a desire to change it that year, so my class actually had the opportunity to come up with the next programme. I pitched to our class the idea that we ultimately carried through, which was an idea called Friday Night Mud Slam, which was kind of building on the competitive nature of the student Fight Night but in a different format. The experience of ideating, conceiving a new platform, pulling it together operationally, building all the different committees that you need to make an event like that be successful – those kind of experiences are really helpful in giving students a true hands-on experience.

Third is absolutely the network. Being the oldest and longest-standing programme in the country, the network is phenomenal. The network is what led to my first internship, my first job, and it has been a network that I have relied on throughout the entirety of my career.

Is that the biggest way that the programme continues to define your career?

Yeah, absolutely. I still get my directory every year, I still keep tabs on everyone in the network. When I look at the network that I always ask people to prioritise in their careers, for me it always starts first with Ohio. Thinking about how so many people in that network are related to the world that I operate in right now, whether it's clients that we work with, whether it's what other brands that are looking to do work with the athletes represent, whether it's clients that we can advise and build strategies for... there's so many connections across the network. I'd say probably a week doesn't go by where I'm not interacting with one of the alumni in some form or capacity, whether it's a personal or business relationship.

What advice would you offer to someone just starting the course?

My advice would be to leverage the network early on. Really think about it, study the connections in the marketplace, learn very quickly what it is that you want to do and be very purposeful and intentional about building a network of connections oriented around where you want to go in your career. Second, make sure you're going above and beyond academically to get the most out of the programme. It's evolved so much since my time there, I think it really is at the cutting edge in terms of the curriculum and where the state of sports is today, so the more you dive into that, the more prepared you're going to be for the other side, and sports business today is more dynamic than it's ever been. I think students are fortunate to be able to experience a programme like Ohio's to fully prepare them for that world. 

2. University of Massachusetts, Amherst MBA/MS in Sport Management

The University of Massachusetts Amherst's MBA/MS in Sport Management will celebrate its 50th anniversary edition in the 2020-21 academic year, and claims the number two spot in this year's rankings. The programme also retained its place at the top of the Professors' Choice category and tied first place for its alumni network, showing the esteem in which it is held by the industry and its students past and present. Associate department chair and graduate program director **Steve McKelvey** talks to *SportBusiness* about the course's continued success.

What are your reflections on this year's rankings?

SM: Obviously, we'd love to be ranked number one, but we seem to go neck-and-neck every year with Ohio University, which is obviously a top-notch programme as well. Being second to them is no discredit to our programme at all. Finishing first in the Professors' Choice category is equally important, because it's a statement of how our peers view us and what they think about the quality of our programme. To be ranked number one in that category for the past two years is something we are very proud of.

What has the past year been like at UMass?

It's been a huge challenge for us, as it has been for any sport management programme. We went to remote teaching right after spring break, and the benefit of that, given that our programme is going to be entirely remote this fall, is that we all got a little practice in understanding how best to deliver our graduate-level classes remotely. We still plan to have all of our graduate programme courses offered synchronously. The students will 'go to class' at their assigned times, and we have spent a lot of time this summer thinking about how to add value to that. We'll continue to tap into our huge alumni network, bringing them into the classroom to engage the students in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

The pandemic has forced us to think about how we add value. One of the great examples is last spring, we hosted




a series of panels with some alumni and some non-alums from across the industry. It was in part professional development, but in part it was just to help the grad students feel that they weren't alone out there and give them some insights into what the industry practitioners were experiencing. It's not rocket science, but it's not something that we had thought of before the pandemic, and so we will continue those.

You came out joint-top for your alumni network. How do you keep your alums engaged?

That's great to hear. We know there are other programmes out there that have an extremely strong alumni network as well – any schools that have been doing this for as long as we have will have a pretty rich and broad and deep alumni network. One of the things we do is run

an array of events around the year where we go to various industry conferences and have alumni gatherings, typically an alumni breakfast. We have a fundraising development team here within the Isenberg School of Management, and they put together events around the country to get alums together. The panels that we did are another great example. When we posted out on Facebook to our alums, 'is anybody interested in jumping on board and speaking to our current students', we had a tremendous response, far more than we could use. Any time that we go out to our alumni, we always get very positive feedback. One of the biggest pieces where we engage our alumni is through our grad mentoring programme, which is now in its 15th year. That continues to be kind of a lynchpin of our course.

Do you feel the remote teaching you've been forced to adopt in the past few months is a long-term solution?

You're not going to replace the value of the in-class, face-to-face teaching, particularly with the amount of group work, group projects, group discussion, case study work that we do. But I think it will lead to some extensions of the on-ground experience rather than replace it. Everybody, at least within the context of my grad programme, both faculty and students, can't wait to be back in person. In the meantime, we'll make the best of it that we can, and try to think outside the box around how to engage the students not only in the classroom but outside as well. 

Burke Magnus, executive vice-president, programming and scheduling, ESPN

Burke Magnus graduated from University of Massachusetts Amherst's MBA/MS in Sport Management in 1994 and joined ESPN in 2008, taking up his current role in 2015. In 2011, he was the recipient of UMass' Distinguished Alumnus Award by the McCormack Department of Sport Management.

Why did you decide to pursue a postgraduate degree in sports management?

It was really kind of a means to an end, relative to my professional pursuit. I was a history major in college, which I absolutely loved, and it was a great combination for me because I enjoyed the material and so I did well in that as a major. But when I finished my undergrad, I was really looking for a way into the sports business, which at the time was even smaller than it is now.

It was a bit of a closed industry, I didn't know anybody. And all I knew was I wanted to make that my initial career, and I had a history degree and not much else on my resume.

And so when I found out that sport management was a discipline which was emerging at the time, it was relatively small discipline and only offered at a couple of universities. I investigated it immediately really as a way to round out my educational experience with some coursework that was specific to the industry, but primarily, to get connections and meet people who could help me get on my way from a career perspective.

What was it about UMass that attracted you?

UMass, in a lot of ways, was the founding institution in the US for this discipline, so I felt like it had the cachet. It had this incredible reputation for a very tight alumni network, particularly among grad students, just because the programme was so small, relatively speaking. Looking forward to starting a career, it was attractive to me that people really took pride in that.

As I've gone forward in my career I've come across other UMass grads.



Two of my good friends are Jay Monahan at the PGA Tour and Howie Nuchow at CAA Sports, and there's always that moment where you realise, 'oh, you're a UMass person too!'

How did the course prepare you for your time in the industry?

First of all, the coursework was really well-rounded. I knew I wanted to be in the industry, but I didn't really have a pre-conceived notion of what that would be, other than a professional business pursuit. And so getting that wide view of the industry – across finance and accounting and law, and sport and society, and those kinds of experiences – everybody got a similar academic experience which I think was good.


But really the payoff was that the final thing you had to do was an internship, and it was on you to figure out where you wanted to concentrate your internship experiences as a launching pad for a job. And it just so happened that an internship at CBS

Sports opened up for me, and one thing led to another and I happened to guess right in terms of what would interest me professionally. The internship was an absolutely critical decision for me to get right, because that really was the opportunity to prove yourself professionally.

Does being a UMass alum continue to benefit you professionally?

They do a great job connecting the professional network of alumni they have in the big cities, in New York, Chicago, LA: they fish where the fish are, so to speak, and create opportunities for us to connect with each other. The hallmark of the programme for me is the alumni network. People supported me and in turn I've supported other people. One of the great aspects of the programme is that you can help people directly and very individually, without being concerned about a tsunami of resumes coming in your direction because the programme is so tight and intimate.

What advice would you offer to grads starting the programme this year?

Too often I talk to people who have a very specific idea of what they want to do or where they see themselves. Opportunity comes in a variety of different ways to people in their lives and you have to be open to those opportunities, especially in this industry, which is relatively small, and you can go a long time without getting the opportunity you're waiting for. So be open to opportunities outside the vision you have for yourself. Because you'd be surprised at what avenues it may open for you. 



Reculture sport – the shifting culture of sport

Professor Nefertiti A. Walker is a lecturer in the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Mark H. McCormack School of Sport Management, as well as UMass' interim vice-chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion and its chief diversity officer. Here, she discusses how her commitment to diversity has informed her research, and how UMass has supported that commitment.

Through my research, industry partnerships and teaching, my goal remains the same: to leave the culture of sport better than how I found it.

For much of the past decade, my research has centered on sport culture. I have conducted research in collaboration with espnW and Dr Nicole Melton in which we examined the role of inclusion in college athletics. We concluded that college athletic departments that are both inclusive and diverse perform the best in terms of overall department success (a combination of wins and revenue). This research is important because it demonstrates that it is not enough to hire people from diverse demographic groups, but that sport managers must also work to develop inclusive organisations where employees feel a strong sense of belonging. These findings were shared at the espnW Women + Sport Summit in California.

The next theme of my research examines sport cultures and the role of gender. Specifically, I examine the treatment of women working in male-dominant spaces such as men's college basketball or the front office of men's professional sports. I was intrigued as to why there were so few women working in men's basketball. Over the years I have interviewed women who have coached men's basketball at the collegiate and professional level, as well as men who have worked with women coaches of men's basketball. The findings from these various studies suggest that women are just as capable and effective at coaching men's basketball as their male counterparts.

However, even though women were rated just as highly on items such as competence to do the job, they were rated significantly lower on hiring recommendation – thereby providing



“with the increased attention on gender pay equity and the #MeToo movement, sexism in sport is overdue for its reckoning.”

evidence of gender discrimination. I have presented this research to numerous front office executives of men's sports leagues and teams. When I began this research a decade ago, there were no women coaching in the NBA and only Nancy Lieberman coaching in the G-League.

Now, at least 11 women work as a coach or basketball operations executives in the NBA. Upwards of 40-plus women work across the NBA with various teams in basketball operations. This is a significant shift in culture. Therefore, my next research project will examine how behaviours, policies, and processes have changed, to allow for the inclusion of women in the NBA. Certainly, having an NBA Commissioner in Adam Silver who, per the *New York Times*, says: “We are very focused on a woman being a head coach in our league,” has helped propel the NBA towards the inclusion of women. But I intend to investigate other factors that have led to this significant change.

Finally, my most recent research comes from collaborating on projects led by McCormack Graduate Student and PhD candidate Lauren Hindman. Lauren and I have spent the last few years examining sexism in sport. One project explored the experiences of women working in professional sports. Our results suggest that all women who participated in our study experienced significant levels of sexism. Some women dealt with subtle forms of sexism, like being left out of networking opportunities or being nudged out of the ‘old boys’ club’ lunch dates. Others experienced overt verbal abuse and harassment. In another study we examined the culture of professional cheerleaders. In this project, we found that cheerleaders were verbally abused, forced to dress in revealing clothes even when not performing, held to unreasonable fraternisation standards, and were grossly underpaid, even compared to the team mascot. Again, this suggests that sexism is deeply entrenched into the culture of sport. However, with the increased attention on gender pay equity and the #MeToo movement, sexism in sport is overdue for its reckoning.

Overall, my previously mentioned research coupled with industry partnerships has led to the incorporation of students on much of what I do as a professor. For example, my students have worked with executives from ESPN, MLS, and NCAA. Every course that I teach incorporates aspects of industry research and partnerships, related to the shifting culture of sport. Therefore, students leave my courses understanding the ways that sport culture is shifting and develop the inclusive leadership skills needed to lead this shift. McCormack students graduate being better prepared to lead the future of sports. [O](#)

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

The Fifa Master retains its podium place in 2020 and is again the highest-ranked European course – a position it has occupied in eight of the nine years we have run these rankings. One of just three courses to have occupied the top spot, which it achieved in 2014, the Fifa Master is a perennial contender at the top end of our table thanks to its international outlook and the consistently strong employment record of its alumni. **Professor Denis Oswald**, CIES and Fifa Master scientific committee director, tells *SportBusiness* about the challenges of managing a course across three countries.

The Fifa Master retained its third place in the rankings and closed the gap to second place. What are the strengths of the course that keep you up at the top?

To stay at the top for so long, two things are essential: to be student-focused and to be innovative. To achieve that, we have placed particular emphasis on student recruitment, the content of the Fifa Master programme, and job placement.

In the last few years, we have undertaken an in-depth analysis of our programme that allowed us to identify and implement new topics that we thought were essential. With such incredible university partners in SDA Bocconi in Milan, De Montfort in Leicester and Neuchâtel in Switzerland, which are constantly challenging themselves to teach better, to produce original research, we can confidently look to the future. In addition, we have listened to the industry and have revamped the curriculum in order to provide up-to-date academic content as well as enriching the experience for the students. For example, we have included new sub-modules on human rights and sport, equality and inclusion, CSR and sustainability.

This year was the 20th edition of the Fifa Master. What have been some of the highlights of the two decades?

We have been fortunate to attract such great students over the years, something we witness every time we have a global alumni gathering, which began in 2006 for the first time. We are a people-centred educational endeavour. So it is rewarding



to see students develop themselves, be entrusted with greater responsibilities and become great sport leaders and even better people.

Growing the partnership between the three universities, our foundation CIES and Fifa has been a real adventure. It has been incredible to see the fruit of the collaborative work from our staff – for example I remember the conferences and publications around research about sport and legacy at a time when the topic was just beginning to garner attention.

Also, providing more scholarship opportunities than we had in the first years – we only had two scholarships at the start – allows us to support more of the best candidates to attend. Now we support around half the students with at least partial scholarships.

Last year marked the Fifa Master's 20th anniversary and we celebrated this milestone by organising a special conference on the theme of 'Female Leadership in International Sport', with several alumni invited as guest speakers.

The course scored very highly for international students. How important an aspect of the course

is it that you maintain that global outlook and attract students from all around the world?

The global outlook of the Fifa Master is an essential aspect of the programme. On average, in a class of 30 students, we have at least 25 different nationalities, normally coming from all continents, and that cultural exchange is a fantastic addition to the students' experience. That outlook proves to be valuable also after graduation. Today the Fifa Master Alumni Association comprises over 560 alumni, from 108 nationalities, currently based in about 80 different countries. That means that you can find a Fifa Master alumnus almost anywhere in the world, and that has proved to be extremely valuable to our network of alumni.

It's clearly been a very challenging year for the entire sector. What has your experience of 2020 been and how are you planning for the future?

Yes it has and our experience, like everyone else's, was obviously full of surprises and crisis management, especially when you consider that we have students who come from all over the world and who are supposed to move across three countries for their studies at a time when international travel became almost impossible.

We learned the value of flexibility, doing more virtually, and still relying on teamwork across our institutional partners.

We had already been planning how to better integrate the digital learning environment, but 2020 has helped accelerate that process which we hope will help us to face our third decade. ○

Pierre Ducrey, Olympic Games operations director, International Olympic Committee

Pierre Ducrey was part of the third intake of students on the CIES Fifa Master, which he graduated with distinction in 2003. He was appointed as Olympic Games operations director in March 2020, having joined the International Olympic Committee as an intern shortly after finishing his Masters degree.

Why did you choose a postgraduate degree in sports management?

I was already studying for a master's degree in International Relations, and I was really trying to figure out where that would take me. I wanted to work in an international environment and sport was always something present in my life, so I tried to figure out, 'okay, what's my next move?' And then I happened to have dinner with a friend of a friend who turned out to be the former secretary general of Fifa, and he mentioned the programme. And it seemed to tick all the boxes I was looking for, so I thought international sports management could be a place I would fit.

What in particular about the Fifa Master appealed to you?

The fact that it was across three countries, so you would get a little bit of insight into three different industries and different ways of doing things at three different universities; one of them, SDA Bocconi in Milan, being really recognised for business. I knew that to get into the sports environment you would need kind of a pathway, because it's not something where you can just be suddenly knocking on the door of some of the bigger companies and be welcomed in. So I thought it would be a good way in, and I liked the idea of living for a year with a group of people from international backgrounds as well.

It was a risky move. I was 28 when I signed up and the Fifa Master wasn't very well known at the time, I was in the third intake of the course, so there were very few alumni already in position. Today, it's a much safer path because you can see how many people have managed to go through the course and ended up in the industry, which is a very high



number, and you know that you have a lot of alumni you can contact, but we didn't really have that at the time. The fact that it was endorsed by Fifa, that the universities were well reputed, there were lots of things that appealed to me.

How did the course help to prepare you for your career at the IOC?


I had a solid background in social economy, politics, management, but not at all focused on sport. I figured that if I wanted to go into the sport industry, I'd better learn a lot. And the thing I really enjoyed about the course was that it really gave you the opportunity to see from the inside a lot of events, a lot of clubs, federations – it's very well connected with the industry. Beyond the alumni, you're also getting opportunities to meet people that you probably would not get a chance to meet be outside of the programme if you tried to create those connections by yourself. A lot of well-known people, reputable companies, clubs and agencies came to present or we went to visit, and that also gives you a good idea of what it takes to be in that industry and create your network, or at least the first steps of it.

And how does being a Fifa Master alum continue to play a role in your career today?

I think really the value of the course today is that it has grown to become a very well established programme that is recognised so when you refer to it, people are favourably impressed because the other alumni are also in important positions today. When you're going through a programme in the early days, you're hoping that it will develop to be something that will be a good line on your CV, and the Fifa Master definitely is. The alumni network has grown, I'm very close to all the people in my class, we still have monthly video calls trying to update each other on where we're at. It's kind of a big family. When you live for a year with people abroad, you create bonds that you can't really create in other circumstances, so that's really important to me.

What advice would you give to someone starting the course this year?

If you invest in the course, you will be rewarded. You can do this course and sit back and not really talk to anybody, just receive the information and pass the grades but to me that's not what it's about. I'd say if you really invest yourself and be smart during the course, you maximise your chances to have an easier way into the industry afterwards.

Getting in is just a starting point; contributing and making sure that the class stands out – that you stand out – and that you also establish communication with the alumni during the course, that makes it a much more rewarding experience than just taking the course for the sake of it. 

Fifa Master and De Montfort University share commitment to anti-racist action

The CIES Fifa Master takes place across three European universities – Neuchâtel in Switzerland, Milan's SDA Bocconi, and De Montfort in Leicester, England. **Professor Martin Polley**, director of the International Centre for Sports History and Culture at De Montfort, discusses how Fifa Master students at the school have taken a lead on anti-racist research in sport.

De Montfort has a huge historical commitment to anti-discrimination in every form imaginable. It's a very high priority on campus that every population, every community, every individual student is made to feel welcome and protected.

What's so special about the Fifa Master is the international spread. In the 20th edition last year, we had a student from Rwanda who was able to bring his experiences of the legacy of the genocide there. We had a student from Israel and a student from Palestine who were able to discuss what has been taught to them through schooling and other settings at home, and how they can look at that differently with different perspectives when they move abroad and think about race in a broader sense. We've had black and white Americans in the same room talking about their experiences through this lens. It's been fantastic for using an academic project with a very resonant personal basis to get students exploring what these issues can mean in their own societies. And then from there, of course we bring it back to sport.

For example, as part of Black History Month we put on a series of events with prominent anti-racist campaigners from within sport, and we made that a compulsory class for the Fifa Master students. We had [Olympic gold medallist 200m runner] Tommie Smith, which was a huge pull, and the important thing there was that he talked about how he didn't see the salute on the podium at the Mexico '68 Games as a Black Power salute, but as a human rights salute. We also got [former Liverpool and England footballer] John Barnes, who talked about his experiences as a

black man from a relatively elite family background, being the only black kid at the posh schools he went to. He was really encouraging students to think about more than just race; don't reduce an individual to the colour of their skin, but think about their wider biography when you're trying to understand their sporting experiences.



One of the most successful pieces of research came from a group made up of a South Korean guy, someone from the Philippines, a girl from the Netherlands, and a guy from Botswana, who collaborated together on a project on how social media can be used both as a channel for racists to express their racism – with all of the usual social media problems about anonymity and relative impunity, and looking at what regulations exist – but also looking at how sports organisations, from clubs right through to international federations, could develop more positive educational materials around

racial issues through social media. They looked how authorities could try and combat this not just through punishment and banning people, but also through education, through positive stories.

The nature of the Fifa Master is that all the final projects have to be interdisciplinary; they have to represent humanities, management and law, and the group pulled that off really well. For humanities they were looking at history, language, culture, and how this all comes into play in social media. For management they looked at what leadership can do to try and make social media a better place. And then for the legal aspect, they were looking at the legal regulations on hate speech and freedom of speech in different legislative settings, and how social media is a very problematic one, because of its obviously transnational nature. They did a great survey where they had over 300 people from across the industry and elsewhere replying to their questionnaire. They interviewed the head of diversity at the Football Association, figures from Kick It Out and various other anti-racism organisations.

Because the time they were writing was relatively early in the pandemic, they looked the racist trope of how a number of Korean and Japanese footballers were being portrayed as carriers of disease. There was one meme where you had the Spurs team all celebrating around Son and somebody photoshopped face mask on to them for example. The multinational make-up of the group meant they were able to bring a postcolonial but also an incredibly progressive political perspective to that conversation. [O](#)

The sports management higher education sector facing the aftermath of Covid-19



Palais DuPeyrou, the CIES headquarters in Neuchâtel (CIES)

Kevin Tallec Marston, academic coordinator, research fellow and academic project manager for the Fifa Master at the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES), discusses the challenges and potential opportunities that are facing the sports management education sector and academia more widely, as the world recovers from the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

Few sectors or industries have gone untouched by the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet higher education, and more specifically the sports management sector, is fundamentally dependent on the proximity, interaction, and exchange that the global lockdown has mostly rendered impossible. From in-class collaboration to on-site learning experiences, the model of regular face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, industry experts, and general campus life has been turned on its head. What have we learned so far during these tumultuous times?

I see a number of challenges and opportunities which may force the sector to refocus and, maybe for some,

redefine their *raison d'être*. Some in wider higher education announce a reckoning with the university sector to finally face the consequences of recent trends in astronomical price inflation, matched with largely inflexible cost structures¹. If sports management remains a niche subject in education, it still involves hundreds of universities worldwide and a safe estimate of at least three-to-seven thousand students annually enrolled worldwide². So what does it mean for the sector? I see three inter-related issues: impacts on the course life cycle; the curriculum; and cost structure.

Every course has its own life cycle from promotion and recruitment to placement and career services. Beginning

with recruitment, how will courses fare with the effects of travel bans and quarantines – particularly with regard to international students? Even if courses with strong reputations and longer waiting lists may not suffer as much, every programme will face a larger (than normal) percentage of applicants unwilling to risk leaving jobs or to take on debt. Some applicants will also prefer to apply later or need more time to commit and accept offers, all of which has a knock-on effect in the admissions process for every programme in the sector.

At the other end, student placement, and more generally career services, have already been, and will undoubtedly

continue to be, affected by the hiring freezes across the industry. The Covid world will test the relationships that sports management courses have with the labour market. In terms of supporting positive short-term career outcomes for graduates, schools may begin to rethink some career skills training, like how to prepare students for videoconference interviews.

In any crisis, some sectors of industry may thrive and if schools can correctly anticipate some of these trends in sport, then their graduates will be better placed to transition into the workplace. Recently, the head of recruitment for Bain & Co. noted how the consulting sector surprisingly did 20-30 per cent more business than usual in the wake of the financial crisis and that this was a boon for hiring MBA and business school graduates ten years ago³. Is an area like esports one that will have a similar unexpected growing demand for labour in the next two years?

This, of course, raises questions about the types of links that courses have with the market. While the independence and critical thinking space of academia are paramount to a university's identity, no modern institution, even less a sports management programme, can truly exist for long without some relationship to the wider world. The freedom of academia comes with responsibility and a commitment to the values of education and research. In the case of sports management, it is a responsibility to prepare the citizens of the global sporting republic if you will allow the analogy. It is the trust that the wider world – in this case, sport – holds in the academy that serves, in part, as a guarantee for the university's legitimacy. Where and when that relationship breaks or is affected, due in this case to a crisis that halts the industry as a whole, no university will have an easy time continuing as normal. Sports management is no different.

This is linked to the second issue I see facing courses: the curriculum. In terms of course content, how will courses adapt to a new landscape where online delivery



Kevin Tallec Marston | academic coordinator, research fellow and academic project manager for the Fifa Master at the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES)

will certainly gain importance? The use of videoconferencing – which most have used by now – will become essential in providing teachers with the possibility to add more supplemental digital content, but also deal with unexpected changes to the academic year. Similarly, as we have all witnessed, the technology is there to include more guest lecturers or outside speakers who never would normally come to campus. For example, we were able to organise some *ad hoc* Zoom sessions for our Fifa Master students this June with alumni who work in, or with, five of the six football confederations around the world, providing added learning and exchanges that normally would not happen – it is hardly feasible to bring 25 alumni working from Malaysia to Miami to the classroom! The on-site learning through field visits, so important to sports management courses, is something that will be more of a challenge to conduct virtually – but we should begin to think about it.

The situation also poses challenges to teaching methods and assessment. Some courses which may have to deliver lectures at least partly online in the coming months need to be adapted to the constraints and opportunities of this new format. Whether it is time

zone differences for students studying internationally or lecturers connecting from abroad, online methods have limits. Even the best annotation tools on a learning platform or virtual breakout rooms have to be thought through in a way that fits each learning objective. Innovation and flexibility are essential here.

The third issue of relevance I see for the coming year is cost structure. What kind of margins do sports management courses operate with? With tuition inflation across much of higher education and the resulting impact on recruitment, this will undoubtedly affect the demand for sports management courses, which, let's face it, is a leisure industry. With the industry largely on hold, will students flock to courses with the same enthusiasm in the next 12 months? For programmes that are largely tuition-dependent and have rigid cost structures, this may be a difficult situation to manage. Courses which can rely on university endowments to weather the storm or scholarships that allow them to retain top applicants may have an easier time. Perhaps this is where the role of alumni will be essential against this institutional financial vulnerability. Business school INSEAD recently boasted one of the largest one-time donations (€66m) gifted by an anonymous alumni. Will sports management courses be able to appeal to alumni who have succeeded and are willing to give back?

Ultimately, the Covid crisis is pushing schools to return to their core values, which is not such a bad thing. Why do we do what we do? What are our core values as an education sector? How do we continue to marry research and teaching for a valuable learning experience for our students in this constantly changing environment? If we can confidently answer those questions, and successfully address recruitment, career services, curriculum, and our funding models, then sports management higher education will hopefully navigate through stormy waters to future calmer seas. ○

¹ Professor Scott Galloway talks to Anderson Cooper | How the pandemic could disrupt higher education – NYU Stern School of Business Professor – both in an article <https://marker.medium.com/this-chart-predicts-which-colleges-will-survive-the-coronavirus-8aa3af4c9e6> and interview with CNN <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P314uMc2X0k&feature=share>

² I estimated here based on the figures in the ranking and NASSM. The courses surveyed in the SportBusiness Postgraduate Rankings have a median 27 students (38 on average but that is with outliers) in the Top 40 since 2017 and NASSM lists more than 300 schools with Masters programmes in sports management. Some programmes I know in Europe are not even listed, so I would guess the figure is higher.

³ <https://poetsandquants.com/2020/06/15/bain-on-mba-recruitment-during-covid-19/>



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Thayssa Plum, senior media relations manager, Fifa

Thayssa Plum took the Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology at the International Academy of Sports Science and Technology (AISTS) in 2011 and began working for Fifa ahead of the 2014 World Cup in her home country of Brazil. She is now the body's senior media relations manager, based in its headquarters in Zurich.

Why did you choose to do pursue a postgraduate degree in sports management?

I was working as a sports journalist in Brazil for a radio station, and we had just been awarded the two big events, both the World Cup in 2014, and the Olympics in 2016. I realised that we had this huge opportunity as Brazilians, and I thought that I needed to better prepare myself, I needed to understand, to study this business. I always had this idea and understanding that Europe was the place to be when it came to the sports industry, so I was also very interested from a cultural point of view, to exchange and understand more about the culture, to get to know new places.

And then what made everything possible was that AISTS offered me a scholarship. For me it was still not possible to afford one year living in Switzerland, which is an expensive country, plus the tuition fees. But AISTS offered a scholarship for women coming from developing countries, and fortunately I qualified for a grant from the June Canavan Foundation, which changed my life and all my perspectives. When I came to Europe in 2011, I thought I was coming to prepare myself to be a better journalist, because I would understand more about the sports business. But then once I got here and I started experiencing the backstage, I realised how amazing and how rich it was and I really enjoyed it. I decided to shift from a career in journalism to a career in sports events and communications.

What was it in particular about the course at AISTS that appealed to you?

Of course, in Brazil, I was completely focused on football, because that's our biggest passion, but I really love the



Olympics as well and I thought it was amazing to have this connection with the International Olympic Committee, and the fact that it was based in Lausanne, the Olympic City.

The curriculum was very interesting to me in terms of event management. I think also what really attracted me was the international make-up. Our class was 30-35 people, and there might have been four or five Swiss people and all the others came from Brazil, China, Canada, the US, Colombia...I have friends literally from every single part of the globe. And that exchange was extremely interesting and a really big asset for starting out in the sports industry which of course is very global.

How well do you feel the course prepared you for a career in the sports industry?

It's really important to stop sometimes and study and look at things with a more critical eye. When you are just doing your work every single day, either the way I was as a journalist or in the industry, you don't get chance to stop to critically look at things and think about where this industry comes from and where it is going. So I think the way it prepared me was that it provided me with a set of cues in relation to sporting events, in relation to project management, but also put me

in a position where I could be a little bit away from the day-to-day life and look at things with a critical eye.

Also what is very important in the market is networking, and the course, with all the alumni and also the people in my current class and the lecturers we had, definitely provides you with a network of very interesting people that you can speak to. Now, constantly I receive emails, messages from current students that are interested in seeking some advice about how to work in football, because there is this connection and as soon as they say, I am a student or I'm in alumni from AISTS, that opens the door for them, and it definitely opens doors for me as well.

How does being an alumni of AISTS continue to impact your career to this day?

Definitely through networking. You're basically connected to hundreds of people in the sports industry, all over the world. I've been at Fifa for more than five years now, but if you are looking for a job and you see that there is an alumni in a company, you can immediately get in touch and get some more information and advice. Besides that, they also offer workshops, they offer events where you can really talk again to the students, to alumni and to the industry and always meet new people.

AISTS also offers a mentorship programme, which has been interesting for me – I had three or four mentees now that I've been in touch with, and all this exchange hopefully helps them but it also helps me in terms of my knowledge, my skills, my professional development, and I see that as extremely enriching to keep that network as we as we move forward in our careers. 



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Felicia Ganthier, director of operations, community relations, WWE

Felicia Ganthier was part of Columbia's graduating class of 2012, and joined World Wrestling Entertainment in 2019 after spending four years with the Madison Square Garden Company. She has also worked as assistant director, corporate and foundation relations at the Columbia Business School, and for the NHL's New York Rangers.

Why did you choose to pursue a sports management postgraduate degree?

I did a sports management undergraduate degree as well, so I knew that this was my path and what I wanted to do with my life. I kind of fell into it but when I found out this was a job, that people can have fun and make money in sports, I was like, 'sign me up!' But I wanted to take the next step, and I knew I needed to 1) build a deeper network bench, if you will, and 2) get more training and skills.

What attracted you to Columbia?

I figured, 'if you're going to do this, you might as well go Ivy!' And they were willing to give me a chance. Coming out of high school, I never considered myself Ivy League material, but now that I've been in it for so long, both as a student and an employee, I realised it was accessible for me and it was something I was limiting in myself. They had just started the sports management programme and they were prepared to give me a shot.

How did the course prepare you for working in the industry?

Through the network. I really didn't understand that aspect of it when I started; I thought it was more based on the coursework and I thought it would be more like undergrad where I would just learn a tonne of things from the best and the brightest, because it's Columbia. But I didn't realise the value of the network that I was going to be a part of.

My instructors brought amazing guest speakers, whether it was



[commissioner of the Big East Conference] Val Ackerman or [NHL commissioner] Gary Bettman. I also met Adam Silver just before he became the NBA commissioner. So it introduces you to the best in the industry, but it also gives you the network of people you're studying with who go on to senior roles across the sector.

How does being a Columbia alum continue to impact your career?


It plays a huge role because it gives me leadership opportunities. I was selected to serve on the inaugural alumni leadership council, it was the first time I'd served on a board or anything like that but they tapped me up to wave the sports management flag and be the representative of the

programme.

Opportunities like this and just speaking with current students and giving something back to them [has had a huge impact]. I had quite a circuitous route here, I was a student athlete and I didn't transition well, but that was good – part of my journey with Columbia is coming back and talking to students and showing people that it's okay to have messed up and have done different things, and that it may take you a long time to get to where you're supposed to be. Columbia opens doors. It gets you in the room, because of the cachet that comes with being a Columbia graduate. It won't keep you in the room, but in this industry in particular, getting there is half the battle. So that's huge, and that's something that I'm keen to keep sharing with the Columbia community.

What advice would you give to someone starting the programme this year?

I would say: loosely plan. Because you never know what is going to pop up, and sometimes the unexpected journey, embracing the adventure, is how you get to where you want to go. Have an idea of what you want to do, but be flexible and open to new opportunities, because you never know where you are going to land.

And stay connected – with people in general, and with the Columbia community in particular. Read those alumni newsletters, go back for things, donate. It's not necessarily about the amount that you give, but the fact that what you give supports the school and helps to grow the programme. 

The balancing act | Universities attempt to address sport's gender gap



Former NBA commissioner David Stern speaks to a UMass graduate class during his Executive in Residence visit last Fall (UMass)

Though slow progress continues to be made, the sports industry remains an overwhelmingly male-dominated one. In recent years, the London-based charity Women in Sport has published research finding that the number of women in leadership roles in the sports industry has remained static since the start of the last decade, at around 30 per cent, while 40 per cent of women in the sector claim to have experienced discrimination based on their gender.

Universities preparing the next generation of leaders in sport are playing their part in bridging that gap, but even with the work that has been done in this regard, our own research for the 2020 Postgraduate Rankings found that only two of the sports management programmes surveyed – Georgia State and Ohio State – currently

have a 50-per-cent or better gender ratio for both student body and faculty.

Nefertiti Walker, interim vice-chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, tells *SportBusiness* that this is indicative of the challenge facing the sector, and emphasises the role education can continue to play. “To be completely frank, I think that higher education and sports management programmes have a responsibility to ensure that they’re doing all that they can to recruit a diverse pool of students,” she says. “Because if not, we’re perpetuating the same lack of diversity that we see in the industry.”

Faculty make-up

Walker says that those running UMass’s Mark H. McCormack Department of

Sport Management have been “very intentional in ensuring that we consider the demographic make-up of our faculty”, adding that almost everyone in the department has carried out work in some capacity in the area of diversity and inclusion. Walker and her colleague Nicole Melton are the co-directors of the department’s Laboratory of Inclusion and Diversity (LIDs), which is dedicated to “real research that will be applied to the industry in the field of representation and diversity”, she says.

In this year’s survey, the Department of Sport Management faculty showed a 50/50 ratio of males to females, while one third of its student body was women. Walker says she thinks the former figure can help in the mission to improve the latter.

“There’s a lot of research that supports the fact that people need to

see people like themselves in leadership roles, they need to see it in the people that are teaching them in order to feel like they can achieve that.

“In most sports organisations, women are somewhere around 20 per cent of the folks in leadership. If you look at some of the professional men’s sports organisations at the level of general manager, president, commissioner, women just do not exist. I think women who are looking for programmes see us and they see our commitment to diversity, not just in gender terms but as something that’s quite radical.”

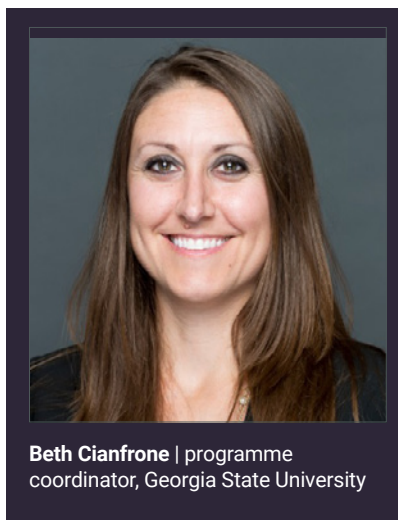
Walker says that students have told her directly that the number of women in leadership positions on the department faculty was a major influencing factor in choosing the programme at UMass. “Female students know the uphill battle they’re facing with a career in sport,” she says. “This is the reason why they feel at home in this programme, because they feel very comfortable in their ability to ask questions about being a woman in the industry that they wouldn’t normally be able to ask if they weren’t in a programme that didn’t have that 50/50 split.”

Diverse recruitment

Brian Turner, associate professor and coordinator of sport management at Ohio State University, says that achieving an equal gender split was not an easy process, in part simply because the industry wasn’t doing a good enough job making pathways open to women.

“I’ve been at Ohio State for 16 years, and in the early years I could look out at my classes at Masters level and only see a handful of female students,” he says. “I particularly remember one incoming class where we only had two or three female students. Now, we are consistently achieving 50 per cent. Our 2020 intake is right at 50 per cent, 16 out of 31 students are female.

“Ten years ago, I don’t think a lot of students across the board, really, but especially female students, saw this as a career option. We, meaning OSU as well as the industry at large, were not really communicating the availability of jobs in the sports sector. With the things we have done promoting the programme, we see that more female students are



Beth Cianfrone | programme coordinator, Georgia State University

seeing this as a pathway to a career in sports.”

One of the main shifts has been in the volume of applications from female students. Beth Cianfrone, professor and programme coordinator of the Sport Administration programme at Georgia State University, says that while diversity plays a role in the school’s wider goals, it doesn’t come into its thinking when approving applicants, and that instead the quality of applications coming in from across the board now consistently leads to a 50/50 split.

“We are fortunate to have a lot of applications every year,” she says. “We have a very large programme, and that gives us the opportunity to select from a wider range of people, but we’re not consciously counting people, like, ‘here’s one male, so here’s one female’. We just get that many talented female and male applicants that it works out roughly equal every year, which is how it should be.”

Turner agrees. “Early on when we started running the course, there were not a lot of female applicants out there, and if there’s not a lot of applicants there’s not a lot of room to improve your numbers. That is why we’ve made a conscious effort to promote the course to more female students and get more applications from them, rather than consciously picking female applicants just to improve our numbers.”

Ohio State and Georgia State’s routes to achieving that 50/50 gender balance among their student intakes have been markedly different. While OSU

turned to its 500-strong undergraduate programme, recreational sports department and athletics department, GSU used its position in Atlanta, surrounded by major league sports organisations, to recruit nationwide and internationally.

“Our biggest benefit has definitely been the relationship with our recreational sports department,” says Turner. “They recruit from all over the country and then people who join there often come through to us, so they’ve been a great partner in helping us to diversify not just in gender but in race, geography, different backgrounds. They are great recruiters for us.

“We’re also helped by the emphasis that Gene Smith, our athletic director, places on life after sports. He really focuses with the student athletes on career development and helps them to see what’s out there after they finish, he runs a podcast called the Buckeyes Future Podcast that I’ve been a guest on, which helps us get in front of student athletes and explain to them that we offer a major in sport management, and I think that has really helped recruit a lot more females into our programme.”

Conversely, GSU has only recently launched an undergraduate programme, with most of its recruitment to its MS in Sport Administration coming from across the US.

“I think our proximity to sports organisations that are themselves really diverse helps,” says Cianfrone. “We’re right down the street from the Atlanta Hawks, which was one of the first sports organisations to have a chief diversity officer. The Falcons and the Braves are really close by. I think because we have that proximity and students know they can work there, that lets us draw on and recruit from a more equitable number of male and female applicants.

“We also have a really strong social media presence, where potentially students get to see the diversity of our student body, and across our promotional materials we do use the numbers that we get from the Postgraduate Rankings to show students that we’re inclusive, which we hope encourages them to spend the money to apply for our programme.”

Alumni support

Walker adds that as well as putting women in leadership positions within the programme, UMass has emphasised the roles its female students go on to when promoting the course to potential applicants. “Our women are knocking it out of the park,” she says. “They get really good jobs and they’re doing well in the industry, and I think that’s both testament to the fact that they get to see women in powerful positions in our classrooms, and also it creates more role models within the industry for our current students to look up to.”

Crucially, she adds, UMass alumni recognise the importance of utilising their network from the university for support in furthering those diversity goals at their current employers. “I have former students who have reached back to me, especially in the aftermath of the protests we’ve seen this year, to say, ‘I’m leading this diversity and inclusion initiative, what do you think about this programme’ and asking me to support them as they’re trying to lead change in their sports organisations, which is really cool to see.”

Turner says that the OSU alumni are “our best salespeople”. The programme there now boasts over 1,000 graduates who are working various positions



Brian Turner | coordinator of sport management, Ohio State University

across the industry, and the school launched a YouTube programme this summer to highlight the success of its alumni. “We were very conscious to get alumni in every area, and to have a gender balance, to really show to all our students that the sports industry can be an equal opportunity one if we keep producing outstanding talent,” he says.

Industry-wide benefits

Achieving greater diversity across the sports industry should not just be viewed as beneficial to the women who make their way in the sector, Cianfrone

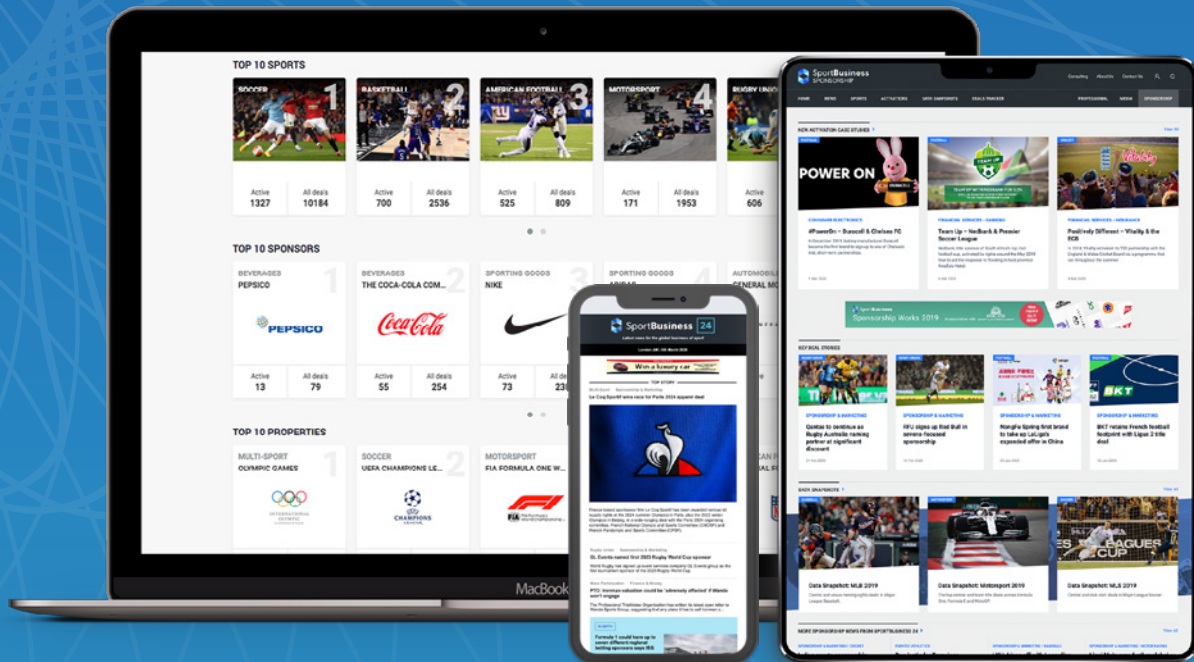
adds. “It’s just as important for the men in the room to see that women work in sports, and to look around themselves and see just as many female faces as they see male. I think for us, having classrooms that are 50/50 is just as much about opening the male students’ eyes to what the industry should look like as it is graduating female students and getting them into leadership roles. If you are in a classroom which is 80-per-cent men, it’s going to impact their behaviour and their outlook moving forward.”

Walker agrees, adding that the male faculty at UMass – “who happen to be all white” – play a major role in calling out sexism in the classroom and in the industry, hopefully sending graduates into the workplace prepared to do the same. “It’s one thing for me to call out sexism in the classroom, and it’s one thing for me to constantly drive home the importance for equity in the workplace,” she says. “But when the students see their male professors also doing it, it sends a different message that this is just who we are as a programme. These are the things that we tolerate, these are the things that we teach, these are the things that are important to us. Our students take that into the workplace.” ○





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Partnerships help universities bridge the gap between academia and industry



Fifa Master students on a visit to the All England Lawn Tennis Club (CIES)

As the ties between universities and sports organisations grow closer and educational institutes continue to look for new ways to strengthen their connections with the industry, *SportBusiness* takes a look at how the growth in partnerships is offering benefits to all parties.

It is a practice that has been gathering pace in the sports management education sector, demonstrated by this year's Postgraduate Rankings survey which showed that NYU, Columbia and George Washington University have all taken advantage of their locations to strike formal partnerships with major leagues, clubs and agencies in the US.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Fifa Master at the International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) and the International Academy of Sport Science and Technology (AISTS) also put up strong showings for their industry partnerships. Both are based at the heart of the European sports industry

in Switzerland, surrounded by the headquarters of the world's governing bodies and international federations, and have leveraged those positions.

Though the partnerships data was not used to decide the final rankings, it nevertheless helps to paint a picture of the increasingly symbiotic links between universities and the industry.

"Real world" connections

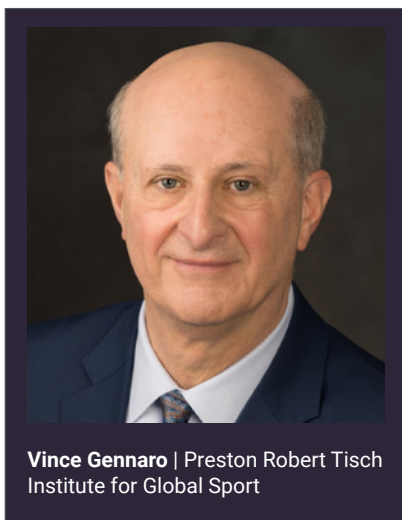
Within the university ecosystem, there is a tendency to see what happens in the industry as 'the real world', says Kevin Tallec Marston, academic project manager at CIES, though as he points out, "the university is my real world!"

He sympathises, however, with the sense that drawing connections and building bridges between the two can only be a positive thing. "It's about listening to the industry," he says. "You can't have a successful course if you don't listen to the industry and know what's going on in the industry. We strike partnerships, some of them formalised,

some of them more informal thanks to relationships that we build through our alumni and through events, so that we can build that stronger insight into the 'real world' of the industry."

An illustration of this is that NYU School of Professional Studies employs an assistant dean of real-world courses. "Essentially, a person who spends much of his time cultivating partnerships", Vince Gennaro, associate dean at the school's Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport, tells *SportBusiness*. "Because we are New York-based, it is critical that we are able to incorporate industry partners into our curriculum. Philosophically, it is just a very important part of our identity. The fact that we're a part of the School of Professional Studies is all about building that bridge to a career path; it's a trademark of ours at the School of Professional Studies to have deep connections with the industries."

The key aspects to the partnerships tend to be knowledge sharing – bringing



Vince Gennaro | Preston Robert Tisch
Institute for Global Sport

in industry expert speakers to talk to students about their field, and taking students on visits to high-profile organisations – and practical, creating opportunities for students to take up internships and work placements in the industry. NYU's partnership with the New York Jets has even seen it source two members of faculty from the NFL team who teach full, annual courses at the Tisch Institute.

Partnerships allow the Tisch Institute to do “real, meaningful work with our students”, says Gennaro. He points to the example of a project carried out in collaboration with the US Conference of Mayors' Sports Alliance, which saw students conduct real-world research into the economic impact of esports facilities. Jeff Williams, the mayor of Arlington, Texas, later directly credited this research with leading to the construction of one of the US's largest esports stadiums in his city. “So the students are getting very hands-on experience – at a young age – of directly impacting the business of sport,” says Gennaro.

Utilising the network

The difference between a fully-fledged partnership and simply inviting a high-profile industry figure to give a guest lecture is crucial, says Tallec Marston. “I insist on the word ‘relationship’. I don't think inviting one speaker for a one-off lecture truly has much value in it. We need to be building long-term, sustainable relationships with organisations to ensure the biggest

benefits to both sides.”

The “Fifa Master spirit”, as Tallec Marston calls it, has helped to build partnerships across the industry, with alumni of the course frequently offering their services, including internships, to current students. “Our alumni go all over the world and all over the industry, and that creates an incredible opportunity when they reach back and say ‘I'm gonna start an internship programme within our organisation and I'd like to have you guys involved’.” The course's long-standing arrangement with the City Football Group arose like this, and Manchester City is now a frequent destination for visits from the course as well as for an annual work placement.

He adds to this the importance of building relationships outside of the alumni network, however: “The sports industry is much bigger than that, so we have to be actively seeking new knowledge partners all the time, through our attendance at events like SportAccord and Soccerex. We really value having relationships that are completely independent to our existing connections; I think it's important to not be too incestuous.”

Partnerships are also important in generating job opportunities, says Gennaro. “We're fortunate to be where we are in New York City, but we still need to foster those links so that NYU graduates are foremost in the minds of recruiters. Certainly the relationships that we have with FC Barcelona and FC Bayern Munich through their New York offices have been particularly fruitful. We have three people at the Bayern office now, one of whom is a full-time employee who started out as an intern then kept the role after he graduated.”

Educating the industry

Dino Ruta, professor of practice at the SDA Bocconi School of Management in Milan, Italy, says his institution has taken a different approach to these kinds of relationships. Its partnership with the organising body for the 2022 Fifa World Cup, Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, is a case in point. Because Bocconi is a business school rather than a traditional university, it allows much

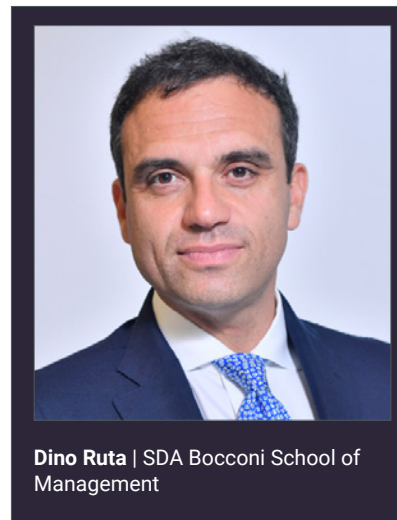
deeper integration between the two parties, he explains.

“We partner together to deliver educational projects, with courses that are co-designed between us and the Supreme Committee. We go to Doha and deliver lectures, and people there, working in the Qatar Football Association or elsewhere in their sports ecosystem, enrol on our courses. In Qatar they are doing a lot very quickly, they're working on the World Cup and delivering 60 more international sporting events, so they come to us because they feel the need to increase the quality of knowledge and talent available in the country.”

Meanwhile, a partnership with the NBA Players' Association has been developed to offer current NBA stars the chance to put the foundations in place for a future career in business, with a course called Branding in the Global Economy.

“We teach them about the relevance of international brands,” says Ruta. “How brands are created, built and developed. Since they are becoming more international brands as players, it is important that they know about how brand building in the overall international business environment works.”

Ruta says that these kinds of partnerships are “the future”, and something that only offers advantages to both sides. “From my own observations, Bocconi is the main business school that is partnering with sporting institutions on this level – the



Dino Ruta | SDA Bocconi School of
Management

universities are there, but business schools are still a little behind.”

There is, he says, “too much separation” between sports organisations and business schools. While in other sectors there tends to be closer relations, the sports industry remains “naïve” to the benefits available from working more closely with schools like Bocconi. “Business schools need sports organisations, and *vice-versa*, to maximise the benefit to everyone.”

Ruta is also working on securing partnerships with both individuals and sporting organisations to improve the level of education available for the practitioners on whose efforts the whole industry is built.

“I think that business schools should offer something more in line with athletes’ and coaches’ expectations,” he says. “The way in which they learn is different, especially managerial concepts, it is different from traditional executives and managers that attend our classes. But without athletes and coaches, we wouldn’t have an industry, so I have designed a specific learning methodology for current and former players to help them transition from sport to business

in a way that works for them.”

Ruta has begun to put together one-to-one teaching initiatives as part of his work with the NBAPA for players who are thinking of a business career after retirement, something he intends to widen and offer to athletes across different sports. “We make it so that they don’t feel like a fish out of the bowl. Often they prefer to go to their technical centres, to their associations, so I make a step forward, in line with our vision of creating partnerships, to create partnerships with individuals so that they can find at Bocconi a place where they can learn.”

“Business schools need sports organisations, and vice-versa, to maximise the benefit to everyone.”

Dino Ruta | professor of practice, SDA Bocconi School of Management

Critical balance

Using partnerships to bridge the gap between the academic world and the business world also plays an important

role in allowing universities to maintain a crucial independence from the wider industry, says Tallec Marston.

“These partnerships help us to keep that connection between the university and the quote-unquote ‘real world’, and I think it is important to maintain that balance and not go too far in either direction. As an academic institute, we cannot become so embedded in the industry that we are not working with the the critical distance, the independence, and the autonomy that the academy requires. The industry doesn’t have time to stop and think, to critically analyse what is coming and what has happened, whereas we can take a step back and provide insight, research and findings on the social, ethical, historical and legal sides that we wouldn’t be able to do if we were 100-per-cent industry-focused.

“Likewise, if we were completely in our three respective ivory towers of the universities, with no links to the industry through these myriad partnerships that we have, both formal and informal, then we wouldn’t be preparing students who would be really ready to go on to roles and applying those learnings that we create.” ○



NYU students visit the offices of the New York Jets as part of the university's partnership with the NFL side (NYU)

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How sport management courses faced the Covid-19 crisis



Columbia University campus displays a warning sign during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Alexi Rosenfeld/Getty Images)

While the Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably touched almost every aspect of modern life, the two sectors with which this publication is concerned were arguably among the hardest hit.

For sport, the implications are obvious. The industry suddenly found itself without a product for several months, and what has returned since is a shadow of its former self, largely played out in crowdless stadiums to a backdrop of silence or artificial crowd noise.

Education has been an even trickier case. While at university level it is easier to take some aspects of the teaching online – indeed, many of the schools we profile here already offer wholly-online courses, while almost all involve some form of remote learning – being faced with doing this over a prolonged period has been a daunting proposition.

“So much of what we do is enhanced

by the face-to-face aspect,” says Scott Rosner, academic director and professor of professional practice on the Sport Management programme at Columbia University. “We do almost everything in person, so for us it was really all-hands-on-deck when we got the word that we’d have to be shutting down.”

The response needed to be “swift and very hands-on,” says Rosner, as he recalls having 48 hours in which to transition from having all faculty and students on campus to arranging for them all to be teaching, or learning, from their homes.

“Especially for a lot of the students, they were like Joe Strummer: should they stay or should they go? We have a lot of international students, and they didn’t want to be stuck in New York indefinitely.” In the initial few days, the focus was on supporting students and ensuring everyone was safe, before putting plans in place for the rest of the academic year.

Brunel University London went as far as to charter a private flight for its Chinese students who did not wish to stay in the UK capital after the lockdown began. “We have a sizeable Chinese community and didn’t want them to feel vulnerable or be sitting on waiting lists at the whim of commercial airlines,” says Vassil Girginov, who leads the school’s sport management course. “We also offered students extensions regarding their assignments, of course, and because of the different time zones students were in, we allowed them to take their exams at different times that were convenient for them.”

While the timing was not the disaster it could have been – Girginov says that most students had concluded their active classes and were about to embark on dissertations and exams when the lockdown began – the implications on university life were wide-ranging.

“We had to essentially reconsider the



Brunel's campus has been "transformed" to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic, says Girginov. (Brunel)

whole *modus operandi* of the university on the level of logistics. We have had to redesign our modules, what we teach and how we teach it, because the question is not just delivery. The question is also how do you ensure meaningful engagement with students so you can keep them involved and interested. It's a massive challenge for most of us, especially those who haven't delivered online courses before."

Planning ahead

Rosner says that Columbia initially announced a two-week period of distance learning, though it quickly became clear that this situation was going to last beyond the fortnight, and the school has now outlined plans for three-quarters of all classes in the 2020-21 academic year to be taught online. Those that are taught physically will still see classrooms at only 28 per cent of their usual capacity, with students rotating days on which they

will be present or learning virtually – and then only if they feel comfortable attending. "Right now, half our students just don't want to be in the classroom, they're more comfortable being remote, and I don't want anyone to do anything they're not comfortable with," says Rosner.

The situation is similar across the academic world, at least in Europe and the US. While some European universities, particularly the Swiss-based institutions like CIES and AISTS, where the pandemic has been better controlled, are re-opening, few are rushing a return to full classrooms. Girginov notes that the Brunel campus has been "transformed" over the summer to adhere to the UK government's policies on social distancing and hygiene, while the university will take a "blended approach" to teaching this year, "whereby content will be delivered online, but there will be somewhat limited interactions on campus".

While Rosner is confident in his and his faculty's ability to deal with the situation in terms of teaching, he is concerned by the loss of the sense of community he has attempted to foster on campus – though he adds that this culture is precisely what has enabled Columbia to navigate the last six months so smoothly.

"I'm a self-professed big-culture guy," he says, "and I think that's a really important part of our offering at Columbia. Our programme takes 12-to-16 months, and it'd be very easy to have a transactional relationship with our students: they pay their money, get their education, we position them for success for their careers and then push them out the door.

"But that's not what motivates me. We have a lifelong relationship with our students, and that's more difficult to foster when our interaction with them is on the other end of a computer screen. But I should add that having that culture in place has allowed us to get through this in a pretty strong fashion, because the students know that not only have we got their backs, but they've all got each others' backs – the alumni supporting the current students, all reaching out to one another. What we've heard from the students is that their bonds are stronger than ever, they've been arranging get-togethers in Central Park and it's been great to see."

Ultimately, this is likely to be what sees institutions through the coming turbulence, he says. "If your culture was strong, and your programme or your organisation was effective and was high



Vassil Girginov | Brunel University London

quality before, you stood a very good chance of getting through this relatively unscathed. But if there was if there was a lack of leadership, if there was dysfunction, if there were inefficiencies under normal conditions, then under these conditions you are going to face a Herculean task to maintain any sort of quality. And I think, honestly, that's not just true in education."

Opportunities

At Washington DC's American University, Matt Winkler, professor and director of the school's Master of Science in Sports Analytics and Management, used the outbreak as an opportunity to launch a series of short courses over the summer. Titled the "Entrepreneurial Toolkit for the Sports Industry: The Covid-19 Playbook" – a moniker which Winkler admits "sounds gimmicky, but it also captures what it is" – the series of webinars took place over the course of the summer, between June and August, aimed largely at mid-career professionals looking to brush up their skills in the new marketplace.

"Thanks to Covid, we're all solo practitioners," he says. "Everybody is exposed by this, and some people felt they didn't have the skills to compete and stay up to date in this new world – especially a lot of 30–50-somethings who maybe weren't involved in digital strategy before but now they have to be."

The pandemic has also encouraged some soul-searching, and Winkler says people have come to the short courses to get a taste for sports management education after either deciding to pursue a new career or after being furloughed or made redundant from existing roles.

"It's giving people the tools for making that career change in a short space of delivery," he says. "It's obviously not a hugely in-depth look into the sports industry, but we're helping people get a grounding and preparing them to make that move if they choose to. It's a quick shot to give everybody not just a tune-up of existing skills but also give them an exercise in experiencing what skills will be more valuable moving forward."

Launching any kind of course at a university is always a lengthy process, says Winkler – "it has to go through the starting committee, through each

relevant school, to a final committee and then to the board of directors, so it's not easy to launch" – but adds that short courses, taking place over just a few weeks, also offer much greater flexibility. "One thing that's great with this solution is that it's easy to update them and tailor them to what's going on."

Girginov agrees, noting that while courses at Brunel will be updated to take the pandemic into account where it is relevant, "it has to be considered that a course is a logically considered set of different topics".



Matt Winkler | American University, Washington DC

"It's not that simple and straightforward to just introduce new ideas into the situation because it always has many more implications," he says. "In terms of managing risks, in terms of the impact and the need to think creatively about the situation, Covid creates many challenges and provides a number of opportunities so, yes, we will certainly reflect it in our teaching, but it's not as straightforward as saying 'Covid has happened' as part of an existing course of study."

Rosner also adds that amid the chaos, Columbia was able to take advantage of distance learning to approach a wider range of guest speakers and lecturers. "We broadened our base of industry talks. The benefit of being in New York is that, like being in London, we have a huge advantage to who we can access and bring into our classrooms and who our students can network with. But this enabled us to reach outside of New York City and bring speakers in from all over the world."

Future implications

The lockdown and subsequent use of remote teaching while campuses remained closed is likely to accelerate the widespread adoption of online learning, though Rosner doubts that it will represent a "tipping point" where the majority of academic goes virtual.

"Both sport and education are industries where relationships are vital," he says. "I don't see everything going remote or a mass move away from campus and classroom-based teaching, because the relationships you forge and the connections you are able to make in person are always going to be more valuable than those done over an internet connection. But, yes, I do think we'll see more individual online pieces to it now."

Girginov concurs, saying that while "new pedagogical approaches will emerge", it will tend to accelerate existing trends rather than cause universities to re-write their strategies to focus exclusively online. "We've had to come up with different activities to address the challenges posed by this delivery process, so that we can ensure engagement, because obviously in an online mode you can't really have one person talking for more than 10, 15 minutes. We have to think about how we bring people together and make them collaborate when they're in different rooms and even different parts of the world. But it will be an extension of existing online pedagogies, not completely new ones."

Rosner also feels that the pandemic will leave its mark on the higher education sector, in terms of causing both universities and students to address whether a sports administration course is viable. "There are, and for a long time have been, too many sports management programmes," he says. "The supply of jobs that are available in the industry is far outpaced by the demand of annual graduates. So I think that the programmes that are of lesser quality may have a hard time getting through this. I think you might see a separation between the courses that appear in the Postgraduate Rankings, some of the others that are on the edges of the top 40, and then the ones below that." ○

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Razan Baker graduated from Brunel University London with a PhD in sports sciences in 2014 and was appointed director of international communication at the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee earlier this year, after joining the organisation in 2018.

What made you decide to study a sports management postgraduate degree?

After graduating from university, I started working as a journalist covering sports and cultural events in 2005 at the *Arab News*. I found myself keen on learning more and enhancing my skills, but I felt I had reached the point where staying in place would not help me achieve that. I decided to get my MA in international journalism with a specialism in sports at City University, and that got me more interested in understanding the field of sports sciences.

At that time, Saudi Arabia didn't have undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in sport sciences for women. I was already settled in London and started contacting supervisors to discuss my PhD proposal before I ended my MA. The Olympics was also happening soon, and I was lucky to be accepted at Brunel under the supervision of Vassil Girginov in 2010. It was a wakeup call for me, it was a new journey that I was willing to take because I wanted to make a difference in my country and the only way to do it was to do something different, and I'm happy I did it.

Why did you choose the the course at Brunel?

As mentioned previously, I was already happy in London and Brunel is considered one of the top universities in the sports sector. I had contacted several supervisors but I found Dr Girginov had a great background related to my idea and area of study. This encouraged me to apply and to start a new journey with a supervisor who understood where I came from and was supportive throughout my journey.

How do you feel the course helped you prepare for a career in the sports industry?


From day one I was learning something new, as we started with the literature review to understand different ideas and studies. My knowledge before was limited to covering sports events and interviewing athletes. The PhD gave me a new direction; to be more precise, a broader perspective to why athletes would say what they say, and how they do what they do. I was able to learn not only from studying, but also from participating at conferences and sports events and meeting people in the field who shared similar interests but were from different backgrounds. It was really fascinating to just absorb the knowledge and communicate with the field in so many different ways. It was a bit difficult to adapt, I remember my supervisor telling me, 'forget your journalist hat and put it on the side for a while, you are a researcher now, think differently'. This helped me a lot in my career and in decision-making, strategy

planning and communicating in general.

How does being a Brunel graduate continue to support your career?

I think it's going to be a similar answer to the previous question, but in addition to that I'm still happy to meet my colleagues from Brunel and hear about their success. I'm always happy to stay in touch with my supervisor and learn about Brunel news. It felt like home, so it is my pleasure to cooperate through my field or career whenever needed.

What advice would you offer to someone starting on the course this year?

First, be sure of your topic of interest, then find a course that will help you understand it more and will help you offer something new and valid when you graduate. Trending topics may seem important now, but it doesn't mean it will continue to be important in four or five years. Therefore, my advice is to invest your time and choose your topic or idea to study carefully. 



Dr Razan Baker (left) and her family at her graduation from Brunel

The importance of storytelling in sports marketing – and education

Joe Favorito has over 35 years of strategic communications, marketing, business development and public relations expertise in sports, and teaches a course on these subjects and more at Columbia University. The third edition of his book, *Sports Publicity: A Practical Approach*, was published earlier this year.

I was lucky enough to spend some time with the late former NBA commissioner David Stern during the last few years, and one of the things he would always tell groups, especially groups of young people, was that there were two skills that were essential in any industry...the ability to sell and the ability to concisely tell your story. If you can do those two things well, you would be ahead of many others trying to climb the ladder. The ability to tell stories effectively is not new at all. It is a skill that has been used as long as people have walked the earth. The difference today is the space and the time that we have to effectively tell the story of who we work with, what we do, and who we are. While in times of yore that space was maybe a few blocks or a village, now the space is the world and, who knows for sure, maybe worlds beyond in the coming years. The means may have changed, but the basic skills to communicate effectively – listening, consensus building, writing, community – are pretty basic.

That was really the original impetus for my book, *Sports Publicity: A Practical Approach*, first published at the suggestion of my colleague John Gonzales in 2007. It was to build a repository of best practices, examples, and cases of storytelling in and around sport, told by those who do the work. The marketplace was not just for “PR types”. It was really to have anyone who touches the industry understand the means and the messages of communication.

Fast forward 13 years, and the third edition of the book came out this



“No matter what level of business you are at, you can take a second and think about the value of storytelling and how your story is told”


spring. While many of the basic tools, and some of the best stories, remain intact, the vastness and importance of effective storytelling has grown greatly. Chapters on corporate communications, digital and social media and crisis communications have advanced, while sections on areas that were once emerging are now mainstream and flow throughout the book. One of the best exercises we conducted was not just in looking forward, but in looking back to what the hot topics were when first printing. “New media” was a big

one. esports did not even warrant a mention, nor did audio storytelling. Today, can we go anywhere without talking about podcasting?

Even with the evolution of topics, the biggest message to convey remains with the words of commissioner Stern: you have to know how to tell your story, and having a strategic plan where a communications executive is at the table in the decision-making process is more valuable than ever before. It’s an essential point that anyone in the business needs to understand and employ. If you can’t tell your story effectively, how you can get any larger stages of business done?

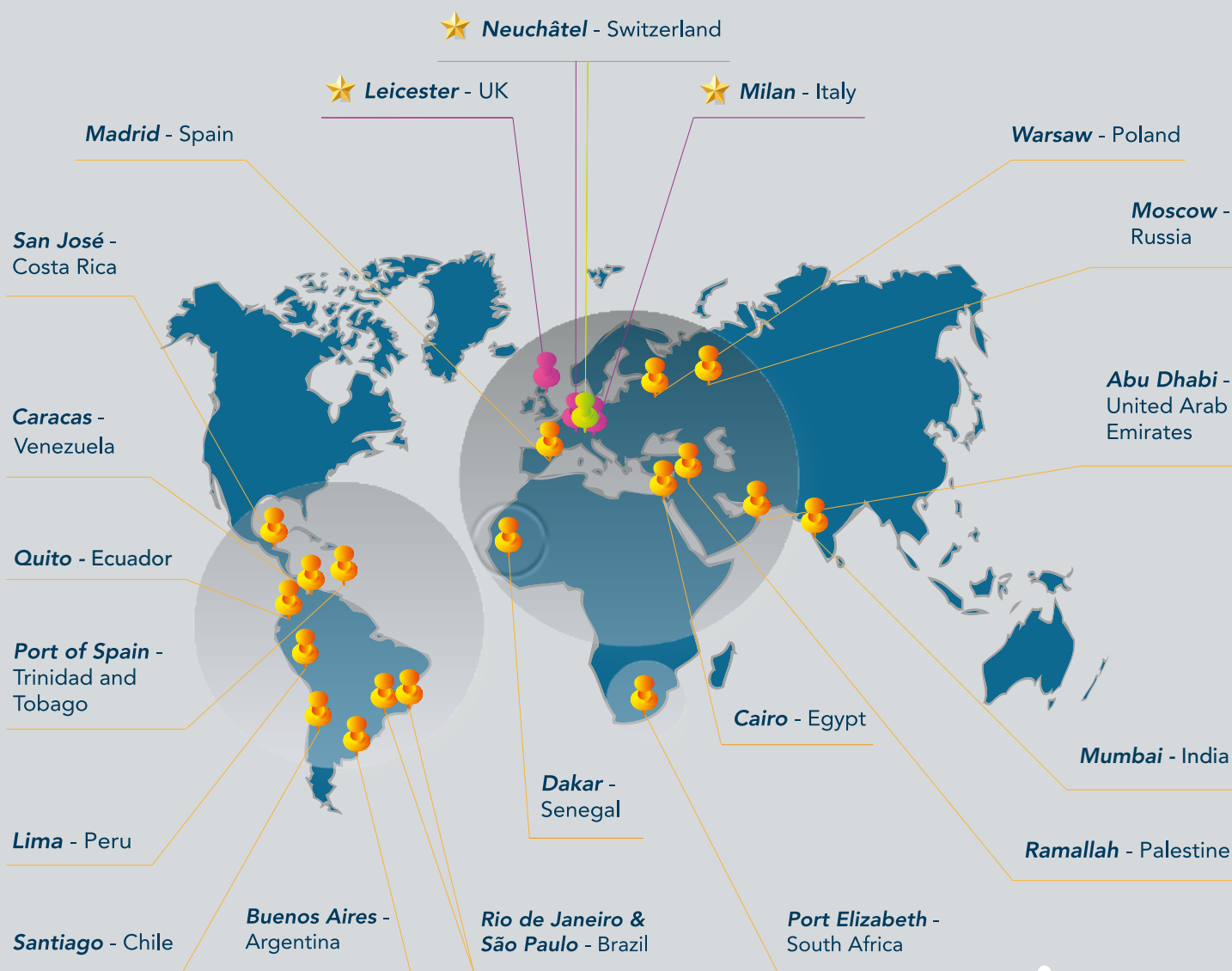
That’s the good news about updating the text and the value of storytelling in our business. The bad news is we put the book to bed in early February, and we all know the world since then has changed dramatically. While most of the content in the book still holds true, and the value of effectively communicating, especially in constant crisis, has never been more important, some of the lessons we are learning in real-time since March 12 can fill a whole new volume (and, yes, that has been discussed).

For now, however, we hope that no matter what level of business you are at, you can take a second and think about the value of storytelling, how your story is told, how you need to tell it, to who, and when.

Just ask all those who learned from commissioner Stern. You will probably hear a great story. 

For more information on Joe Favorito and his book, visit joefavorito.com.

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Shoko Tsuji, Head of Partnership Success at MyCujoo and FIFA Master Alumna

ADVERTISING FEATURE

The Japanese Shoko Tsuji is yet another talented woman who benefited from her FIFA Master experience to boost her career in sports. She had already studied Sports Sciences at Waseda University, in Japan, and then did a Masters' degree in Sports Journalism in Spain, when, in 2012, she got her first gig in sports – as an intern at the renowned Diarrio AS, for a few months. "Right after that I was lucky to land a job in Barcelona, where I was responsible for doing TV production for the rights holding broadcaster of La Liga", she recalls. "I couldn't have asked for a better introduction to the football industry and I truly enjoyed broadcasting the Clásico, interviewing La Liga players and managers, and travelling around the world to produce football documentaries".

However, during her five years in Spain, she could already see the world shifting from traditional broadcasting to online streaming, and Shoko felt that she needed to make the transition as well. "Therefore, after completing the FIFA Master, I joined MyCujoo, an innovative OTT platform, as it seemed like the perfect opportunity to move into the digital space and also explore the long-tail of football", she says. In her first role at MyCujoo, she was based in Singapore and responsible for the "AFC Live Streaming Project", where she worked alongside the Asian Football Confederation to implement live streaming within its member associations. A year later, she moved to the Amsterdam HQ, where she is currently responsible for creating and implementing a global strategy to support MyCujoo's partners and help them achieve their strategic objectives.

In addition to all that, Shoko has recently co-founded a new venture called SPORT GLOBAL (sportglobal.jp). "Having worked overseas during the last decade, I have seen how the Japanese (and Asians in general) are hugely underrepresented in international sport organisations, despite the constant discourse of 'The Future is Asia'. I have also experienced first-hand how challenging it can be to get a work permit outside my own country", she explains. "One of the key issues I identified was the lack of information and guidance for those aspiring to go abroad. That is why together with two friends, I created SPORT GLOBAL, a one-stop platform that inspires, informs and empowers Japanese students and professionals to pursue an education or career in sport overseas".

Read more of Shoko Tsuji's interview:

Why did you choose to do the FIFA Master?

I first found out about the FIFA Master during my third year at Waseda University. I was strongly drawn to the international, multidisciplinary nature of the course and from that moment onwards, it was always on my agenda. When I was in Spain, I had the opportunity to work with Tsuneyasu Miyamoto, former captain of the Japan national team, who played in 2 World Cups, and had graduated a few years before me, and he spoke very highly of the course as well.

How important was the FIFA Master for your career?

It was definitely a turning point for me. It allowed me to reset my sport career and opened my mind to new perspectives and opportunities. The experience of thinking critically, exchanging ideas and working together with colleagues from different nationalities and backgrounds prepared me for my role today, where I am working across multiple departments in a multicultural environment. The vast network of FIFA Master alumni worldwide has also been a huge asset to me both on a professional and personal level. Knowing that I can reach out to someone from the network to seek advice in any country on any topic is a true privilege.

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

Yes, every single day! I currently work with alumni on a daily basis, and when I was relocated to Malaysia, Singapore and the Netherlands, it was the alumni in these countries that helped me to settle down and with whom I developed the strongest friendships. Although it has been three years since I graduated, I feel that the FIFA Master experience is still ongoing and I always look forward to catching up with alumni at different events and locations around the globe.



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Evidence-led policy in community sport for public health and well-being

Louise Mansfield, professor of sport, health and social sciences at the Institute for Environment, Health and Societies at Brunel University in London, discusses her research, which is focused on the relationship between communities, sport, physical activity and public health. In 2020, her work was nominated for a Research Impact Award.

My work since 2013 has been underpinned by this package of research, funded by various bodies, around making a difference to people's health and well-being through community sport. In doing that, we have focused on increasing the number of people taking part who started off as inactive. But we have also changed decision-making at a policy level, particularly with Sport England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, around how they evaluate activity and how they know their initiatives are working.

We were involved in the policy and decision-making development post-London 2012, when we had the physical activity and health legacy targets from the Games, targets which it quickly became obvious were not being reached. We knew there needed to be a strategic approach to raising physical activity levels through community sport, so we have been involved in that in a sustained way and from the outset, through a number of research projects and academic publications. So the impact measurement is based on a package of published research and funding grants and then the work that we do with organisations in order to translate and disseminate that information.

We first published what we call a 'protocol paper', about how we were going to do the research, using some Sport England funding to explore the impact of community sport on health and well-being for the least active. Once we conducted the study – a large, mixed-methods project which involved quantitative survey data collection, repeated measures and also the qualitative work with the groups and with the sports coaches – we published


a paper on the role of sports coaches in this whole agenda. In this paper we argued that they were what we called a 'community asset' or resource, an alternative to the medical profession, to really support inactive people to take part in physical activity.

In the community sport project we took an intersectional approach, it was about social diversity in different and complex communities. The common feature of the population involved was that they had to be inactive, that was who we were targeting, but apart from that we were trying to look at who were the least active across a range of social diversity groups in Hounslow, London, where the studies were carried out. We worked in schools with sixth-form girls. We worked with an organisation called Urban Youth Network that delivers to Somali populations and other black and minority ethnic groups to deliver a football project. We worked with a group called Integrated Neurological Services, who work with people who have got neurological conditions, where we delivered a yoga project. So we targeted specific groups within the inactive population to get a view across issues of gender, race and ethnicity, disability and socio-economic status.

Sport England has just written for us a corroborating evidence letter for the Research Impact Award, and I think one of the standout impacts that we have been involved in is their decision to spend a quarter of their budget on delivering to those who are inactive because, through projects like ours they can see that it works, that it makes a difference and it has an impact. So they made an investment decision to spend more of that money than they had done and up to 25 per cent on delivering to



inactive people.

The second stand-out decision on their part was to develop new evaluation approaches. We were working with Sport England on how they could evaluate their work better to demonstrate the evidence of what was working and what was not. That has led to a series of outputs from Sport England, one on the design principles – how do you design a project in order for it to have best impact? We had a significant impact on the development and content of that. They have also developed an online evaluation framework, and all projects now that Sport England fund have to follow the process of that evaluation framework, and that's been implemented through the knowledge that we've produced through our work. 

Columbia University prioritises diversity and inclusion to support students through difficult year



Scott Rosner, academic director and professor of professional practice on the Sport Management programme at Columbia University, discusses how an emphasis on inclusion has helped the school guide its students through the turbulent events of 2020 so far.

Student anxiety in our Columbia Sports Management programme was understandably high throughout the spring due to Covid-19, but reached an entirely different level during the nationwide protests against racial injustice fuelled by the murder of George Floyd. Like the city in which we are based, our programme is a melting pot of different races and other intersectional identities. Black students comprise approximately 15% of our population. The tenets of over-communication, availability, transparency and empathy guided our response. I spoke with every Black student and a number of our other students (many on multiple occasions) to check in on their well-being and

to solicit their ideas on potential programmatic changes. I similarly connected with every black member of our faculty and staff. None of these conversations was easy, many were hard and all were emotional. A lengthy, heartfelt letter to our community was crafted - though I did call on my own network of Black friends and colleagues to serve as a sounding board as I wrote it. (Though their feedback as to its content and sentiment was de Minimis, all praised me for reaching out before sending it. It is a good reminder of the importance and value of having a diversity of perspectives on your internal Board of Directors - and in your organisation.)

A first step was explaining to our

stakeholders the various initiatives, programmes and activities that the Sports Management programme already had underway regarding the topics of race and racism. We purposely had not done much in the way of public relations around these activities, as I am of the mind that great deeds are done not for optics but because they are worthy investments in and of themselves. So what were we already doing?

A significant part of our efforts focused on the Columbia University School of Professional Studies HBCU Fellowship programme, a four year-old concept that provides full tuition, housing, a modest stipend and tailored programming - a total value of over \$100,000 - to two dozen recent graduates of Historically

Black Colleges and Universities every year. Our programme has had four HBCU Fellowship students thus far. We want far more, so we undertook additional recruiting efforts at the NFL Careers in Football event in Atlanta in 2019, delivering presentations to all 200+ attendees as well as the MEAC conference and approximately 50 institutional representatives. Our plan for 2020-21 is to add the SWAC conference and its institutional representatives. These efforts yielded all-time highs in both applicants and acceptances from HBCUs.

We work on projects with major properties. In conjunction with the National Football League, we have conducted substantial independent research and delivered reports on the ongoing social justice efforts of the NFL in two separate courses during the past two academic years. Both reports were delivered and discussed with the highest levels of league leadership. We are also involved in a project with the NYC Department of Education, East Harlem Schools, and New York Rangers, conducting all of the data entry and analysis of survey work around the creation and implementation of a street hockey curriculum in NYC physical education classes. Inside the classroom, we have five members of our faculty and staff who are Black, but we could be more diverse. We added a course on Athlete Activism and Social Justice in 2018. We ensure that there is a diverse set of panelists at all sessions of our annual conference and all events hosted by the Sports Management programme. Finally, we had already planned for the creation of a public service requirement (to be part of a core course) as of January 2022, pending state approval. This would require all Sports Management programme students to perform between 20-40 hours of community service with a sports-focused non-profit organization. The programme is in the process of creating relationships with a variety of these organisations across New York City. The public service requirement will be integrated with faculty-led educational sessions. So we were quietly doing a lot of different things, but it never felt like quite enough. We should have been better.



Scott Rosner | academic director and professor of professional practice on the Sport Management programme at Columbia University

“Great deeds are done not for optics but because they are worthy investments in and of themselves.”

Since the nationwide protests against systemic racial injustices that resulted from the killing of George Floyd, we have undertaken a number of different measures in an effort to make a change in our corner of the world. We began by having difficult conversations within our Columbia Sports Management community. Four-plus hours of town halls were held in which there was anger, tears, apprehension, expressions of ignorance, teaching and learning, among other things. Our international students gained an immense amount of knowledge, as most had little concept of the extent to which systematic racism exists in America. A new student club, the Black Sports Management Union, was formed with the full support of the Sports Management programme. A host of potential changes were discussed in these town halls and many ultimately will be implemented.

Our changes moving forward impact students from the very beginning of their Columbia experience and continue throughout. We are adding sessions on bias training to our own Sports Management orientation programming and creating an annual ‘book club’ with

required reading on a topic involving race and sports with a corresponding speaker event. The book for 2020 is *Sport Matters: Leadership, Power, and the Quest for Respect in Sports*, with author Kenneth Shropshire leading the conversation. An assignment based on the book will be a part of our core introductory course requirements in the Fall 2020 semester. We are introducing an annual two-day Race and Sports workshop, which also will be a part of a core course requirement. We will also infuse more conversation on the topics of diversity and inclusion throughout the curriculum. Where appropriate, these topics will be included as part of the course modules and include more speakers from underrepresented groups. We are altering our peer mentoring programme by putting each dyad into larger 6 person groups that are interracial/international and more broadly representative of the student population in general. We have also requested that our school leadership advocate for broader changes across the entirety of Columbia University.

Externally, the programme is going to increase the involvement of our students, faculty and staff in working with students at a public high school in Manhattan. Next steps are being planned. The Sports Management programme is also planning to create a series of weekend programming for New York City students from disadvantaged areas on careers in the sports industry. The goal is to promote awareness of the industry in an effort to diversify the pipeline of future entrants. We will increase our collaboration with groups focused on networking opportunities aimed at minorities in sports with various Black organisations, non-profits, and related groups. Finally, unlike our previous approach, we will provide continuous updates on matters of race during our regularly scheduled Sports Management student meetings. It’s still not about the optics but we owe it to our stakeholders to keep them informed. I welcome the opportunity to share further insights on any of these efforts with readers at other programmes or organisations that might be interested in taking them under consideration. [🔗](#)

AISTS's Master of Advanced Studies research paper

As part of the Master of Advanced Studies at the International Academy of Sport Science and Technology (AISTS), all students are required to carry out a piece of in-depth research on a relevant sports-related issue. **Magali Louis**, head of research and education, and **Claude Stricker**, executive director, discuss how the projects are developed and the real-world industry impact they have had.



ML: The research papers are the only component of the Master's programme that is free for the students to choose. We also have a team project, where external clients come in with their ideas and the students work with them, but for the projects, the students are responsible for their own research ideas. We guide them towards topics that are currently relevant, but at the end of the day, it is their choice. They need to spend nine months on something they are motivated by, or a topic that is something that they want to research in more detail.

We have external speakers come in from clients, or people from different federations, to provide guidance. We had somebody from the marketing team at Omega coming in to present what they would like to research in terms of the sponsorship deals that they have been doing around the Americas Cup in New Zealand next year. Some students might pick up that idea and make it their research paper.

The research project is like your

business card. I did the Master in 2004 and it got me my two first jobs, so I tell the students to do something that will open doors for them. It's only nine months, but that's time to get quite deep into a subject. I advise them to use their background first, and then look deeper into a field that they already know. For me it was anti-doping, and because of the connections I made in the field by interviewing people and researching it, I got jobs with two federations in their anti-doping departments after I completed the Master.

In terms of impact, last year a student wrote a paper, titled *The Reshaping of the Sports Media Content Ecosystem, Media Companies and the Increasing Role of OTT Streaming Platforms*, which was used by one of the federations and has already been picked up by other people in the industry, and published in the Swiss newspapers. The federations are especially interested in how they can use over-the-top, direct-to-consumer platforms to engage with their fans, and

we were very happy we could contribute to that.

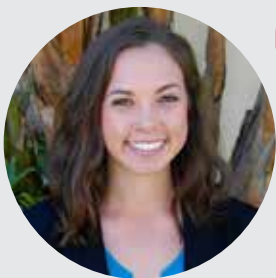
CS: Another piece of research from last year, *Major Determinants for International Federations to Adopt Esports as Part of Their Digitalisation Strategies* by our student Jidong Wang, was published by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations. Jidong had already been doing some work for ASOIF and the topic came up of how its members were approaching esports, so he looked into the factors and the development of that.

The AISTS goal is to make sure there is a good bridge between scientific expertise – not necessarily only in sport – and the wider sports industry. Jidong worked with Professor Giovanni Derchi, whose main topic of research is not sport, but he could bring his experience in other fields and make sure that the best methodology was applied. Then it was the role of the student to bring the sports-specific knowledge, and of course with Jidong's positioning with ASOIF, it was natural for him to work on this topic.

It is not the role of ASOIF to implement the research, but to support it, to distribute it among their members and let them see the conclusions Jidong had come up with. They had a working group on esports, they had also a forum where they were discussing esports and its potential growth and how traditional sports federations can integrate it. ASOIF is an organisation providing support in terms of debating, discussing and sharing knowledge within their circle, which includes members of Olympic Federations, so it definitely helps our student's work to have that impact. Now it's up to the federations to develop their own programmes with esports. ○



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SIGA University Network harnesses power of education to promote integrity within sport

This year, the Sport Integrity Global Alliance launched the SIGA University Network (SUN), an initiative that connects over 20 educational institutes from 14 different countries worldwide to help to build and promote the organisation's ideals.

Several of the institutions involved will be familiar to regular readers of these pages – the likes of NYU, De Montfort and George Washington, for example – while others, such as Qatar University, the Tswane University of Technology in South Africa and Ukraine's Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University help to provide a global outlook, as SIGA aims to seed its values in the next generation of international sports business leaders.

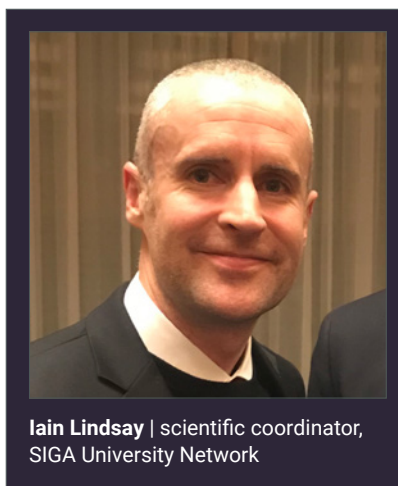
"Essentially, our mission is to have sport globally governed with the highest integrity standards," says Iain Lindsay, director of research, knowledge and innovation, and scientific coordinator of the SUN. "That's quite a broad brush, but we're working on making sport free from unethical, illicit and criminal activity. The intention of the SUN is to actively promote education and research around these matters at some of the world's leading universities."

SIGA established the network after working with "a core academic stakeholder group" on various pieces of integrity-related research over the years. Lindsay says that SIGA was receiving so many great research proposals, however, that "we became concerned we were missing opportunities", so decided to formalise those relations.

Membership is neither exclusive nor based on paying a fee to join but is instead based on "a collective commitment to contributing to our global agenda", says Lindsay. "We're not interested in expanding for the sake of expansion. It needs to have a solid reason, and everyone is expected to be productive across our three key objectives."

The first of those objectives is research

output, with SIGA hoping that it can help its member universities' academic work have a deeper impact across the industry – especially, as Lindsay notes, at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to mean reduced funding for those kinds of projects. "We're acting as a platform between academia and stakeholders to create synergies, to cultivate projects, and really to emphasise projects that have a commercial aspect as well because we know that the coming financial implications of Covid are going to make it tougher for academia and research at large.



Iain Lindsay | scientific coordinator,
SIGA University Network

"One of the key projects that we're delivering over the next 12 months is our white paper on sport integrity. We've created expert groups with top names in the world of sports – from federations, arbitration, academia – and aggregated these expectations in key areas which are: good governance and integrity, sports betting integrity, self protection and governance, safety and security and anti-doping.

"Across those groups we're going to synthesise the landscape in terms of best-practice policy, what the key issues are, and how this relates to the lived environment and how we can move forward to battle some of these issues directly. And also what we want to do

from that is to share this with the next generation."

That leads into the second objective – knowledge transfer – which is where formalising the relationships with universities into a network of partnerships is most beneficial, Lindsay says, helping new research and thinking move more freely between institutions and academics. "We want to ensure sports integrity is a key component of university curricula to try to help fill this gap between academia, and, for want of a better word, the 'real world', the lived environment."

The final objective plays into that bottom-up approach, placing the focus on the students themselves with the creation of the Future Leaders programme. The intention of that, Lindsay says, "is giving students the pathways to expand on their research through internships, through relationships, through involvement in projects where we're giving them a platform for recognition in terms of our Youth Council, in terms of our female leaders awards, our mentorship".

Ultimately, the aim is to place integrity at the top of the agenda across the sector by sending graduates into the industry prepared with the tools they need. "Integrity is a small word with a huge application," Lindsay says. "If you're interested in good governance your areas of expertise or potential career options are very broad, whereas perhaps anti-doping is a little bit more specific, but across the board integrity issues impact the range of sport from the played environment, all the way through to the board level so it's something that we see as a broad concern that impacts everything that sport stands for and sport delivers.

"So we're trying to raise awareness and make sure that everybody is cognisant of the impact of integrity and trying to forward that to the key component of sports evolution in the in the near- and medium-term future." ○

Top Of The Class

Average Salary

| Rank | Provider | Salary (\$) |
|------|--|-------------|
| 1 | San Diego State University | 92,362 |
| 2 | Columbia University | 90,474 |
| 3 | University of Liverpool Management School - Football MBA | 83,429 |
| 4 | University of Bayreuth | 82,635 |
| 5 | University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center | 82,321 |
| 6 | NYU Tisch Institute for Global Sport | 80,278 |
| 7 | University of Liverpool Management School - Thoroughbred Horseracing Industries MBA (THIMBA) | 80,000 |
| 8 | AISTS | 74,957 |
| 9 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) | 73,357 |
| 10 | George Washington University | 70,357 |

Graduates' Choice Based on Student satisfaction score*

| Rank | Provider | Score |
|------|---|-------|
| 1 | University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management | 97.64 |
| 2 | George Washington University | 97.39 |
| 3 | University of Vigo | 96.91 |
| 4 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Sport Leadership | 96.67 |
| 5 | San Diego State University | 96.38 |
| 6 | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | 95.97 |
| 7= | Ohio University | 94.86 |
| 7= | University of Windsor | 94.86 |
| 9 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) | 94.06 |
| 10 | Real Madrid Graduate School | 92.74 |

* The student satisfaction score is the aggregated total of the following six measures: Quality of teaching, support in finding a job in the industry, quality of extra-curricular support, opportunities to connect with the alumni network, ability to network with industry executives and value for money provided by the masters program.

Top Of The Class

Peer review

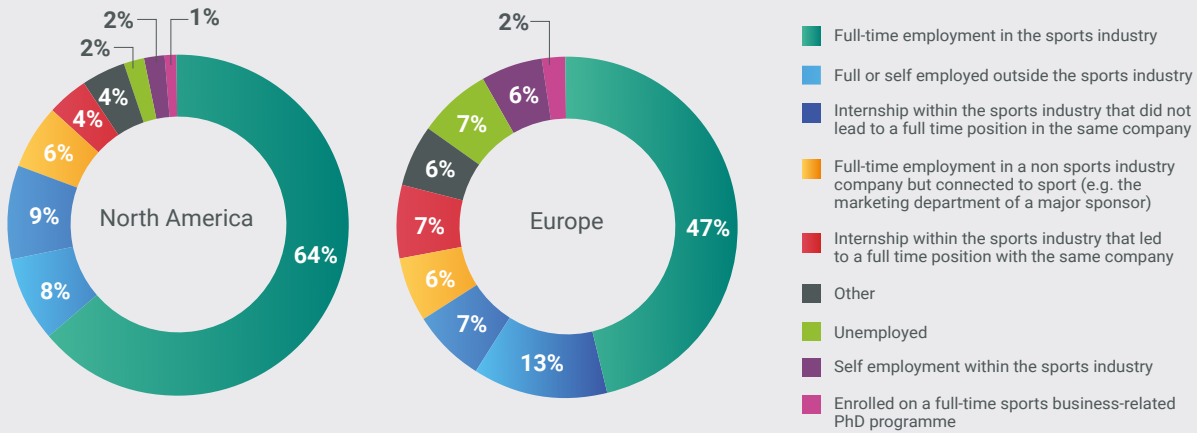
| Rank | Provider |
|------|---|
| 1 | University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management |
| 2 | Ohio University |
| 3 | University of South Florida |
| 4 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) |
| 5 | University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center |
| 6 | Deakin University |
| 7 | University of South Carolina |
| 8= | University of Liverpool Management School - Football MBA |
| 8= | University of San Francisco |
| 10= | AISTS |
| 10= | Coventry University |
| 10= | Johan Cruyff Institute |
| 10= | Temple University |

Most valuable in furthering career Based on Career value score

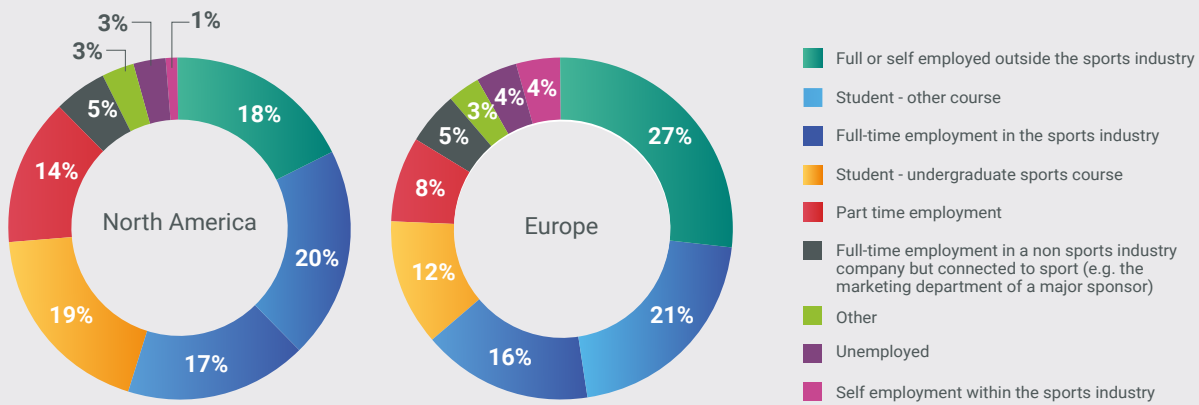
| Rank | Provider | Score |
|------|---|-------|
| 1= | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) | 95.00 |
| 1= | University of Vigo | 95.00 |
| 3 | Ohio University | 94.81 |
| 4 | San Diego State University | 93.68 |
| 5 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Sport Leadership | 93.55 |
| 6 | Russian International Olympic University | 93.33 |
| 7= | George Washington University | 91.43 |
| 7= | Real Madrid Graduate School | 91.43 |
| 9 | Sheffield Hallam University | 91.11 |
| 10= | AISTS | 89.52 |
| 10= | University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino | 89.52 |

Career Prospects | Sports Masters Graduates

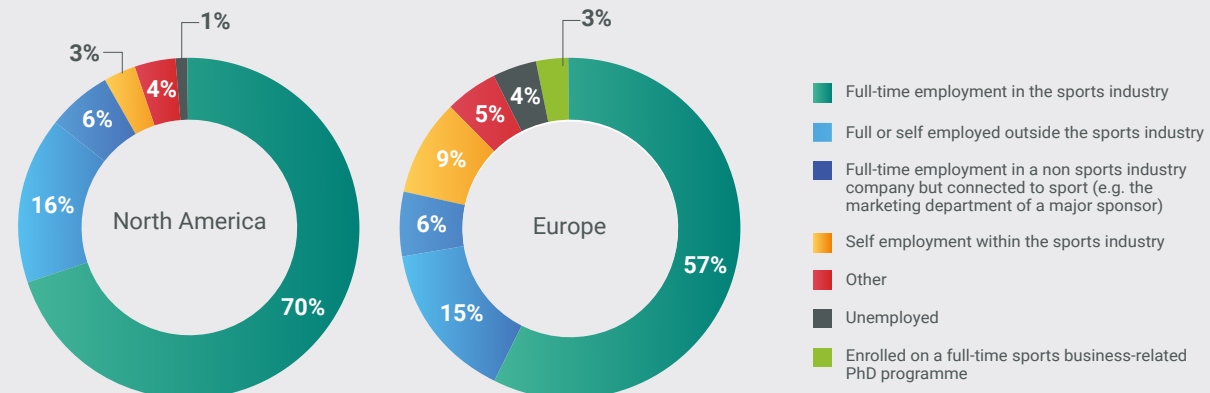
Employment status six months after graduation



Employment status before beginning course



Current employment status





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+ 44 (0) 2072 654184

Scott.Longhurst@sportbusiness.com

Americas

(305) 470-2483

Robert.Nogueras@sportbusiness.com

APAC

+44 (0) 2072 654106/+65 9336 4604

Laurence.Burton@sportbusiness.com

Postgraduate Report 2020 the complete data

| Rank | Programme provider | Programme | Class size 2016/17 | Response rate | Course duration (months) | Work place-ment | Average age | Female students | Female teaching staff | Interna-tional students | Interna-tional teaching staff | Employ-ment (at 6 months) score | Current employ-ment score | Quality of teaching score | Job support score | Extra-curricular support | Alumni network score | Industry network-ing score | Value for money score | Career value score | Useful-ness score | Peer review score | Total score |
|------|---|---|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Ohio University | MBA/MSA and Master of Sports Administration | 29 | 93% | 11-22 | Yes | 24 | 34% | 50% | 14% | 20% | 94.44 | 94.44 | 94.93 | 86.55 | 94.57 | 99.57 | 97.90 | 95.55 | 94.81 | 91.40 | 90.00 | 91.38 |
| 2 | University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management | MBA/MS Sport Management and MS Sport Management | 18 | 73% | 12-21 | Yes | 26 | 33% | 50% | 14% | 0% | 91.18 | 82.35 | 97.25 | 91.76 | 98.62 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 98.62 | 89.41 | 85.99 | 100.00 | 90.40 |
| 3 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) | The FIFA Master | 30 | 53% | 10 | Yes | 29 | 34% | 22% | 88% | 34% | 90.63 | 96.88 | 93.53 | 91.45 | 91.34 | 100.00 | 97.81 | 89.68 | 95.00 | 84.35 | 70.00 | 90.22 |
| 4 | George Washington University | Masters in Sport Management | 16 | 44% | 16-24 | Yes | 26 | 45% | 65% | 30% | 10% | 92.86 | 100.00 | 96.66 | 100.00 | 93.57 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 93.31 | 91.43 | 78.06 | 30.00 | 87.83 |
| 5 | Columbia University | MS Sports Management | 71 | 38% | 12-16 | Yes | 27 | 34% | 19% | 47% | 3% | 98.15 | 96.15 | 94.93 | 90.80 | 84.26 | 94.50 | 97.03 | 87.40 | 88.15 | 87.48 | 30.00 | 84.98 |
| 6 | University of South Florida | Vinik Sport & Entertainment Management Program | 24 | 83% | 21 | Yes | 22 | 43% | 50% | 4% | 25% | 82.50 | 92.50 | 88.15 | 86.92 | 88.75 | 92.83 | 97.66 | 86.84 | 79.00 | 74.29 | 80.00 | 84.01 |
| 7 | University of South Carolina | Masters of Sport and Entertainment Management | 31 | 48% | 15 | Yes | 25 | 36% | 25% | 14% | 8% | 83.33 | 93.33 | 97.00 | 83.88 | 88.33 | 89.89 | 92.44 | 94.00 | 89.33 | 90.87 | 50.00 | 83.14 |
| 8 | University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center | MBA in Sports Business | 23 | 57% | 21 | Yes | 28 | 20% | 36% | 12% | 16% | 92.31 | 92.31 | 86.39 | 81.02 | 79.62 | 93.45 | 87.43 | 86.27 | 86.15 | 84.16 | 60.00 | 82.92 |
| 9 | AISTS | Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology | 35 | 60% | 15 | Yes | 29 | 34% | 35% | 95% | 35% | 87.50 | 95.24 | 86.02 | 87.37 | 80.71 | 92.61 | 91.42 | 86.98 | 89.52 | 75.74 | 30.00 | 82.87 |
| 10 | Real Madrid Graduate School | MBA in Sports Management | 20 | 70% | 9 | Yes | 27 | 15% | 12% | 70% | 20% | 78.57 | 96.43 | 97.49 | 88.09 | 89.16 | 88.56 | 95.82 | 94.28 | 91.43 | 88.61 | 30.00 | 82.85 |
| 11 | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | Masters of Sport Administration | 10 | 100% | 22 | Yes | 24 | 80% | 29% | 10% | 0% | 95.00 | 90.00 | 97.66 | 88.00 | 95.00 | 98.83 | 97.66 | 97.66 | 88.00 | 83.81 | 30.00 | 82.62 |
| 12 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Sport Leadership | Master of Sport Leadership | 41 | 76% | 12-18 | Yes | 23 | 50% | 25% | 6% | 25% | 88.33 | 95.16 | 98.55 | 94.94 | 93.92 | 98.87 | 97.33 | 94.83 | 93.55 | 92.90 | 20.00 | 82.20 |
| 13 | Russian International Olympic University | Master of Sport Administration | 61 | 15% | 10 | Yes | 30 | 45% | 40% | 33% | 43% | 94.44 | 100.00 | 96.10 | 72.96 | 100.00 | 93.70 | 78.71 | 94.80 | 93.33 | 82.80 | 20.00 | 81.56 |
| 14 | San Diego State University | Sports MBA | 28 | 68% | 18 | Yes | 26 | 35% | 25% | 22% | 33% | 84.21 | 84.21 | 98.15 | 91.66 | 95.17 | 97.02 | 97.02 | 98.15 | 93.68 | 88.47 | 0.00 | 80.94 |
| 15 | Coventry University | MSc Sport Management | 37 | 49% | 12 | Yes | 25 | 10% | 30% | 90% | 50% | 83.33 | 94.44 | 94.90 | 82.06 | 90.65 | 82.49 | 88.79 | 88.33 | 88.89 | 84.66 | 30.00 | 80.56 |
| 16 | NYU Tisch Institute for Global Sport | MS in Sports Business | 54 | 31% | 16 | Yes | 26 | 33% | 22% | 54% | 11% | 91.67 | 95.83 | 90.55 | 76.94 | 80.83 | 93.18 | 95.75 | 80.42 | 81.67 | 79.46 | 10.00 | 79.85 |
| 17 | Sheffield Hallam University | MSc Sport Business Management | 29 | 62% | 12 | Yes | 26 | 15% | 50% | 65% | 30% | 94.44 | 91.67 | 95.55 | 78.43 | 95.00 | 89.53 | 86.20 | 96.75 | 91.11 | 87.17 | 0.00 | 78.70 |
| 18 | University of Liverpool Management School | Football Industries MBA | 25 | 60% | 12 | No | 28 | 8% | 44% | 14% | 13% | 90.00 | 93.33 | 91.00 | 72.34 | 81.67 | 94.78 | 91.88 | 89.77 | 86.67 | 75.24 | 40.00 | 77.96 |
| 19 | University of Vigo | Master in Business Administration of Sport | 20 | 40% | 9 | Yes | 25 | 25% | 35% | 15% | 5% | 81.25 | 93.75 | 100 | 89.36 | 94.38 | 98.54 | 98.54 | 98.54 | 95.00 | 86.46 | 0.00 | 77.68 |
| 20 | Washington State University | M.A. in Sport Management | 13 | 62% | 21 | No | n/a | 33% | 25% | 27% | 37% | 87.50 | 93.75 | 94.38 | 75.83 | 89.36 | 84.78 | 77.29 | 88.13 | 85.00 | 87.35 | 0.00 | 76.70 |
| 21 | University of Stirling | MSc in Sport Management | 33 | 33% | 12 | Yes | 25 | 34% | 43% | 73% | 57% | 86.36 | 86.36 | 94.68 | 69.40 | 86.21 | 81.05 | 74.85 | 90.75 | 83.64 | 79.00 | 20.00 | 76.63 |
| 22 | Ohio State University | Master of Science in Sport Management | 26 | 58% | 12-21 | Yes | 22 | 56% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 90.00 | 93.33 | 93.10 | 76.66 | 87.44 | 88.78 | 95.44 | 89.11 | 77.33 | 81.51 | 10.00 | 76.06 |
| 23 | University of Central Florida | DeVos Sport Business Management Program | 35 | 69% | 17 | Yes | 25 | 40% | 20% | 20% | 0% | 73.91 | 80.43 | 87.29 | 80.62 | 89.44 | 86.05 | 92.43 | 89.50 | 71.67 | 72.92 | 30.00 | 75.82 |
| 24 | University of Windsor | Master of Human Kinetics in Sport Management | 10 | 79% | 16-24 | Yes | 24 | 60% | 43% | 10% | 0% | 86.36 | 68.18 | 98.94 | 91.20 | 92.26 | 92.43 | 95.91 | 95.91 | 70.91 | 77.38 | 0.00 | 75.43 |
| 25 | Georgia State University | Masters of Science in Sport Administration | 40 | 65% | 24 | Yes | 24 | 50% | 66% | 11% | 33% | 88.46 | 88.46 | 89.35 | 80.13 | 85.38 | 88.78 | 84.37 | 87.95 | 74.62 | 76.33 | 0.00 | 75.09 |
| 26 | Centro Formación Fundación Valencia CF ESBS | Master in International Sports Management | 17 | 65% | 9 | Yes | 27 | 20% | 30% | 77% | 25% | 77.27 | 100.00 | 91.20 | 82.87 | 79.65 | 80.91 | 91.05 | 88.17 | 89.09 | 76.62 | 0.00 | 75.01 |
| 27 | University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino | International Master in Strategic Management of Sports Organisations, Events and Facilities | 25 | 84% | 12 | Yes | 26 | 20% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 80.95 | 90.48 | 91.90 | 91.35 | 82.06 | 91.59 | 91.19 | 91.82 | 89.52 | 86.96 | 20.00 | 74.21 |
| 28 | Temple University | MS in Sport Business | 48 | 35% | 24 | Yes | 23 | 48% | 41% | 30% | 12% | 88.24 | 73.53 | 84.41 | 76.96 | 71.27 | 85.09 | 85.29 | 72.45 | 65.88 | 72.83 | 30.00 | 73.81 |
| 29 | University of New Haven | MS Sport Management | 23 | 48% | 12 | Yes | 24 | 45% | 50% | 15% | 75% | 77.27 | 85.00 | 96.81 | 82.42 | 76.21 | 85.00 | 89.09 | 80.45 | 74.55 | 72.73 | 0.00 | 73.77 |
| 30 | Florida Atlantic University | MBA Sport Management | 41 | 32% | 23 | Yes | 24 | 31% | 35% | 13% | 24% | 84.62 | 79.17 | 94.74 | 80.25 | 88.71 | 83.08 | 85.90 | 81.28 | 78.46 | 78.94 | 0.00 | 73.03 |
| 31 | University of Liverpool Management School | Thoroughbred Horseracing Industries MBA (THIMBA) | 12 | 50% | 24 | No | 38 | 73% | 36% | 20% | 18% | 91.67 | 83.33 | 80.57 | 76.40 | 81.40 | 85.00 | 86.95 | 82.22 | 66.67 | 82.54 | 0.00 | 72.89 |
| 32 | University of Ottawa | Master of Human Kinetics Concentration in Sport Management | 18 | 61% | 12 | Yes | 23 | 45% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 77.27 | 95.45 | 89.69 | 65.61 | 75.30 | 77.57 | 80.15 | 86.05 | 83.64 | 75.22 | 20.00 | 72.02 |
| 33 | Ball State University | Master of Sport Administration | 17 | 47% | 12-24 | Yes | 25 | 43% | 17% | 23% | 14% | 81.25 | 93.75 | 88.13 | 68.34 | 78.34 | 76.68 | 73.54 | 81.88 | 72.50 | 70.09 | 0.00 | 70.49 |
| 34 | University of Tennessee | Master in Sport Management | 29 | 72% | 20 | Yes | 23 | 40% | 22% | 7% | 22% | 85.71 | 92.86 | 87.93 | 60.16 | 74.91 | 76.03 | 76.27 | 77.37 | 71.43 | 67.80 | 10.00 | 69.48 |
| 35 | Ca' Foscari University of Venice | Master in Sport Business Strategies | 36 | 22% | 12 | Yes | 23 | 25% | 35% | 35% | 0% | 81.25 | 87.50 | 80.20 | 83.74 | 73.75 | 83.13 | 82.28 | 72.71 | 72.50 | 60.42 | 0.00 | 69.01 |
| 36 | Seattle University | Masters in Sport Business Leadership | 22 | 64% | 22 | Yes | 24 | 46% | 50% | 5% | 0% | 76.92 | 83.33 | 91.06 | 73.69 | 75.94 | 82.26 | 79.76 | 77.02 | 68.57 | 68.54 | 0.00 | 68.71 |
| 37 | University of Bayreuth | MBA Sport Management | 42 | 21% | 24 | No | 29 | 40% | 25% | 10% | 25% | 77.78 | 77.78 | 87.40 | 65.18 | 73.89 | 86.30 | 74.81 | 77.04 | 75.56 | 66.53 | 0.00 | 68.55 |
| 38 | Johan Cruyff Institute | Master in Sport Management | 152 | 21% | 10-13 | No | 30 | 19% | 25% | 50% | 12% | 70.00 | 71.88 | 88.17 | 58.75 | 70.44 | 79.94 | 73.12 | 76.56 | 70.63 | 69.87 | 30.00 | 68.29 |
| 39 | University College Dublin | MSc in Sport Management | 20 | 45% | 12 | No | 30 | 24% | 50% | 13% | 10% | 62.50 | 62.50 | 96.10 | 70.61 | 82.08 | 88.75 | 94.15 | 90.00 | 80.00 | 67.59 | 0.00 | 66.10 |
| 40 | Deakin University | Master of Business (Sport Management) | 102 | 10% | 20 | Yes | 26 | 30% | 30% | 69% | 30% | 75.00 | 90.00 | 64.00 | 47.17 | 67.00 | 76.50 | 62.33 | 59.83 | 50.00 | 37.98 | 50.00 | 65.39 |

Top 15 North American Courses

| Rank | Programme provider | Programme | Class size 2016/17 | Response rate | Course duration (months) | Work place-ment | Average age | Female students | Female teaching staff | Interna-tional students | Interna-tional teaching staff | Employ-ment (at 6 months) score | Current employ-ment score | Quality of teaching score | Job support score | Extra-curricular support | Alumni network score | Industry network-ing score | Value for money score | Career value score | Useful-ness score | Peer review score | Total score |
|------|---|---|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Ohio University | MBA/MSA and Master of Sports Administration | 29 | 93% | 11-22 | Yes | 24 | 34% | 50% | 14% | 20% | 94.44 | 94.44 | 94.93 | 86.55 | 94.57 | 99.57 | 97.90 | 95.55 | 94.81 | 91.40 | 90.00 | 91.38 |
| 2 | University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management | MBA/MS Sport Management and MS Sport Management | 18 | 73% | 12-21 | Yes | 26 | 33% | 50% | 14% | 0% | 91.18 | 82.35 | 97.25 | 91.76 | 98.62 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 98.62 | 89.41 | 85.99 | 100.00 | 90.40 |
| 3 | George Washington University | Masters in Sport Management | 16 | 44% | 16-24 | Yes | 26 | 45% | 65% | 30% | 10% | 92.86 | 100.00 | 96.66 | 100.00 | 93.57 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 93.31 | 91.43 | 78.06 | 30.00 | 87.83 |
| 4 | Columbia University | MS Sports Management | 71 | 38% | 12-16 | Yes | 27 | 34% | 19% | 47% | 3% | 98.15 | 96.15 | 94.93 | 90.80 | 84.26 | 94.50 | 97.03 | 87.40 | 88.15 | 87.48 | 30.00 | 84.98 |
| 5 | University of South Florida | Vinik Sport & Entertainment Management Program | 24 | 83% | 21 | Yes | 22 | 43% | 50% | 4% | 25% | 82.50 | 92.50 | 88.15 | 86.92 | 88.75 | 92.83 | 97.66 | 86.84 | 79.00 | 74.29 | 80.00 | 84.01 |
| 6 | University of South Carolina | Masters of Sport and Entertainment Management | 31 | 48% | 15 | Yes | 25 | 36% | 25% | 14% | 8% | 83.33 | 93.33 | 97.00 | 83.88 | 88.33 | 89.89 | 92.44 | 94.00 | 89.33 | 90.87 | 50.00 | 83.14 |
| 7 | University of Oregon, Lundquist College of Business, Warsaw Sports Marketing Center | MBA in Sports Business | 23 | 57% | 21 | Yes | 28 | 20% | 36% | 12% | 16% | 92.31 | 92.31 | 86.39 | 81.02 | 79.62 | 93.45 | 87.43 | 86.27 | 86.15 | 84.16 | 60.00 | 82.92 |
| 8 | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | Masters of Sport Administration | 10 | 100% | 22 | Yes | 24 | 80% | 29% | 10% | 0% | 95.00 | 90.00 | 97.66 | 88.00 | 95.00 | 98.83 | 97.66 | 97.66 | 88.00 | 83.81 | 30.00 | 82.62 |
| 9 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Sport Leadership | Master of Sport Leadership | 41 | 76% | 12-18 | Yes | 23 | 50% | 25% | 6% | 25% | 88.33 | 95.16 | 98.55 | 94.94 | 93.92 | 98.87 | 97.33 | 94.83 | 93.55 | 92.90 | 20.00 | 82.20 |
| 10 | San Diego State University | Sports MBA | 28 | 68% | 18 | Yes | 26 | 35% | 25% | 22% | 33% | 84.21 | 84.21 | 98.15 | 91.66 | 95.17 | 97.02 | 97.02 | 98.15 | 93.68 | 88.47 | 0.00 | 80.94 |
| 11 | NYU Tisch Institute for Global Sport | MS in Sports Business | 54 | 31% | 16 | Yes | 26 | 33% | 22% | 54% | 11% | 91.67 | 95.83 | 90.55 | 76.94 | 80.83 | 93.18 | 95.75 | 80.42 | 81.67 | 79.46 | 10.00 | 79.85 |
| 12 | Washington State University | M.A. in Sport Management | 13 | 62% | 21 | No | n/a | 33% | 25% | 27% | 37% | 87.50 | 93.75 | 94.38 | 75.83 | 89.36 | 84.78 | 77.29 | 88.13 | 85.00 | 87.35 | 0.00 | 76.70 |
| 13 | Ohio State University | Master of Science in Sport Management | 26 | 58% | 12-21 | Yes | 22 | 56% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 90.00 | 93.33 | 93.10 | 76.66 | 87.44 | 88.78 | 95.44 | 89.11 | 77.33 | 81.51 | 10.00 | 76.06 |
| 14 | University of Central Florida | DeVos Sport Business Management Program | 35 | 69% | 17 | Yes | 25 | 40% | 20% | 20% | 0% | 73.91 | 80.43 | 87.29 | 80.62 | 89.44 | 86.05 | 92.43 | 89.50 | 71.67 | 72.92 | 30.00 | 75.82 |
| 15 | University of Windsor | Master of Human Kinetics in Sport Management | 10 | 79% | 16-24 | Yes | 24 | 60% | 43% | 10% | 0% | 86.36 | 68.18 | 98.94 | 91.20 | 92.26 | 92.43 | 95.91 | 95.91 | 70.91 | 77.38 | 0.00 | 75.43 |

Top 15 European Courses

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|-----|-----|-------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) | The FIFA Master | 30 | 53% | 10 | Yes | 29 | 34% | 22% | 88% | 34% | 90.63 | 96.88 | 93.53 | 91.45 | 91.34 | 100.00 | 97.81 | 89.68 | 95.00 | 84.35 | 70.00 | 90.22 |
| 2 | AISTS | Master of Advanced Studies in Sport Administration and Technology | 35 | 60% | 15 | Yes | 29 | 34% | 35% | 95% | 35% | 87.50 | 95.24 | 86.02 | 87.37 | 80.71 | 92.61 | 91.42 | 86.98 | 89.52 | 75.74 | 30.00 | 82.87 |
| 3 | Real Madrid Graduate School | MBA in Sports Management | 20 | 70% | 9 | Yes | 27 | 15% | 12% | 70% | 20% | 78.57 | 96.43 | 97.49 | 88.09 | 89.16 | 88.56 | 95.82 | 94.28 | 91.43 | 88.61 | 30.00 | 82.85 |
| 4 | Russian International Olympic University | Master of Sport Administration | 61 | 15% | 10 | Yes | 30 | 45% | 40% | 33% | 43% | 94.44 | 100.00 | 96.10 | 72.96 | 100.00 | 93.70 | 78.71 | 94.80 | 93.33 | 82.80 | 20.00 | 81.56 |
| 5 | Coventry University | MSc Sport Management | 37 | 49% | 12 | Yes | 25 | 10% | 30% | 90% | 50% | 83.33 | 94.44 | 94.90 | 82.06 | 90.65 | 82.49 | 88.79 | 88.33 | 88.89 | 84.66 | 30.00 | 80.56 |
| 6 | Sheffield Hallam University | MSc Sport Business Management | 29 | 62% | 12 | Yes | 26 | 15% | 50% | 65% | 30% | 94.44 | 91.67 | 95.55 | 78.43 | 95.00 | 89.53 | 86.20 | 96.75 | 91.11 | 87.17 | 0.00 | 78.70 |
| 7 | University of Liverpool Management School | Football Industries MBA | 25 | 60% | 12 | No | 28 | 8% | 44% | 14% | 13% | 90.00 | 93.33 | 91.00 | 72.34 | 81.67 | 94.78 | 91.88 | 89.77 | 86.67 | 75.24 | 40.00 | 77.96 |
| 8 | University of Vigo | Master in Business Administration of Sport | 20 | 40% | 9 | Yes | 25 | 25% | 35% | 15% | 5% | 81.25 | 93.75 | 100 | 89.36 | 94.38 | 98.54 | 98.54 | 98.54 | 95.00 | 86.46 | 0.00 | 77.68 |
| 9 | University of Stirling | MSc in Sport Management | 33 | 33% | 12 | Yes | 25 | 34% | 43% | 73% | 57% | 86.36 | 86.36 | 94.68 | 69.40 | 86.21 | 81.05 | 74.85 | 90.75 | 83.64 | 79.00 | 20.00 | 76.63 |
| 10 | Centro Formación Fundación Valencia CF ESBS | Master in International Sports Management | 17 | 65% | 9 | Yes | 27 | 20% | 30% | 77% | 25% | 77.27 | 100.00 | 91.20 | 82.87 | 79.65 | 80.91 | 91.05 | 88.17 | 89.09 | 76.62 | 0.00 | 75.01 |
| 11 | University of Parma - University of Republic of San Marino | International Master in Strategic Management of Sports Organisations, Events and Facilities | 25 | 84% | 12 | Yes | 26 | 20% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 80.95 | 90.48 | 91.90 | 91.35 | 82.06 | 91.59 | 91.19 | 91.82 | 89.52 | 86.96 | 20.00 | 74.21 |
| 12 | University of Liverpool Management School | Thoroughbred Horseracing Industries MBA (THIMBA) | 12 | 50% | 24 | No | 38 | 73% | 36% | 20% | 18% | 91.67 | 83.33 | 80.57 | 76.40 | 81.40 | 85.00 | 86.95 | 82.22 | 66.67 | 82.54 | 0.00 | 72.89 |
| 13 | Ca' Foscari University of Venice | Master in Sport Business Strategies | 36 | 22% | 12 | Yes | 23 | 25% | 35% | 35% | 0% | 81.25 | 87.50 | 80.20 | 83.74 | 73.75 | 83.13 | 82.28 | 72.71 | 72.50 | 60.42 | 0.00 | 69.01 |
| 14 | University of Bayreuth | MBA Sport Management | 42 | 21% | 24 | No | 29 | 40% | 25% | 10% | 25% | 77.78 | 77.78 | 87.40 | 65.18 | 73.89 | 86.30 | 74.81 | 77.04 | 75.56 | 66.53 | 0.00 | 68.55 |
| 15 | Johan Cruyff Institute | Master in Sport Management | 152 | 21% | 10-13 | No | 30 | 19% | 25% | 50% | 12% | 70.00 | 71.88 | 88.17 | 58.75 | 70.44 | 79.94 | 73.12 | 76.56 | 70.63 | 69.87 | 30.00 | 68.29 |

Online programmes

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|----|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Ohio University | Professional Master of Sports Administration | 26 | 38% | 21 | No | 30 | 32% | 55% | 0% | 9% | 95.00 | 90.00 | 98.83 | 93.16 | 92.17 | 94.33 | 94.33 | 95.50 | 84.00 | 82.98 | 90.00 | 87.35 |
| 2 | Unisport Management School | MBA Sports Management | 40 | 20% | 13 | No | 28 | 27% | 20% | 32% | 5% | 62.50 | 64.29 | 76.25 | 51.25 | 64.56 | 71.04 | 63.75 | 62.09 | 50.00 | 51.93 | 0.00 | 53.84 |

Department of
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Susan O'Malley | *first female president of a professional sport franchise*

Stephen Shapiro | *editor of Sport Marketing Quarterly*

Sporty Jeralds | *consultant and former manager of the Charlotte Coliseum*

Todd Koesters | *past VP of marketing and sales for Churchill Downs Entertainment Group*

Khalid Ballouli | *president-elect of the Sport Marketing Association*

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Danny Morrison



Susan O'Malley



Stephen Shapiro



Sporty Jeralds



Todd Koesters



Khalid Ballouli



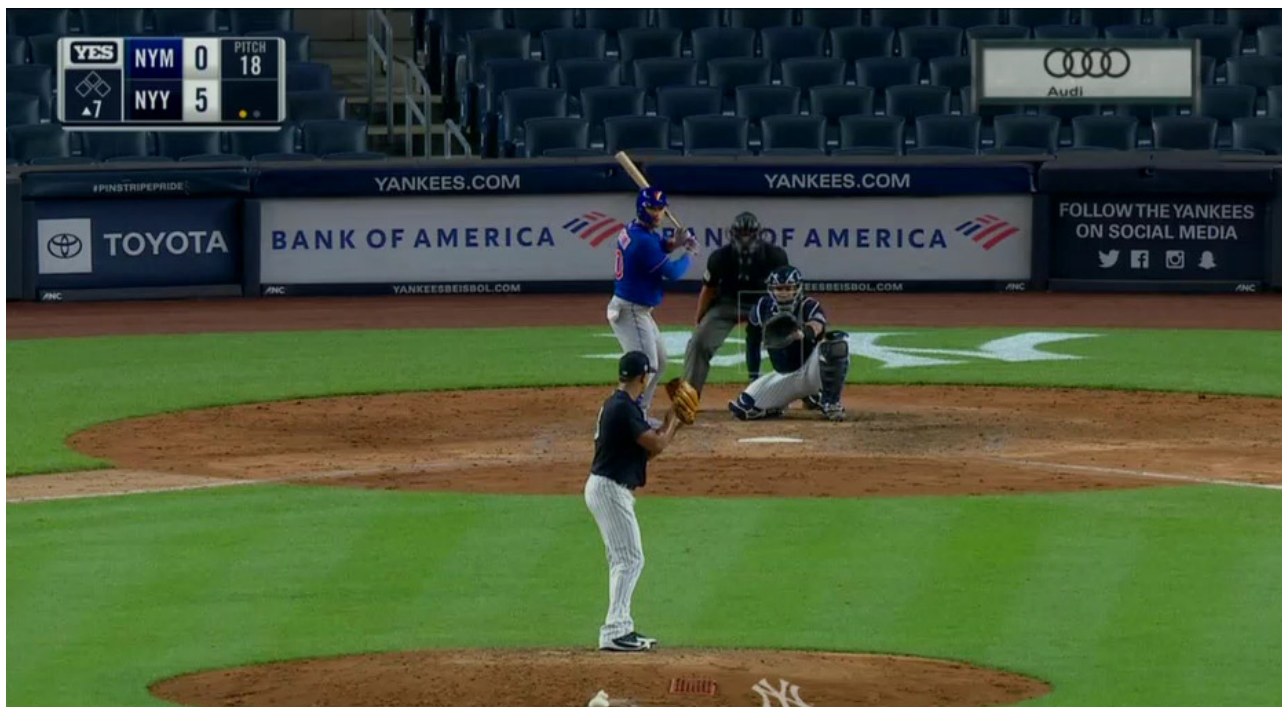
South Carolina

MLB looks to get aggressive with virtual advertising

Prior experiments to be greatly expanded with large set of new ad positions

Individual teams and regional sports networks have much more access to virtual inventory this season

Many virtual ad deployments will be used to help fulfill sponsor contracts from prior to the pandemic



Virtual signage appearing behind home plate at Yankee Stadium during a recent exhibition game. (YES Network)

Eric Fisher

On a literal level, the stands at Major League Baseball parks stood empty for the start of the amended 2020 season. But in virtual sense, they could have been as full as ever, and perhaps even more so.

The league, the 30 clubs, and their set of national and regional media partners in this unprecedented and abbreviated, 60-game season have initiated a program in which they are using the heavy revenue loss from losing nearly two-thirds of a normal season and the empty ballparks to insert a wide array of virtual advertising into game broadcasts.

Technologically and conceptually, virtual advertising is hardly new. MLB, the teams, and their TV network partners for years had already used a green screen in the prime space behind home plate,

particularly for games where there were shared broadcast rights and normal rotational signage wasn't feasible. Other prime spots such as the center field batter's eye have been mined in recent years in national broadcasts during marquee events such as the World Series.

And numerous other sports entities including Italy's Serie A and Major League Soccer back in the United States have also pursued various forms of virtual advertising.

But not only does MLB, even amid their shortened 2020 campaign, have more games than any other major sports property, but they will be particularly aggressive in finding non-traditional locations for the new advertising. As this season unfolds, ads will be found in stands directly behind home plate, on and behind the pitcher's mound, along both the first and third base lines in foul

territory on the field as well as in the stands, and in the center field batter's eye area.

The new virtual ads, being developed with the aid of various firms including New York-based virtual advertising and product placement firm Brand Brigade, also will not require a green screen to deploy in the various sections of the ballparks. They also add to the team-based efforts to fill out empty ballparks with cardboard cutouts bearing the pictures of individual fans and physical tarps with sponsor logos installed in many stadiums.

"The idea is that we had open space otherwise sitting empty [during games] and that filling it...would be helpful to our broadcast partners," says Chris Marinak, MLB executive vice-president of strategy, technology, and innovation. "This is really about helping out our

partners and their sponsors in what is a very strange year.”

MLB and individual TV networks have not disclosed the aggregate revenue potential from baseball’s new virtual advertising, and that number will depend significantly on how aggressive teams ultimately are selling the new inventory over the next two months.

But the technology in particular will be a key tool toward satisfying prior sponsor and advertiser commitments for the 2020 season that otherwise couldn’t be fulfilled due to the season delay and reduced number of games created by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

“We’re collectively trying to make up for the lost brand exposure because of the shortened season,” says Ryan Zander, MLB vice-president of broadcast products and services. “The empty space [in seating sections], a lot of empty real estate normally occupied by fans, gives us the opportunity to create some new inventory for our partners. The goal is to make this signage look as authentic as possible and not be disruptive to the viewer.”

Regionals heavily in the mix

In a normal year, technology such as virtual advertising would heavily or entirely be the domain of national broadcasters and the larger resources and wider distribution they have. Because of the pandemic, individual clubs and regional sports networks will have the same level of access to these assets as the league itself and national media partners ESPN, Turner Sports, and Fox Sports,

with wide latitude to sell inventory on many different levels of frequency such as full games, full innings, half innings, or more specifically, discrete moments.

The YES Network in the New York area, for example, has already begun experimenting with virtual advertising, and plans to actively deploy more executions in collaboration with the RSN’s majority owner, the New York Yankees. YES Network’s broadcasts with virtual signs behind home plate have also included a virtual frame in order to have that signage not appear as if it is floating in space.

“This is an experiment, so we don’t know exactly where it will go. But certainly if it’s allowed to continue [beyond 2020], the economy gets better, and people get used to seeing it, I think there’s a lot of potential there,” says Howard Levinson, YES Network senior vice-president of ad sales. “Right now, we’re putting it in as part of our [larger sales] packages. But I could definitely see this being sold on its own.”

To that end, MLB is working with New York-based agency Scout Sports and Entertainment to help value the assets and build out a rate card.

“It’s going to run the gamut [in terms of deployment]. No two of the 30 MLB teams are doing exactly the same thing,” says Scott Savran, senior manager of property strategy and analytics for Scout 360, the agency’s sponsorship unit. “And all ballparks themselves are different, which is different than a [National Basketball Association] or [National Hockey League] setup, where you’re

seeing a lot of consistent signage.

“But some MLB teams will have what I would call ‘logo soup’, while others will be very strategic and very conservative in the branding that they’re adding,” Savran says.

Despite the enlarged approach to deploying virtual advertising, the MLB situation remains anything but a free-for-all. Much like established analog and digital forms of sponsorship, specific rules governing the use of the new virtual spots include protecting category exclusivity for existing sponsors and not accepting any political messaging for that inventory.

And while on a broad level the gaming category has become a wider sales opportunity for RSNs such as YES, there also will not be virtual ads for sportsbooks within ballparks this year.

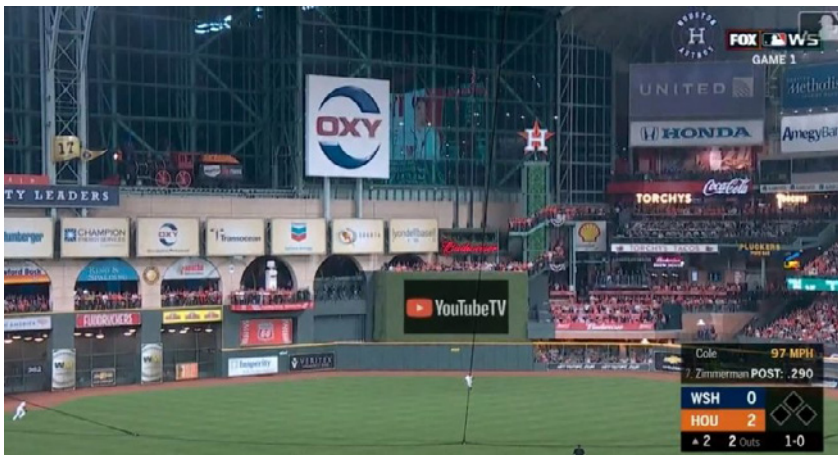
“This can’t be a guerrilla marketing thing,” Levinson says. “We have to honor all the existing deals.”

Virtual ads during regional broadcasts, meanwhile, will also be driven heavily by home teams, and that inventory will be subordinate to physical tarps that clubs may opt to install.

“What we’ve done this season is qualified a bunch of technologies and devised a plan and framework to make this technology available for all clubs who want to take advantage of the program,” Zander says.

The new virtual ad inventory will also co-exist with similar efforts by Fox Sports, and over time likely some RSNs, to also have virtual fans in ballparks. And because of the more unusual planned locations of some of the virtual ads, such as near outfield corners in ballparks, the inventory will require regional and national broadcasters to expand beyond their normal directorial workflow and have some less traditional camera shots during games, such as following the arc of a foul ball entirely into the stands.

“A lot of these new assets are going to be in locations that typically are not captured in historical broadcast production,” Savran says. “A lot of the teams will need to communicate with the RSNs how to capture that and drive value from those various locations. And that value itself will be determined in part by how they adjust production from years past.”



An example of virtual batter’s eye advertising at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas, during last year’s World Series. Such deployments will be much more common in baseball, on both a national and regional level, during the 2020 season. (Fox Sports)

Blast follows Riot Games in cancelling NEOM partnership

Blast esports consultancy deal with NEOM cancelled after weeks of backlash

Blast staff and fans angry at partnership with Saudi government-owned entity

Cancellation comes after Riot terminated deal with NEOM on July 30



(Lars Ronbog / FrontZoneSport via Getty Images)

Callum McCarthy

Esports tournament organiser Blast and Saudi future city project NEOM have agreed to terminate their partnership after more than two weeks of backlash and controversy surrounding the deal.

The deal was cancelled on August 13 after days of private talks between Blast and *Counter Strike: Global Offensive* teams contracted to participate in its events. The teams requested that Blast end the partnership, which has been roundly criticised by esports media and several key members of the CS:GO community, some of whom work for Blast as on-air talent.

“We can confirm we have reached a mutual, professional, and respectful agreement with NEOM to terminate our contract,” a Blast spokesperson told *SportBusiness*. “Blast remains focused on increasing access and involvement to esports, and we will continue to seek to expand our global footprint including in the Middle East.”

The deal would have seen Blast act as an esports consultant to NEOM, a \$500bn (€422bn) Saudi government project which aims to build a tech-focused mega city in the north west of the kingdom. NEOM is wholly-owned by Saudi Arabia’s sovereign Public Investment Fund.

By agreeing to terminate the deal, Blast

has become the second esports rights-holder to prematurely end a partnership with NEOM in recent months.

League of Legends publisher Riot Games cancelled a sponsorship deal between its League of Legends European Championship (LEC) and NEOM within 24 hours of its announcement on July 30, after large numbers of Riot Games staff threatened to go on strike should the agreement have remained in place.

Criticism of Blast and Riot’s dealings with NEOM centred upon Saudi Arabia’s human rights record, the country’s treatment of the LGBTQ+ community, and evidence that the Saudi government has forcibly displaced



(Fayez Nureldine/AFP via Getty Images)

people living on the land where NEOM will be situated.

The termination of these partnerships with NEOM is a significant setback for the Saudi government both in practical and PR terms. Esports forms a key part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 project, which seeks to diversify the Saudi economy and pitch the kingdom as a forward-thinking, digital-first nation.

Saudi Arabia needs strong relationships with key players in the esports industry to make good on a promise to make NEOM the region's esports hub. Now that Riot and Blast have publicly distanced themselves from the project, other esports tournament organisers choosing to partner with Saudi government-owned entities will face renewed scrutiny from teams, fans and the media.

Wave of criticism

Blast could potentially have withstood the wave of criticism from staff, media and the wider esports community. But when partner teams privately requested the deal's termination, Blast was left with little choice.

Anders Hørsholt, the chief executive of Danish CS:GO team Astralis, hurried Blast's decision along with a public statement on August 10 describing the deal as "unacceptable".

"We find this kind of partnership unacceptable, which we also made clear to Blast immediately."

Anders Hørsholt | chief executive, Astralis

Astralis is one of the biggest CS:GO organisations in the world and formerly shared a parent company with Blast before it launched an IPO late last year. Astralis remains one of Blast's most important partners – the Danish capital Copenhagen hosts an annual Blast event at which Astralis is the *de facto* home team.

"We and our team are rooted in a strong set of values, which among other things is about inclusivity and embracing diversity," Hørsholt told Danish media outlet *Politiken*. "Therefore, of course, we find this kind of partnership unacceptable, which we also made clear to Blast immediately."

He continued: "We always want to solve this kind of problem directly with our partners and give them a fair chance to solve this in the right way. At the same time, however, we have made it clear that we can in no way stand up in a context where our brand, players or partners are connected with companies

of this type, and we naturally expect Blast to find a solution."

Prior to this, the deal was consistently criticised by a number of CS:GO casters (esports commentators) and on-air interviewers that work with Blast, with many vowing not to work with Blast for as long as the deal stood.

Blast on-air interviewer Frankie Ward confirmed that she would not work with Blast until the deal was cancelled, making clear that it was due to Saudi Arabia's treatment of the LGBTQ+ community: "The Blast x NEOM deal is an opportunity to educate ourselves so that we no longer work with people who would kill our friends," she tweeted.

Blindsided

Partnerships and business links between sports and esports companies and Saudi government-backed entities aren't anything new, and sources say this logic led to executives at Riot and Blast being taken by surprise at the widespread backlash to the NEOM agreement.

For instance, Blast signed a deal for its 2019 Pro Series Final to be hosted in Bahrain – a country with its own issues pertaining to human rights – with limited community criticism and no staff revolt as a result.

In December 2019, Riot held its Nexus tournament in the Saudi capital,

Riyadh, after agreeing a deal with the government-owned Saudi General Entertainment Authority. Similarly, Riot experienced no backlash or widespread calls to cancel the event.

In addition, the Saudi Arabian Federation of Electronic and Intellectual Sports (SAFEIS) – a government-owned entity – has been at the forefront of recent investment in esports, again without much criticism.

SAFEIS' most recent high-profile play was Gamers Without Borders, a series of charity esports tournaments held from April 24 to June 7 this year. The event, produced by tournament organiser ESL, raised a total of \$10m for charities of the winners' choosing.

The federation also title sponsored the *24 Hours of Le Mans Virtual*, which acted as a substitute for this year's cancelled real-life race.

Cultural shifts

However, since those events, social and cultural movements pushing for equality, diversity and human rights have risen in prominence, inspiring young people to use their voices as tools for change.

Many major sports and esports

“We believe in being inclusive and creating a more diverse landscape for everybody.”

Alberto Guerrero | director of esports EMEA, Riot Games

properties supported these movements and Blast and Riot were no exception. Both companies expressed their explicit support for charities, collectives and events that promoted equality and diversity.

Blast launched its ‘Blast For Good’ initiative in June which explicitly aligned the company with Black Lives Matter, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and other collectives campaigning for racial justice.

Riot Games donated \$1m to The Innocence Project and the American Civil Liberties Union – non-profits committed to racial justice – and changed its logo to Pride colours during Pride Month.

It was during that month that the LEC announced its partnership with NEOM, resulting in the deal with a Saudi government-owned entity being

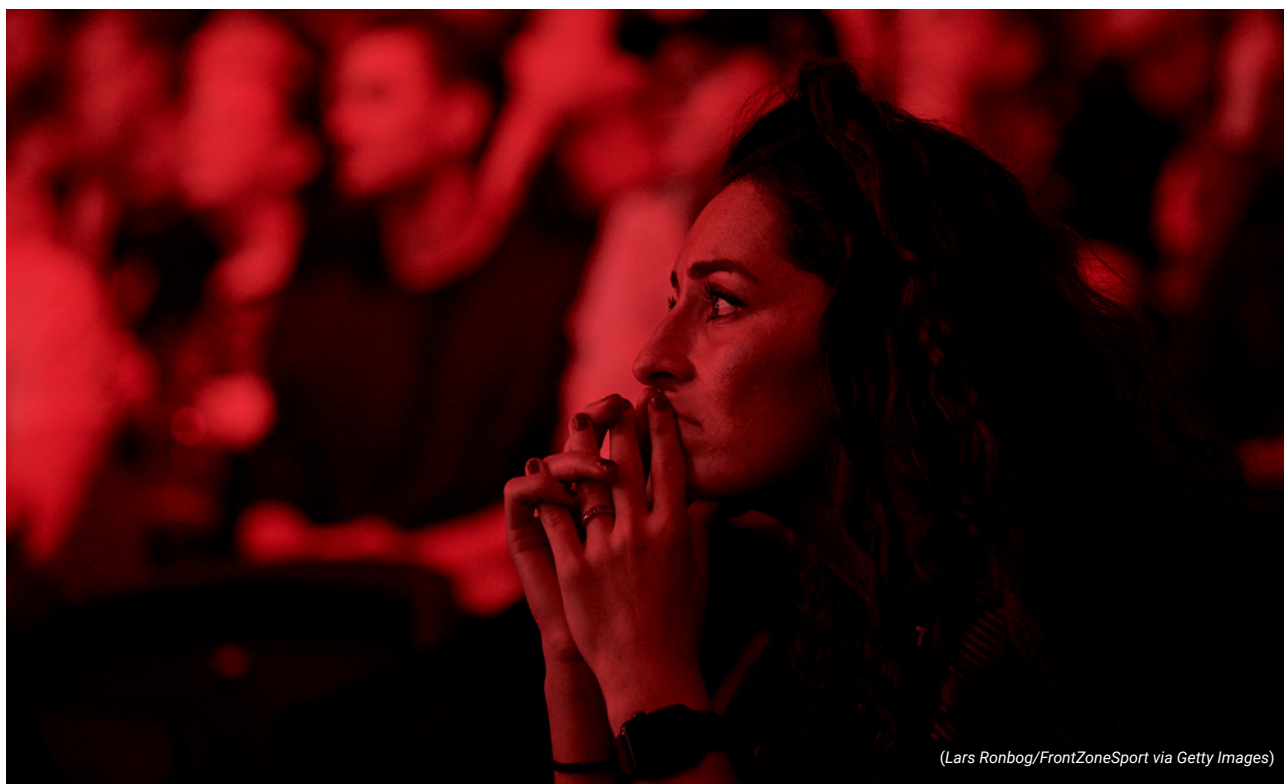
publicised side-by-side with its Pride logo.

The overwhelmingly angry response from Riot staff and LEC fans was quelled only by the deal's cancellation, and Riot is now moving forward with an ethics committee in an attempt to prevent further incidents such as this.

Alberto Guerrero, director of esports EMEA at Riot Games, said: “We know that recently our actions hurt and alienated our community, particularly women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and our players in the Middle East, and for that we are deeply sorry. At the LEC, we believe in being inclusive and creating a more diverse landscape for everybody.

“We understand that some of you lost faith in us but we are committed to taking steps to earn back your trust. Until then, thank you for sticking with us.”

Blast is now under pressure from staff and fans to follow in Riot's footsteps and double down on its commitments to support progressive social movements. However, sources close to the situation say Blast is keen to maintain strong relationships in the Middle East and is wary of alienating fans in the region, which it has earmarked as a key growth market for the company. ○



(Lars Ronbog/FrontZoneSport via Getty Images)

US Open retains sponsor portfolio with fee discounts and transparent communications



The VIP Lavazza Lounge at The 2019 US Open at Arthur Ashe Stadium. (Eugene Gologursky/Getty Images for Lavazza)

US Open retained a full roster of sponsors for the closed-door tournament

Sponsorship revenue impact mitigated by strategy of staggering main partner renewals

Corporate partners, broadcasters and sponsors "very appreciative of the unique situation"

Matthew Glendinning

The United States Tennis Association confirmed in June that the US Open would go ahead on August 31, the last Monday of the month as originally scheduled, but without spectators because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since then, defending men's champion Rafael Nadal has pulled out, citing the increasing cases of Covid-19 worldwide, while others have expressed a reluctance to travel Stateside, where the virus is still on the rise.

New York City, once a global pandemic hot spot, appears to have gained a level control of the outbreak, and for Lewis Sherr, the USTA's chief

revenue officer, the ability to host the US Open at all this year is "a tremendous accomplishment".

An elder statesman in US sports sponsorship, Sherr's perspective veers off the purely commercial into areas of civic responsibility that are not always matched by today's politicians.

He wants the tournament to mark this moment in time, not just deflect attention from difficulties, and to strengthen partner relationships in adversity. The staging of the US Open, even behind closed doors, is "terrific for New York, sponsors, broadcasters, everyone," he says.

The USTA's perspective has evolved over the last six months, with the current upbeat mood contrasting with

earlier in the year when the pandemic first hit. "If asked how it would feel to put on a US Open with no fans [earlier this year] everyone would say the US Open is the largest spectacle in tennis, it would not feel like a celebration. Somehow, all of us now think of it as a great opportunity to bring sport back. Our corporate partners, broadcasters and sponsors have been very appreciative of the unique situation."

In terms of the presentation of an event that relies so much on the New York crowds for its spectacle, the organisers will cover a significant part of the lower-level seats in the main arenas with tarpaulin showing graphic imagery of the US Open, the city of New York, as well as messages to mark

this point in history – “a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence”.

The designs were created by the USTA’s in-house graphic teams, with several agencies involved in the logistical processes. There will be no new ad positions on the tarps – “we have always tried to adhere to a very clean look,” says Sherr – but stadium video boards will show some rotating advertising.

‘Ask Us Anything’

Sherr included the tournament’s sponsors and broadcasters at every stage of the tournament’s planning process, with a weekly series of video calls called ‘Ask Us Anything’ involving the USTA marketing team, the tournament director and the medical director.

Sherr says: “When this started, we challenged ourselves to come through with stronger partnerships than when we went into this. Adversity tests partnerships; we can control the way we engage with our partners and emerge even stronger and have more

loyalty than when we started.

“Of course, there is a risk in transparency in that things get out, but everyone has been incredibly responsible and appreciates the access. We’ve not had any negatives.”

Sherr also worked closely with each sponsor, analysing what assets could still be delivered and what new elements could be added to their agreements. There have been no “contentious situations”, while fee reductions have been negotiated to compensate for lost or neutralised assets.

“In every case, there has been a significant change in [rights fee] even

“We challenged ourselves to come through with stronger partnerships than when we went into this.”

Lewis Sherr | chief revenue officer, United States Tennis Association

for those with visibility and signage valuations. There is still value from signage, but everyone associates the US Open premium with hosting and fan engagement opportunities.”

Sherr said the 12 official sponsors, all of which have signage rights, will pay between 30 and 40 per cent of their contracted fee this year. Official suppliers like Coca-Cola, Kim Crawford Wines, Lavazza and Heineken will pay greatly reduced fees – more than 50 per cent smaller.

Wine partner Kim Crawford Wines, for example, would normally pour about 17,000 glasses of wine from a dedicated brand bar during the tournament and has no signage rights. Assets include rights to make promotional offers to win tickets to the US Open, IP rights and digital rights.

Not one sponsor has dropped out. “They did not take this as an opportunity to exit even though many industries like travel and hotels are in trouble. The intent is to remain



(Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images)



(Al Bello/Getty Images)

associated for the long term and do what's best for the long term."

For broadcasters, the situation may appear more straightforward – "the tournament is either on or it's not" – but Sherr describes a more complex evolution: "In March, we didn't know if we'd change the date or move the tournament to Florida or California, with a reduced draw or not, so there's been a significant impact. The early discussions were to play or not to play and in what conditions. By mid-June, the focus was on our operating plan, and the safety protocols."

Looking ahead

The sponsorship revenue impact of Covid-19 has been mitigated by the USTA's strategy of staggering main

"In March, we didn't know if we'd change the date or move the tournament."

Lewis Sherr | chief revenue officer,
United States Tennis Association

partner renewals so that they are negotiated two years out from their end date.

"The current economic conditions are not impacting on renewal conversations, and if we're not back to normality by 2022, then there are bigger issues in this world," says Sherr. "Right now, nothing's been impacted or stood down, although in some cases, sponsors have agreed to extend deals for one year as part of the conversation."

Another positive is that Sherr has not had to reduce staff, partly because the US Open does not have an in-house team dedicated to sales.

This year, the CAA Sports agency was contracted to take care of the USTA's sponsorship development after more than half a decade with the CSM agency. The partner services team, on the other hand, is run in-house and remains intact, despite the USTA cutting 110 jobs in June.

Sherr says he speaks with the other grand slams on a regular basis, but those conversations have changed. "It used to be all about small things like vendors and agencies, now it's about bigger issues, with the French Open and Australian Open in similar positions." ○

Simon Green, BT Sport | Closed-door matches “not the product we paid for”

Sport media-rights values likely to take a hit due to economic recession

Changing consumer habits will also have impact

Green says that sport without fans is “a different product”

Adam Nelson

The Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing recession is likely to have a “lasting impact” on the value of sports media rights, says Simon Green, head of BT Sport, adding that for the broadcasting world, “the ‘new normal’ is not going to look very much like the old normal.”

Speaking to *SportBusiness*, Green cautions that it is not as simple as predicting a drop in media-rights values, though he notes the recession and reduced spending power of consumers will inevitably exert downward pressure.

“It’s very difficult to predict exactly what’s going to happen with fees for rights and whether or not the values will drop,” he says. “I’ve no doubt Covid-19 will accelerate some of the trends we were already seeing before the pandemic, and it introduces some new factors of its own.”

Those pre-pandemic trends include static or falling fees for major properties in the UK: BT Sport paid no increase in its most recent Uefa Champions League acquisition, while BT Sport and Sky Sports cut their collective Premier League payment from £5.14bn (\$6.74bn) for 2016–19 to £4.46bn for the current cycle.

In its first financial statement to take the impact of the pandemic into account, the wider BT group showed a seven-per-cent year-on-year drop in revenue for its first quarter of 2020–21, while Sky witnessed an even steeper decline of 15 per cent. Both companies cited the lack of sport and subsequent refunds offered to customers as contributing factors to that decline, and both are likely to seek a reduction in the fees they are paying across the board.



Consumer habits and expectations

Changing consumer habits will continue to affect rights values, Green believes, though their impact is harder to gauge. As the consumption of live sport in the home – as opposed to in stadiums or in pubs or other communal environments – has grown, so too has the way viewers access content changed. With families staying at home and fighting over who gets to watch what on the main television, BT Sport has seen “a huge adoption of people using big-screen apps through streaming boxes and consoles, as well as small-screen apps on tablets and phones,” he says. BT Sport serendipitously launched its app for Apple TV, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One in February, just a month before the UK’s lockdown came into effect.

“Customers now expect to be able to access the content they’re paying for, wherever they want to access it; they also expect enhanced ‘second screen’ experiences. That opens up a lot of options to us in terms of getting under the bonnet of things and allows for innovation and creative ideas for

organisations to get to their customers in a more efficient and direct way.”

That, Green adds, will lead to “the value of rights and the value of pay-TV changing in certain ways. It’s almost impossible to say exactly how, but I’m sure that it will”.

Similarly, the widespread availability of almost every fixture from the coronavirus-affected seasons of major sporting competitions is something that could firm into an expectation, with consumers demanding more content for less following the lockdown.

As reported by *SportBusiness*, BT Sport is working alongside Premiership Rugby to ensure that season-ticket holders can still watch all their team’s home games live. All 57 of the remaining matches in this season’s Premiership will be available to BT Sport subscribers, and the broadcaster is also collaborating with clubs to offer the games to season-ticket holders who don’t already pay for BT Sport. A £25-a-month Rugby Pass has been announced to offer contract-free access to the games, and similar pay-per-view-style solutions have been proposed

for other sports that rely heavily on matchdays not just for the income from gate receipts, but for engaging with their supporters.

The Premier League is a different case, a globally popular competition where matchday revenues represent on average less than 10 per cent of a club's income. When it returned for the conclusion of the 2019-20 season following its lengthy "Project Restart" deliberations, the league struck a deal with its four domestic broadcast partners – BT Sport alongside Sky Sports, Amazon Prime and the BBC – to show every fixture live, though that arrangement has not been extended into 2020-21. Rumours persist that a similar deal to that in Premiership Rugby is in the works to allow season-ticket holders access to games and provide them with an incentive to renew, but Green cautions against taking a "one-size fits all" approach.

"It's difficult to forecast exactly what's going to happen in terms of the impact of crowds coming back, or not coming back, as the case may be," he says. "The matches post-Project Restart were under a very particular set of circumstances, and it was right for us all to adopt what we did. Likewise with the Premiership

Rugby arrangement, but it doesn't necessarily mean that because we've got this model in rugby, let's do the same in football. Each sport has its own particular demands and approaches."

Sport without fans "a different product"

Green also suggests that in the medium-term he doesn't see a huge appetite – either from rights-holders or on the broadcaster side – for major changes in the ways media deals have been structured over the seven years since BT Sport launched, even if fans become expectant of being able to watch a far higher proportion of fixtures live.

"The major relationships that we have – particularly with the big domestic football rights deals, the big rugby deals, the likes of MotoGP – I think they will remain similar, because it gives customers a way to engage with high-end content, and I don't think that desire from the consumer is going to change," he says.

"What we'd ideally like to get back to is the level of exclusivity and the structure of what is in the agreement between us and the rights-holder. We entered into these kind of deals with a level of

exclusivity over what we have access to and what remains with the rights-holder, because it's the arrangement that, in the current environment until earlier this year, still works best for everyone.

"If the extraordinary set of circumstances we find ourselves in now continues, with home fans unable to see the game, we understand it's best if we change those arrangements, to suit the fans. But going forward, we would always want to retain the structure of the original deal."

The lack of crowds isn't just of concern to clubs and rights-holders. Green is clear on the importance of fans to the broadcast experience, describing the events BT Sport has broadcast since the easing of lockdown as "a different product".

"We're not getting what we originally had, the product that we paid for," says Green. "If we have learned two things from this pandemic so far, it's that our customers still want to watch live sports, and that live sports are not the same without a crowd. Sport is still incredible, it still has value, and people still want to watch, but we are as desperate as anyone else to return to a situation where fans and atmospheres are back in stadiums." ○



Bristol Bears v Harlequins was one of final Premiership fixtures to take place before suspension of the season. (Harry Trump/Getty Images)

“The future of TV across Asia is online” | Takeaways from the APOS media conference

SportBusiness reports from the APOS 2020 Virtual Series, the online incarnation of the leading Asia-Pacific media, telecoms and entertainment industry conference hosted by Media Partners Asia.



(Dhiraj Singh/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

Kevin McCullagh

A POS usually gathers leading executives from the Asia Pacific and global media industries to discuss business direction at an annual get-together in Bali. This year, Covid-19 forced the event online, but it still attracted a host of stellar names, including Uday Shankar, president, The Walt Disney Company APAC and chairman, Star and Disney India; JB Perrette, president and CEO, Discovery Networks International; Hugh Marks, CEO, Nine Entertainment; Janice Lee, CEO, Viu and MD, PCCW Media Group; and Ajit Mohan, VP and MD, Facebook India.

“The future of TV across Asia is online”

Media Partners Asia executive director and co-founder Vivek Couto is confident that the Asia-Pacific video entertainment industry will continue to grow strongly in the coming years, following a dip in 2020 due to Covid-19. Growth will be powered by online services and products.

He said: “The future of TV across Asia is online. It’s a challenging time for some of the incumbents. But it’s a great opportunity to move online, to monetise online and have a business that lasts the next 50 years as we really move into this new era...There’s a lot of potential in these markets, a lot of growth.”

MPA predicts revenues across the industry – covering advertising and

subscription-funded television and online video services – will drop three per cent this year due to Covid-19. Growth is expected to resume thereafter, except in TV advertising, which the company does not expect to have recovered to 2019 revenue levels by 2025.

Underpinning the projected growth in revenues online is a huge growth in connectivity. There are expected to be 3.6 billion 4G and 5G mobile customers in APAC by 2025. Japan and Korea will lead the way in 5G penetration, with each market hitting around 30 per cent by 2025. MPA expects 600 million fibre internet customers in the region by 2025, giving these homes access to big-screen video entertainment products delivered over the internet. This will not just be



Uday Shankar. (Manoj Patil/Hindustan Times via Getty Images)

the preserve of developed markets – fibre penetration in Thailand is expected to hit 50 per cent by 2025, and the Philippines and Indonesia could both be close to 20 per cent.

Jio lays the foundations for Indian digital growth

Several speakers mentioned the stunning growth in access to high-speed internet in India in the last five years. Much of this has been achieved by telco Jio's successful marketing of its 4G mobile network. Facebook's Ajit Mohan noted that, in September 2016, when Jio launched its 4G services, there were fewer than 50 million 4G customers in India. Today, the figure is over 500 million.

"One thing that really stands out is the extent to which [Jio] had an impact on the internet ecosystem in India in a short period of time," Mohan said, adding that they "created a new model of access to affordable mobile broadband. I think they set the foundation for the 500 million or 550 million-plus people who today have access to high quality mobile broadband."

Jio's success has brought it massive investment this year from a host of leading private equity and digital media companies, including Facebook and Google. Since April, about \$20bn worth of stakes have been taken in the firm, taking its valuation close to \$60bn.

Disney Plus Hotstar aims to capitalise

Disney's Disney Plus Hotstar OTT service in India, a sister company of pay-television platform Star, stands to be one of the big winners from India's connectivity boom. MPA believes Disney Plus Hotstar has the potential to add a further 100 million subscribers, equating to \$1bn in annual revenue. Premium sports rights will remain central to this growth, Couto said.

Hotstar and Star are together the market-leading sports broadcasting

platform, and have rights for India's biggest cricket properties through deals with the Board of Control for Cricket in India for domestic internationals and the Indian Premier League T20 tournament, and the International Cricket Council.

Uday Shankar leads both Hotstar and Star, as well as Disney in the wider Asia-Pacific region – meaning he's also responsible for the rollout of the Disney Plus OTT platform in markets beyond India. He confirmed that sport would be front and center of the Disney Plus Hotstar strategy. The business's aim is to be the "leader in every segment", he said, including sport: "That is what we did in TV. We will have the best destination for sports, we will have the best destination for drama, and we will have the best destination for movies as well."

Shankar noted that Disney Plus Hotstar's success – and Star's before that – had defied the recommendations of analysts, who had not believed that the Indian market was ready to pay for content, and that sports content had proven particularly successful.

"When Star started, the wisdom was 'people won't pay for content'. When pivoting from AVOD (advertising video-on-demand) to SVOD (subscription video-on-demand), we were told no one will pay for content.



(Hakan Nural/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

Research agency after research agency told us that, when people pay for data, they believe they have paid for content as well, so they're not going to be ready to pay a second time. Especially because...companies that offered user-generated content [social media platforms like Facebook], don't charge anything.

"But in our experience our sports service has taken off remarkably well, and that is why we have the confidence and the courage to invest more in it and ramp it up further."

It appears Rupert Murdoch's 'battering ram' logic for sports content still applies, 25 years on in a developing economy.

Facebook focuses on its communities

Mohan essentially confirmed the weakening of Facebook's focus on acquired video content. When asked "What is the glue for your communities?" he responded, "I don't think the conversation starts with content. I don't think it starts with, 'should we use video to attract users?'"

Facebook's retreat from the sports media-rights market has been well-documented, to the chagrin of rights sellers. But the platform remains hugely important to sports properties and marketers globally, and Mohan hinted at interesting opportunities ahead, in India and beyond.

Video content partnerships are

not out of the picture. He used the example of the company's deal for International Cricket Council clip rights to illustrate how Facebook wants to use content partnerships to encourage communities to form on its platforms around topics of interest. As he put it, to "ignite the interest that's already there with partners we can collaborate with deeply".

"...ignite the interest that's already there with partners we can collaborate with deeply."

Ajit Mohan | VP and MD, Facebook India

Facebook Watch was a couple of years ago investing in original content and being touted as competition for YouTube, Netflix and other digital video content platforms. It failed to get traction and Mohan said the focus of Watch is: "Could we invent the future of social video?...How do we create new ways of consuming?" He hinted at one potentially interesting future avenue for sport: "We are really exploring a Watch Party – for people that are already connected with each other – can they come together and watch something that is of shared interest?" It is an old idea, that no one has ever quite cracked; with Facebook's focus and resources, perhaps they will.

Sport's role for streamers

Scripted series and films have powered the stunning growth of video streaming services globally, and sport has so far been only a small part of the story.

Discovery Networks International president and chief executive JB Perrette drew a comparison between the role scripted content is playing now and the role sport played in the pay-television era. "Right now, scripted series and movies look like what premium sports have looked like for the last few decades – they're loss leaders," he said. "When Rupert [Murdoch] launched Sky, he said: 'I'm going to take premium football, I'm going to lose a tonne of money, and I'm going to attach it to an entertainment train, and I'll...make money when I upsell people to the package'."

Joe Ravitch, co-founder and partner at merchant bank Raine Group, and a hugely experienced dealmaker in sport, media and entertainment, thinks sports content will become increasingly important for streaming platforms.

"As sports come back online...I think you will see the power of live sports continue to be, as it was before Covid, one of the most important drivers for the digital industry, for the media industry," he told the virtual conference.

Speaking primarily about the US market, he said: "As the big international streaming companies try and move more aggressively into the sports environment and broadcasting live sports, I think you will see sports transition from traditional over-the-air broadcasting, and even pay-television, to a streaming environment. And I think that will really be a significant change. We haven't seen that from any of the major sports yet, but I expect it to come in the next year or two."

China rifts, short form rise and big bets

Ravitch picked out several big trends that will increasingly shape the media business in the years to come, and that have also reared their heads in sport.

One is political tension between



(Roslan Rahman/AFP via Getty Images)

China and other parts of the world. “I think that one of the great tragedies of the last year has been the growing divide between the US and China,” he said. “We are now seeing what is referred to as a ‘decoupling’...We are fundamentally at risk of a world where you have two parallel technology systems in 5G, you potentially have two global internets...and I find the decoupling to be something that will make world poorer and I hope that in the future it will not last.”

These rifts affect every industry and have already touched sport. In the last year, the NBA has fallen foul of US-China tensions on more than one occasion. At the start of August, the Indian Premier League lost its Chinese title sponsor due to the recent border clash between Chinese and Indian troops.

The second big trend for media is “massive capital inflows” to companies focused on the digital economy from investors seeking increasingly difficult-to-find returns in a world with record low interest rates, and this has accelerated during the Covid-19

pandemic. One of Raine’s companies, DraftKings, the American fantasy sports operator, has seen its value on public markets “explode”.

Ravitch said the huge amount of money seeking investment opportunities meant that “the businesses that are seen as able to

prosper in a post-Covid world...the valuations are extraordinary. Whether they will last, I don’t honestly know.

“You have an interesting combination of trends driven by Covid, combined with a massive excess of global liquidity. They’re creating risk. They’re creating opportunities. There will be winners. But there will also be losers. People are going to lose a lot of money when the world settles down. And some people will come out of this much, much stronger. This is the time for people to be placing bets.”

Several high-profile sports properties have been targeted by investors in recent months, including rugby properties and the Italian Serie A football league.

Addressing sport more specifically, Ravitch noted that, unless many sports can resume play after Covid-19 with full arenas as quickly as possible, there could be some big changes in business models.

“It’s a very interesting dynamic that remains quite uncertain... fundamentally most of these economic models, especially given the salaries due to players, most of these economic models don’t work without the fans in the seats. And without a live audience, without signage, without people buying tickets, seats and suites, these sports leagues are going to be economically challenged to restructure in a very substantial way.” ○



(Rafael Henrique/SOPA Images/
LightRocket via Getty Images)



Joseph Ravitch. (Peter Foley/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

Diversity dividend | Five ways sports bodies can encourage diversity and inclusion

SportBusiness invited a group of senior black and ethnic minority executives to explore how sports organisations can increase diversity and inclusion in their workforces. Here we summarise five strategies outlined in the discussion.



Ben Cronin

The Black Lives Matter movement has forced businesses and organisations from every walk of life to re-evaluate their diversity and inclusion policies – sport included.

The large numbers of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) athletes that do so much to drive revenues in the sector are not replicated at boardroom level in most sports federations, associations and agencies.

After writing an impassioned column calling on the sports industry to recognise the economic and cultural benefits of greater diversity, Tony Simpson, partner and head of sport and media practice, Savannah Group, asked for *SportBusiness*' help in convening a

webinar to explore the topic in greater depth.

He gathered a group of senior BAME executives in the sports sector to discuss the issues they have faced personally, the advantages of more internationally-oriented boards, and to suggest ways for the industry to increase diversity and inclusion in its workforce.

Here we summarise their discussions and five strategies they outlined for ensuring diversity and that the resultant business dividends are delivered.

The panellists included Jason Gardener MBE, president UK Athletics, Yath Gangakumaran, director of strategy and business development, Formula 1; Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, chief executive, Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA; William Louis-Marie,

chief executive, World Squash; and Michael Bolingbroke, former chief executive officer, FC Internazionale Milan; and ex- chief operating officer, Manchester United.

Increase candidate pools to reduce unconscious bias

The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee recently started increasing the size of its recruitment candidate pools and selecting a larger proportion of BAME applicants at the interview stage when recruiting for its executive positions. Fitzgerald Mosley, a former chief of organisational excellence and chief operating officer for USOPC, referenced a *Harvard Business Review* study that found this approach helped to reduce unconscious bias against BAME candidates.

The panellists



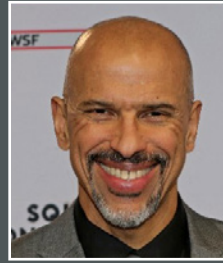
Jason Gardener MBE,
president, UK Athletics



Yath Gangakumaran, director
of strategy and business
development, Formula 1



Benita Fitzgerald Mosley,
CEO, Laureus Sport for Good
Foundation USA



William Louis-Marie, CEO,
World Squash



Michael Bollingbroke, former
CEO, FC Internazionale Milan;
and ex- COO Manchester
United

“If you have a pool of three candidates and one of them is a person of colour, a woman, or a person with a disability, the chances of that individual [getting the job] is about zero,” she said. “If you have four candidates and half of the candidates are people of colour, women or people with disability, the chances of each of those individuals getting the job moves to 50 per cent.”

Diversity isn't a trade-off – make the board larger

Louis-Marie, chief executive, World Squash, spoke of the sense of isolation he sometimes feels as one of the few BAME senior leaders in sport.

“You look around you and [there] are sometimes only a handful of people of colour in a room with 200, 300, 400 executives at a sporting body level,” he said.

Simpson said the feeling of being in a minority created an additional burden to succeed as a flag bearer for the BAME community: “It’s something I hadn’t realised in the job that I do – the pressure on one individual in my own career. You have to perform.”

As a solution, Fitzgerald Mosley suggested sports organisations should aim to employ more than one BAME board member to ‘normalise’ diversity and emphasised that this shouldn’t be seen as a threat to existing members.

“Some people approach this as a zero-sum game: ‘If we add or include more people of colour there is less for me.’ I think that point of view has to go away,” she said.

“The only way that goes away is by adding those folks. Make the board larger – add two people to the board, so you don’t feel like you’ve got to trade

off board members in order to get more people to come in.”

Don't forget the ‘inclusion’ in diversity and inclusion

“It’s great if you’ve got someone of colour on the board but it doesn’t actually mean anything if they’re not able to feel comfortable,” said Gangakumaran.

He said F1’s decision to get rid of its ‘grid girls’ – the scantily-dressed female models that used to appear in opening ceremonies at grands prix – was an example of how new owners Liberty Media had embraced the benefits of a more inclusive attitude to its workforce and truly listened to the views of an increasingly diverse group of senior executives.

“With a new leadership team, some of whom had different views, they created a culture where we felt we were being included and that our views – that this [was] outdated, and we were on the wrong side of history if we continued with the grid girls – were heard.

“So not only do you have diversity, in that you’ve got a BAME executive, you’ve got female executives now in Formula 1, but we have an inclusive culture, which means that they actually listen to our perspectives.”

What gets measured gets done

Fitzgerald Mosley described how she applied her experiences of assessing gender diversity in the telecommunications industry to implement a diversity and inclusion scorecard for the USOPC and each of its 47 national governing bodies.

“I love the adage: ‘what gets measured gets done’,” she said. “We were the first

national major sports league, if you will, to make that data public.”

The USOPC also created a succession-planning programme to identify senior executives from minority groups called FLAME – Finding Leaders Among Minorities Everywhere.

Although she said the system had proved successful in increasing the amount of BAME representation in senior positions within the US Olympic family to just under 20 per cent, she said she remained frustrated that there were still few BAME leaders at the very top of these organisations.

Think about the triple bottom line, but don't be a hypocrite

“Increasingly you’re seeing organisations that do have diverse leadership outperforming the market,” said Gangakumaran, referencing the theory that businesses should begin to think about a “triple bottom line”, in which they assess their social and environmental performance alongside financial metrics.

“Just look at Nike. As soon as they made [Colin] Kaepernick the face of their brand, their stock market price went to the highest it’s ever been,” he added.

But Simpson said the brand was guilty of undermining its stand against racism with some of its tax avoidance strategies and recruitment approach.

“Yes, they were brave and they created some brand equity with Kaepernick but their board is still not as diverse as it could be,” he said. “And some of the people who suffer the most from tax avoidance are the very people they are looking to support.”

Adelaide adopts holistic approach to maximise sporting opportunities

29 per cent of visitors to 2015 Cricket World Cup came from overseas

City aggressively targeted Indian cricket community

Study argued 2026 Commonwealth Games bid would be too expensive



Indian fans in the crowd celebrate as a Pakistan wicket falls during the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan at Adelaide Oval. (Scott Barbour/Getty Images)

Bradley Rial

In the ultra-competitive sporting landscape of Australia, the lengths to which Adelaide leveraged a 2015 Cricket World Cup match demonstrate how the city aims to ensure the impact of such events extends well beyond sport.

The Adelaide Oval, one of the country's most iconic sports facilities, hosted four matches during the 2015 men's tournament, including Bangladesh v England, Ireland v Pakistan and Pakistan v Australia. But

it was the India v Pakistan clash that anchored the city's outreach effort, especially as Adelaide served as the training base for the Indian team ahead of the event.

"We strategically targeted India and created a legacy strategy around hosting the team in Adelaide and securing the India v Pakistan blockbuster," says Hitaf Rasheed, executive director at Events South Australia, the events arm of the South Australian Tourism Commission.

"This strategy included a business forum where we hosted business representatives from India to explore

trade and investment opportunities and followed up with a return trade mission to India.

"In our desire to engage with the younger cricket-loving community in India, we ran a competition hosted in India which saw 15 young cricketers win the opportunity to travel to Adelaide for a once-in-a-lifetime cricketing and cultural experience. In addition to this, we hosted media families and leveraged the broadcast assets to promote Adelaide as a tourism destination."

According to PwC's report on the economic impact of the tournament,

the India v Pakistan contest was, at the time, the most talked-about cricket match in digital media history. In addition, an impressively high 29 per cent of all attendees in Adelaide came from overseas with the sole purpose of attending the Cricket World Cup. Average spend per unique visitor in South Australia was A\$870 (£475/€523/\$608), with total visitor spend standing at A\$80m.

On a recent list compiled by The Economist Intelligence Unit, Adelaide was ranked as the 10th most liveable city in the world, and its lifestyle credentials, which have attracted a sharp increase in visitors in recent years – including a 12.5-per-cent year-on-year rise through to March 2020 – are at the forefront of its sports destination strategy.

Often referred to as the 20-minute city, the iconic Adelaide Oval and the hustle and bustle of the city centre are 11km from the coast and the sprawling beaches that make it so desirable for locals and tourists alike.

However, Events South Australia's innovative approach to India's

stay during the Cricket World Cup illustrated a broader need to think outside the box.

"A key challenge felt Australia-wide is that we are a long-haul destination for many international travellers, and it may be a logistical challenge to get to the country," Rasheed explains. "Strategies to simplify the journey and the decision-making process, including working with trade and airline partners and utilising our high-performing SouthAustralia.com platform, help address this challenge."

"We strategically targeted India and created a legacy strategy around hosting the team."

Hitaf Rasheed | executive director, Events South Australia

And Adelaide has overcome the logistical hurdles to establish a wide-ranging event portfolio.

Casual observers will be familiar with the city's status as a cricket and Aussie rules destination, but its location also lends itself to mass-participation events

such as cycling's Tour Down Under.

From 1985 to 1995, the Adelaide Street Circuit hosted Formula 1's Australian Grand Prix before the event moved east to Melbourne. The circuit continues to host the Adelaide 500 event and is now complemented by The Bend, which opened in 2018 and hosts Supercars races, Asian Le Mans and more.

An impressive venue portfolio also includes the South Australian Aquatic and Leisure Centre, which has hosted Australia's Olympic swimming trials, as well as the 11,300-seat Adelaide Entertainment Centre, the 8,000-capacity Adelaide Arena and the 16,500-seat Coopers Stadium, home of A-League football club Adelaide United.

"Adelaide is a compact city of around 1.3 million, which is well credentialled – both in expertise and facilities – to host major events," says Rasheed. "Adelaide is large enough to host world-class events but still small enough so that those events can 'take over' our city, and they do. Adelaide doesn't put on a bike race, car race or football match – its key attributes ensure events are delivered with a true festival atmosphere."



Ravindra Jadeja of India is bowled during the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan at Adelaide Oval. (Michael Dodge-ICC/ICC via Getty Images)



Adelaide 500 Supercars Championship Round at Adelaide Parklands Circuit on March 3, 2019. (Daniel Kalisz/Getty Images)

Targeted approach

The Tour Down Under is one of Adelaide's most lucrative events, having gone from strength to strength since launching in 1999. It serves as the season-opening event on the men's UCI World Tour, with a women's race having been held in parallel since 2016.

In 2019, the Tour Down Under generated a record economic impact of A\$70.7m – an 11-per-cent increase on the 2018 edition. A total of 48,000 event-specific visitors from overseas and interstate travelled to South Australia for the event, which attracted 805,000 spectators in total.

The Tour proved just as popular in 2020 and Rasheed credits the success of the race to Events South Australia's marketing strategies.

"The Santos Tour Down Under's creative campaign – which in 2020 saw more than 44,000 people travel to South Australia, injecting more than A\$66m into the visitor economy – champions strong emotive imagery to draw in our key market," Rasheed says.

"The reason why people travel for live sport is to feel the emotion from

"We don't just put on an event, we put on a festival. The city allows for that."

Hitaf Rasheed | executive director, Events South Australia

world-class athletes and be a part of the atmosphere, which is what we highlight through photography and vision."

Other international events held in Adelaide include golf's ISPS Handa Australian Women's Championship and the Adelaide International ATP and WTA tennis tournament, which forms part of the pre-Australian Open swing and was this year won by home favourite Ashleigh Barty.

Adelaide is perhaps best known, though, as an Aussie rules city. It boasts two AFL teams in the shape of the Crows and Port Adelaide FC, both of which play at the 55,000-seat Adelaide Oval. The Adelaide Oval also serves as the home of the Adelaide Strikers Big Bash League Twenty20 cricket franchise and has built a reputation as a

major destination for Test and one-day internationals, having regularly hosted Ashes clashes between Australia and England, as well as an inaugural day-night Test in 2015.

Fresh opportunities

The impact of Covid-19 has been minimal in South Australia, where there have been only four confirmed deaths from the virus at the time of writing.

With showpiece events such as the Tour Down Under and Adelaide International taking place in the winter months, the number of competitions that have been cancelled outright is comparatively low. The Adelaide Oval is free to stage AFL matches at 50-per-cent capacity and, as Rasheed says, the city is "pretty much Covid-free", with members of the public also back playing sport.

One event that has been postponed is the NRL's State of Origin match at the Adelaide Oval. The city's leg of the rugby league showpiece had been scheduled for the middle of the year, but will now be held in November. It will be the first time that South Australia has

hosted the event.

It is expected that the game will deliver an A\$15m boost to the local economy, with 20,000 interstate visitors set to descend on Adelaide. The city was awarded the rights in February 2018 after the South Australia government provided an additional A\$70m in tourism funding to market the state at home and overseas.

"I think for South Australia, which is traditionally not an NRL state, to have the State of Origin is a great opportunity," says Rasheed. "One of the things we pride ourselves on is that we don't just put on an event, we put on a festival. The city allows for that – it will take over the city and attract new people to South Australia."

Another event South Australians have to look forward to is the 2023 Fifa Women's World Cup. It was announced on June 25 that Australia and New Zealand would co-host the national team tournament, and Coopers Stadium will be one of 13 host venues.

The federal government has promised that the event will deliver "hundreds of

millions of dollars" to the economy and boost women's football participation by more than 150,000 over seven years.

From the outside looking in, Adelaide appears well set to host a major multi-sports event at some point in the near future. The South Australian Government explored such an opportunity last year.

In March 2019, a feasibility study was launched for an Adelaide-led bid for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, but the government opted to drop the proposal in September after an independent analysis of staging the event put the total cost at around A\$3.5bn, with the economic benefit only projected at about A\$1.2bn.

Although the bid did not come to fruition, Rasheed believes that the lessons learnt will serve South Australia well for future plans. "It was great to go through the process and understand the Commonwealth Games Federation's assessment of Adelaide as a suitable host city and a fantastic venue," she says.

Corey Wingard, South Australia's

Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing, said: "Although we won't be bidding for 2026, we have embarked on the State Sporting Infrastructure Plan, which will provide the path forward to ensuring we have the best facilities to attract big events to the state in the future.

"Unfortunately, the cost to the taxpayer was too high to bring the Games to South Australia by 2026, but we remain open to potential bids in 2030 and 2034 as key initiatives from the State Sporting Infrastructure Plan are rolled out."

The State Sporting Infrastructure Plan, supported by dozens of consultation sessions and public surveys, will tally with a 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy with the goal of equipping the city for the next generation of sports stars. Whether it is planning for the development of new sporting facilities that can benefit communities, as well as elite athletes, or bidding to bring new types of events to Adelaide, there remains plenty more to come from the capital of South Australia. [O](#)



Essendon players run onto the field during the round 8 AFL match between the Adelaide Crows and the Essendon Bombers at the Adelaide Oval. (Mark Brake/Getty Images)

SoFi Stadium looks to break new ground with massive videoboard

70,000-square-foot videoboard developed by Samsung is largest of its type in the sports industry

Aim of the double-sided oval design is to engage every part of the Rams' and Chargers' new home

Technology constructed to not interfere with distinctive translucent roof



The 70,000-square-foot videoboard at SoFi Stadium hangs above the field. (Los Angeles Rams)

Eric Fisher

The National Football League's Los Angeles Rams, set to move this summer into the new \$5bn SoFi Stadium with fellow team the Los Angeles Chargers, recently detailed plans to have attendance limited during the 2020 season to about 15,000 people for each game in the 70,000-seat venue because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chargers have similarly told their season-ticket holders to plan on reduced attendance this season.

But even amid those safety-driven plans, one of the largest and technologically advanced fan

engagement tools in sports industry history now stands ready.

SoFi Stadium construction personnel recently completed the installation and testing of a 70,000-square-foot videoboard. A mammoth, ring-shaped structure, the SoFi Stadium videoboard is roughly triple the combined video display area of the Dallas Cowboys' center-hung scoreboards at AT&T Stadium that a decade ago helped open up a bold new era in sports facility videoboards.

Developed by Samsung, the double-sided videoboard in the Inglewood, California-based facility features the sports industry's first fully native 4K video production in a stadium,

weighing more than two million pounds, stretching to 120 yards in length, with a resolution of 80 million pixels and is both longer and wider than the field of play. For now, it also carries the mantle of the largest videoboard in sports.

"The videoboard is unlike anything else in live sports, particularly from a venue perspective," says Jason Gannon, managing director of SoFi Stadium and the Hollywood Park mixed-use development. "This is really the very best videoboard in live sports. And besides the size, it was really important to create the dual-sized nature of the board in order to really engage the entire seating bowl."

The SoFi Stadium scoreboard in

particular shows some design influences from another NFL facility, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Georgia, home of the Atlanta Falcons. That venue is known in part for its 63,000-square-foot “Halo Board”, which was developed by Daktronics, and also sits as a ring above the field, and prior to the arrival of SoFi Stadium was the prior standard bearer for the largest video display in pro sports.

But just three years after that facility opened, the SoFi Stadium videoboard has more total video display area, is the only two-sided oval center-hung videoboard in a sports venue, and also features 56 5G mobile antennas.

“We are proud to outfit the stadium with an iconic, first-of-its-kind, double-sided 4K LED display to ensure that each fan has a unique experience every time they visit Hollywood Park,” says Harry Patz, Samsung Electronics America senior vice-president and general manager. “SoFi Stadium will instantly become one of the NFL’s most-talked-about stadiums.”

Design Goals

The development of the SoFi Stadium videoboard arrived with a pair of key aspirations that guided its overall development and design.

First, and much like the inherent challenges at every other NFL venue, was to find a way to engage every fan in the seating bowl and give them a compelling reason to leave the comforts of home to attend a live game.

That meant developing a videoboard that fully reaches every part of the venue, differing from many other stadiums that have dead spots where fans can’t see the primary videoboard, and take full advantage of SoFi Stadium’s total footprint of more than three million total square feet.

“Every building is unique and every videoboard is unique. The mandate from [Rams owner and lead developer of SoFi Stadium] Stan Kroenke to the design team and construction team was to build a board that engaged 100 per cent of the seating bowl, fans sitting in every seat of the building,” Gannon says.

“You’ll have incredible sightlines to the board if you’re up high, and

incredible sightlines if you’re sitting down low. And when you think about designing something this size, you have to look at the building itself. It’s more than three million square feet. That size gave us a unique opportunity to do something really special inside of the seating bowl,” he says.

The second main goal for the scoreboard development was to offer that level of immersion and fan engagement without getting in the way of perhaps SoFi Stadium’s most notable design feature: the translucent, ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE) roof that is aimed to be a lightweight alternative to glass and provide abundant natural light and an indoor-outdoor feel to the facility. That ETFE roof covers both the stadium and adjacent pedestrian plaza, and the videoboard hangs from it.

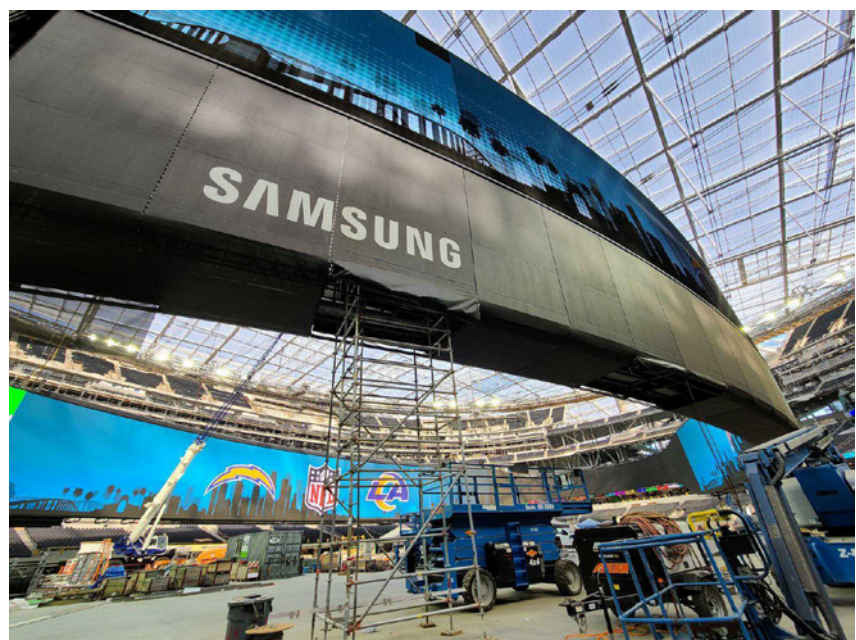
“The center-hung nature of the videoboard itself is really a design feature that allows for the sightlines not only inside the building but also to outside the building,” Gannon says. “One of the great things about Los Angeles, and something this building really embraces, is the indoor-outdoor lifestyle that people have come to enjoy here. Having the board as it is really allows us to have sightlines to outside the building. It is something that really takes advantage of where we are in Los Angeles, too, looking out into the Santa

Monica Mountains and out toward Palos Verdes.”

Prior to the arrival of the pandemic, stadium officials planned on more than 80 personnel staffing the videoboard and creating content for the platform during events. Plans are still being finalised with the Rams and Chargers as to the exact programming plans for the upcoming 2020 NFL season, given the reduced attendance plans. SoFi Stadium itself is more than 97 per cent complete, with Gannon’s construction team now running through final tests and inspections.

But if other US pro leagues that have recently resumed play with no fans in attendance are any indication, the scoreboard will still be actively in use this fall.

“We’ll work with each team,” Gannon says. “Each team will have a unique experience on gameday, whether there are fans in the building or there are no fans. Inside the bowl, there is more than 90,000 square feet of LED displays, with 70,000 square feet of that being the scoreboard itself. So having that amount of digital display affords us a tremendous amount of flexibility to navigate between the teams and non-NFL events, both in the near-term with perhaps a fanless environment, and over the long-term when the building is fully occupied.” ○



Construction earlier this year of the SoFi Stadium videoboard. (Samsung)



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