

SPORTS

MANAGEMENT

sportsmanagement.co.uk

21 March 2016

Vol 20 Issue 4 No 116

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Mountain bike legend **Martyn Ashton**

“ You just have to keep pushing
and hunting for the feeling ”

Cover star:

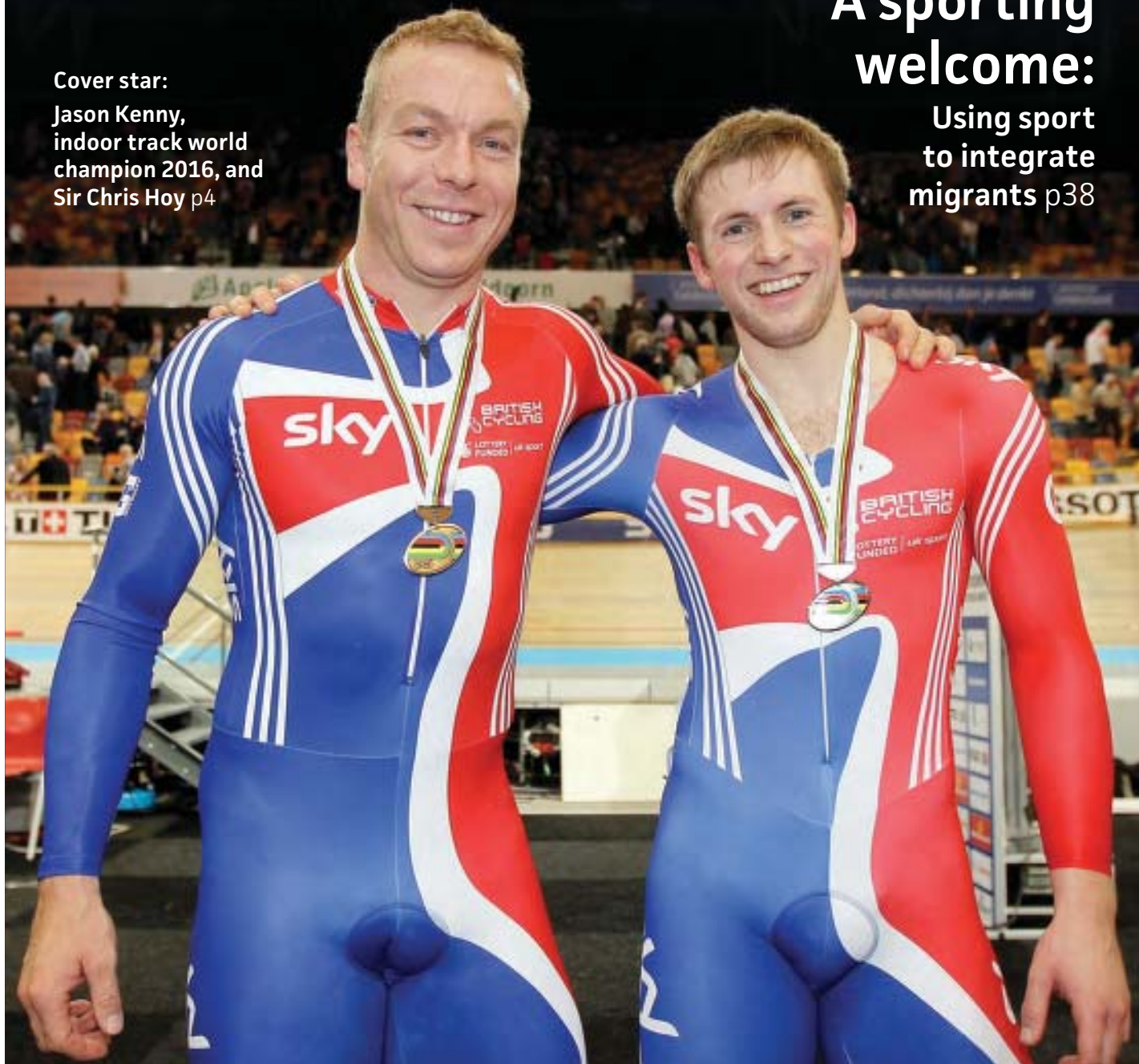
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to integrate
migrants p38



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Find your next challenge

“Talent is an overrated word – it implies you can turn up, wave a magic wand and realise you’re a fantastic cyclist”

Sir Chris Hoy

There are two different types of character you get in a sprint cyclist, says Sir Chris Hoy, plumping for a straight-forward dog analogy to crystallise his point. There are the Labradors, who “follow what they’re told”, and the Rottweilers, who generally don’t.

Which breed would Hoy be more akin to? “I was a Labrador actually,” he says with a smile. “Easy to get on with, good for adverts.”

His laid back manner is demonstrated by the way he deals with journalists during a Q&A he hosts following UK Sport’s press conference in which the quango unveils its #DiscoverYourPower talent identification campaign – a campaign he is supporting.

While Hoy talks amiably about his life since retirement in 2012 and the prospects of the GB sprint team at Rio 2016, it is still abundantly clear that UK Sport has chosen the six-time Olympic gold medallist as the poster boy for its new initiative because of the steely determination and single-minded will to win that made him one of the UK’s greatest Olympians.

“The thing I miss most about being an athlete is the day-to-day. It’s being part of a team, the common goal, the camaraderie. It’s hard work, it’s huge commitment – it’s brilliant,” he explains.



BOTH PICS: PA ARCHIVE/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Sir Chris Hoy celebrates winning at London 2012

“It’s not just about a few months of focus, it could take up a good 10 years of your life. It’s about having the ability to sustain that and not think too far ahead into the future.”

That – simply – is Hoy’s message to the 15-21 year-old athletes thinking of enrolling on #DiscoverYourPower. The scheme – created by UK Sport and British Cycling – was devised to encourage promising athletes from other sport, with the right physiology and attitude, to enrol on a fast-track programme to potentially make the Team GB sprint squad for Tokyo 2020 and follow in Hoy’s footsteps.

“There could be a number of young individuals out there who will see this today and think ‘I fancy giving that a go’, and they can go on to be future champions,” says Hoy, albeit with a warning: “For somebody who





Chris Hoy tried football, rugby, rowing and mountain biking before excelling at sprint cycling

might be thinking about trying it, I would say once you're an elite athlete there's a huge amount of hard work. You do it at the expense of everything else, you work exclusively pursuing that one goal, but it takes a lot of time to get to that point."

The elite sports quango turned to Hoy to front the campaign because he is perhaps its best example of an athlete who tried several sports before settling on sprint because his fast-twitch muscles made him physiologically suited to the discipline.

Prior to that the Scotsman tried a range of sports, including football, rugby rowing and mountain biking.

"Rowing taught me about discipline, the training for rowing was an important step towards cycling," he says. "I'm a big believer that talent is an overrated word. It implies you can turn up, wave a

magic wand and realise you're a fantastic cyclist. It's all about the work you need to do to get there. Do you have the right attitude? Do you have the right commitment? Do you have the right physiology?"

Hoy, speaking before this month's UCI Track Cycling World Champs in London – **where our cover star, Jason Kenny, was among the British winners** – says attitude is the most important attribute he has seen in champions across all types of sport. "It's about the way they take responsibility for their own performance. They don't rely on motivation for a coach or an audience."

Young athletes interested in taking part in #DiscoverYourPower will have the chance to display this attitude during a series of assessments being held by UK Sport and British Cycling from July. ●



“Her first competition was a 21km hill race, which she won – despite having no training, drink or food.”

Mira Rai, endurance runner

Mira Rai is quite literally a trail blazer. The former child soldier from a poor Nepalese village is winning races in one of the world's toughest sports – ultra marathon running – and becoming a national hero for her country's women.

Rai grew up in the eastern Nepalese village of Sanu Dumba. She received minimal schooling and performed daily household chores in preparation for marriage and a life of hard labour – as is widely expected of Nepalese girls with her background.

Running became instinctive for her when she was sent to the market – three hours away – to buy sacks of rice weighing 28kg before running back to sell them for profit, aged 11.

In 2003, Rai, then 14 years old, was recruited by Nepal's Maoist guerrillas. Lifted into an “always dangerous regime of constant uncertainty”, Rai experienced a sense of escapism at the rebels' sports facilities. Denied the chance of anything other than a monotonous life of hard work on a rural hillside, the



LLOYD BELCHER

Rai has become an advocate for women's sport

young girl saw the insurgents' football, volleyball and athletics fixtures as “amazing opportunities.”

When the war ended in 2006, the United Nations deemed Rai to be a child combatant, which meant she wasn't included in the incorporation of Maoist forces into a new national army. Rejected by the UN, she went home to study. She also kept running every day.

THE FIRST RACE

A couple of hill runners told Rai about a local 21km race in 2014, which she went on to enter and win – despite collapsing 400 metres from the finish line because she hadn't brought food or drink. Spurred on by her success, she moved to the northwest of the Kathmandu Valley to see if she could compete more.

Trained over the phone by a coach, to avoid paying a 20 pence bus fare to the stadium each day, Rai's confidence grew. In March the same year, she entered the 50km Himalayan Outdoor Festival race – her first



MARTIN WALMASSO

Following her success, Rai has become a national hero in Nepal



Turn over: Sir Chris Hoy on UK Sport's latest talent identification initiative



Rai instantly excelled
in endurance running
– despite receiving
no formal training





Ultra running has taken Rai to nearly every continent

official event. Another runner lent her 50 Nepalese Rupees for food and drink near the end of the trail, however, she was famished, having not packed any nourishment again. She still won first place.

Event organiser and Rai's race coordinator, Richard Bull, told *Sports Management* that it's not unusual for Rai to arrive unprepared for an event. "When runners get to a checkpoint, they think the time is more important than eating." Thanks to Bull, however, Rai has been able to compete internationally. He set up a crowdfunding page on the website he runs: trailrunningnepal.org, where donors ranging from running friends to tourists sponsored Rai's training.

"Before anyone recognised how talented Mira is, we calculated it costs US\$80 per month to live in Kathmandu so we aimed for that," said Bull. "On top of this, we started another collection for Mira's trip to Italy to run both the Sellaronda Trail Race, 57km, and the Trail Degli Eroi, 83km. The contributions we received paid for her flights, equipment and her visa – which only arrived six hours before her flight departed." It was worth the journey, as Rai won both races.

STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Rai has come a long way since then. After more races in Hong Kong, Nepal and Australia – with some flights paid for by Hong Kong's Dragonair – it was time for the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc (UTMB) in April 2015.

It was here, at the 80km race through the French, Italian and Swiss Alps, that Rai realised she needed to adapt her running technique.

"UTMB is essentially a festival dedicated to running and the first thing Mira did when she arrived was to watch," said Bull. "She learned from other competitors – world class runners – to be lighter on her feet. After this race – which she



From abject poverty to a running phenomenon

won – she started doing more strength-building drill exercises and technique-enhancing sprints.

"Ultra running is about hanging in there during long periods of slow running and keeping your heart rate low," says Bull. "Hitting 'the wall' should never happen to an endurance athlete.

"Ultra running is different from marathon or shorter distance events. It has a big focus on managing energy input. So, for example, training will be for long periods at low heart rates. Then there's the discipline of not eating too much at checkpoints: I think gels have enabled runners to avoid the wall, if they're sensible."

While Rai's training regime has changed over time, her programme is starting to build up in preparation for this year's races. Towards the beginning of April it will increase to six hours a day, ahead of The Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge 37.4km run. Described by Bull as "for fun", this UK event will serve as preparation





Filmmaker Lloyd Belcher has followed Rai's life and a movie about her life was launched in March

for the 76.7km Transvulcania ultra marathon on the Canary Island of La Palma 14 days later.

"Rai has won money now and people have made donations to her from all kinds of places, including businesses that are grateful to her for putting Nepal out there in a positive light. For a woman in Nepal, she's done extraordinarily well."

FILM OF HER LIFE

With such an amazing story to tell, Rai has agreed to let filmmaker Lloyd Belcher make a film about her life. This is due to be released this month at film festivals and on platforms such as Vimeo. A portion of the proceeds will be used to create a fund to support other Nepalese girls' running ambitions.

Bull notes how difficult it is to change Nepalese society's opinion of girls and women through sport when life is difficult as it is and says this will help. "Power cuts last 13 hours a day here in

Nepal, mostly during the day," he explains. "There's a political crisis in the south, which has meant checkpoints are blocked and there are huge fuel shortages. These factors combined mean organising things is difficult."

CAMPAIGNING FOR WOMEN AND SPORT

"Mira is passionate about fighting the bias against women and she's speaking up against it. She's finding her voice after being voiceless for so long. Now she can meet the people who run the country, she can get on TV and radio and be listened to," says Bull. "Mira is popular now. Everybody who meets her likes her immensely. She's full of energy and always smiling. But Mira's task is also to focus on running. Being an ambassador for trail running, for women and for sport already means she's achieved a great deal already in her life, with more to come." ●

Helen Andrews, journalist



“The app has been designed to make it easy for people to play sport regardless where they are”

Jim Law, founder, Find a Player



Law plans to expand the coverage of the app

After moving from England to live in Glasgow, CEO and founder of Find A Player, Jim Law, struggled to find people to play sport with at convenient times. He set out to create a match-up service between game organisers desperately posting pleas for players on Facebook and local participants. The result is Find a Player – a free app that lists more than 140 sports.

The app allows managers to find and invite players via existing phone contacts or Facebook and permits sports fanatics to search for games to join in their area at times to suit them.

Designed to make it easy for people to play sport regardless of where they are, Find A Player plans to license its database of users to sports venues that find it difficult to keep their pitches and courts filled. This will allow them to fill gaps in their bookings and generate revenue from pitches and courts.

“We want to make the whole administration process easier for organisers, particularly at facilities that are not currently running at maximum capacity,” said Law.

Using this model, sports providers, including local authorities, will pay Find A Player a monthly

license fee of £50 for every venue in their portfolio which uses the app to find customers.

Law’s research in developing the app showed a strong potential demand, as he explains: “A survey I conducted showed 82 per cent of people who organise games struggle to find someone to play with and 88 per cent would be happy to play sports with someone they don’t know – while only 1.7 per cent currently do so.

“A total of 78 per cent said they would do more sport if they could easily find something to get involved with and play with locally,” he said.



The free app is available on iOS and Android

AWARD WINNING

Find a Player won the Edinburgh Apps competition in 2014 by providing a product to “increase engagement within the community, reduce inactivity and promote the use of Edinburgh City Council’s sports facilities”.

Following two initial versions, which both suffered development problems,

Law was put in touch with start-up accelerator Entrepreneurial Spark. Developers from this network joined forces with Law’s Glasgow-based development team and in five months they worked together to build the third version of the app from scratch.





Find a Player enables managers and coaches find available players at a short notice

When users sign in to the app, they're asked what sports they play. By accessing Facebook friends and phone contacts, the app does a smart search so when the user looks for a specific sport to participate in, it prioritises contacts over strangers. If the user chooses not to pick an existing friend, the app highlights strangers who play the sport they're interested in.

Users can rate players on skill, fitness and reliability; they can schedule availability and set games to recur on a regular basis, while also providing an entire in-app communication platform for messaging.

CROWD FUNDING THE FUTURE

To secure funding for continued development of the app and to increase marketing activities, the team put Find A Player on equity-based crowdfunding platform Seedrs with the aim of raising £110,000.

"The app reached its target in two days. We kept the portal live for a few more weeks, raising a total of £150,000 before we tied it off – having reached the upper limit of equity we wanted to give away."

With around 100 investors, whose contributions range from £40,000 down to the base share price of £19, famous backers include Owen O'Donnell (former chairman of the sports fantasy game FanDuel and the maker of Candy Crush) and Steve Oliver – co-founder and CEO of cash-for-goods exchange company Entertainment Magpie Limited.

"In terms of future development, we want to engage with government and sports bodies to provide opportunities for local sport players," says Law. "We're making sure the app's functionality is optimal first in Scotland, before we expand to the rest of the UK and then internationally. We also have lots of contacts in sports governing bodies, so we have easy access to many sports venues."

"Obviously the key sports we'll be targeting to use the app will be team games for which it's essential to have the right number of players – for example football. However, it will ultimately be up to the users to determine how they work with Find A Player and how they rate the value they get from it." ●

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PAOLO BONA





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Above: Dax Polé Commercial



Den Haag Zuiderpark



Lyon Carre de Soie



Derby Arena



Omnisportcentrum Apeldoorn

ELITE SPORT

UK Sport lines up talent initiatives

UK Sport is redoubling its efforts to boost the numbers of elite athletes in canoeing, skeleton and martial arts with the launch of talent identification campaigns throughout 2016.

The elite sports quango has unveiled its #DiscoverYourPower campaign (page 4-5) alongside British Cycling and the English Institute of Sport, which aims to identify potential sprint cycling champions from a pool of promising young athletes taking part in alternative sports.

“We’re looking at power-based sports as well as the martial arts like taekwondo and judo”



BRITISH BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON

▲ Skeleton – the sport of Olympic gold medallist Lizzy Yarnold – will have a scheme

Talking to *Sports Management* during the launch of the initiative at London’s Lee Valley VeloPark, UK Sport head of performance pathways Natalie Dunman said that while the primary talent identification focus was on cycling, the quango was devising similar schemes for other Olympic sports.

“We’re looking at canoeing and skeleton – power-based sports – as well as the martial arts like taekwondo, judo and boxing. That will be a campaign we launch later this year,” said Dunman. “We’ll also be looking at rowing and netball – sports that require tall people.”
Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=H6n0e>

Player welfare at the heart of Beaumont’s World Rugby election pitch

Bill Beaumont – the chair of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) – has revealed his vision for the sport as he primes himself to become chair of World Rugby.

Beaumont is poised to replace current incumbent Bernard Lapasset in July this year after he was confirmed as the sole candidate. Elections for the post will be held in Dublin on 11 May.

The former England international has published his manifesto – Strong Roots for Healthy Growth – which details a five-point plan focused on the protection of players, integrity, global competition,



▲ Bill Beaumont has been chair of the RFU since 2012

commercial partnerships and empowering unions.

In terms of the former, Beaumont has pledged to “significantly increase

investment” into research on concussion prevention and research into long-term player welfare. Funds will also be ploughed into training and

equipment for pitch-side care.

Beaumont said that while World Rugby had made “significant advances” in dealing with head injuries, the concussion graph is still “simply too high”.

The 20-page document hinted that Beaumont would relax the governing body’s “overly prudent position” and drive money into individual unions so that they can invest in “modern welcoming facilities, qualified coaches and referees, volunteer workforces, and grassroots programmes”.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=u3b2w>





▲ The stadium will form part of a larger development which will include 6,000 houses

Scunthorpe stadium gets green light

League One football club Scunthorpe United has been given the green light to build a new £25m (US\$35.6m, €32.4m) stadium as part of a £1.2bn (US\$1.7bn, €1.6bn) local regeneration project.

North Lincolnshire Council has signed off the planning application for the 12,000-capacity ground, which is expected to be completed in time for the start of the 2017/18 season.

The stadium – which will be built on a 60-acre site close to the west side of the M181 – will include club and executive facilities, a gym, office space and areas for commercial development. A supporters' bar will also be part of the development.

“We are at the beginning of an exciting period for Scunthorpe, in which we will provide some of the finest sporting facilities”

“We are at the beginning of a hugely exciting period for Scunthorpe and North Lincolnshire, one which will help to define the area and provide some of the finest football and sports facilities in the country,” said Scunthorpe United chair Peter Swann.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=T9D5q>

Boris Johnson backs London boxing participation initiative

Six London boroughs will benefit from 12 new community boxing hubs as part of a scheme funded by Sport England and the Mayor of London's Office.

Known as British Lionhearts in the



▲ Mayor of London, Boris Johnson

Community, the project is designed to increase grassroots boxing participation and aims to engage with more than 2,600 men, women and children.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=S3Q5n>

NEWS IN BRIEF



▲ Lydia Ko, women's world No. 1

PGA and LPGA agree strategic partnership

Male and female professional golfers may compete in joint events after the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) and ladies equivalent LPGA entered a “long-term strategic alliance”.

Under the terms of the new alliance the leading men's and women's golf tours will coordinate schedules and explore the “development of joint events”.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=x3R3V>

PHE targets mid-life inactivity with One You

Public Health England (PHE) has launched a new campaign which aims to get middle aged people more active and on course to spend their retirement in good health.

Aimed primarily at 40 to 60-year-olds, One You is intended to help adults move more, eat well, drink less and be smoke free. It will also provide information on how people can improve sleep.

Currently, 40 per cent of all deaths in England are related to behaviour, while the NHS spends more than £11bn (US\$15.8bn, €14.2bn) a year treating illnesses caused by bad diet, inactivity, smoking and drinking alcohol.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=l3n0G>

NEWS IN BRIEF



▲ UK Sport CEO Liz Nicholl

UK Sport enrolls 11 coaches on elite course

England football under-21 coach Gareth Southgate is among 11 professional coaches who will receive UK Sport investment to take part in its Elite Programme.

Southgate will be joined by Dave Alloway (GB Boxing), Simon Amor (Rugby Football Union), Paula Dunn (British Athletics), Barry Fudge (British Athletics), Ady Hinchliffe (British Diving), Paul Manning (British Cycling), Mel Marshall (British Swimming), Mark Ratcliffe (British Canoeing), Peter Sheppard (GB Rowing Team) and Tony Zummack (British Curling).

Each coach will undertake the elite sports quango's three-year development programme, with an investment of around £20,000 (US\$28,447, €25,924) per individual, per year.

UK Sport chief executive Liz Nicholl said the coaches had been chosen as they had all already experienced a level of success and were "committed to doing whatever it takes to be the very best they can be".

"On the Elite Programme they will have the opportunity to learn with each other, from each other and from experts in other sports and industries," she added.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=E5b2T>



▲ Former MP Andy Reed expects to deliver his findings to the DCMS by the end of May

Reed to lead government CSP review

Andy Reed – the former MP for Loughborough – has been assigned to lead the review into the role played by County Sports Partnerships (CSP) as called for in the government's sport strategy, *Sporting Future*.

The review will look at the roles and functions of CSPs in a changing political landscape of devolved local government and insight-led sports provision.

Reed, who has chaired his local Leicestershire and Rutland CSP since 2004, said the review "comes at an important

time", and that he intends to approach the process "with an open mind".

"This review is a look at what CSPs will and can do in the future and what they will look like," Reed said.

Although the government initially set an autumn deadline for the review to be completed, Reed is likely to report to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with his findings by the end of May.

"I am looking forward to hearing from all sectors about CSP's future," he added. "I will set out a framework and a proper consultation process so we can get started as soon as possible."

CSPs are made up of local agencies working together to increase participation in sport and physical activity, including clubs and local authorities.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=g4p6a>

"This review is a look at what CSPs will and can do in the future and what they will look like"

West Ham United eyes Olympic Stadium capacity expansion

West Ham United is attempting to expand the capacity of the Olympic Stadium – its home from the 2016/17

season – following demand for tickets.

The club's board said it is "doing everything in its power" to expand

the capacity to 60,000 seats from the current 54,000 capacity.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=r5x7W>



Turn over: Scunthorpe United stadium plans get the green light

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EU SPORT FORUM 2016

Europe scrutinises sport governance

The European Commission will invite all major sporting federations to commit to a criteria for good governance in the wake of the scandals surrounding FIFA and the IAAF.

Tibor Navracsics, commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport at the European Commission, said he would launch the initiative during the European Week of Sport in September and put it forward as the way to “drive reform” and allow federations to “stand up and be counted”.

“We are painfully aware of the scandals engulfing professional sport. There are many threats”



For more on the EU Sport Forum go to page 42

▲ Tibor Navracsics, commissioner of education, culture, youth and sport

He said federations which fail to achieve the highest ethical standards “must face greater scrutiny, and if need be, our [the European Commission’s] full regulatory power”.

“We are all painfully aware of the scandals engulfing professional sport. The crisis of FIFA, doping in

athletics and match-fixing in tennis – there are many threats to the integrity of sport,” said Navracsics.

“My ambition is in four years time to be in a much better way than today, and we can once again have faith and confidence in sport organisations.”

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P6N4R>



▲ Ambassador Paula Radcliffe

This year’s European Week of Sport will take place on the week commencing 10 September 2016 after the inaugural event attracted 5m participants in 2015.

Festivities will begin in Kosice, Slovakia – a European City of Sport in 2016. Paula Radcliffe and Steven Gerrard were ambassadors for the week in 2015.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=l8j1l>

Refugee crisis prompts ERASMUS+ sports fund

Sports organisations in Europe will be able to bid for grants of up to €600,000 (£462,347, US\$657,647) for projects which are aimed at social inclusion for refugees.

European Commission head of sport policy and programmes, Yves Le Lostecque, revealed that those eligible for the ERASMUS+ funding had until 12 May to apply for a 2016 award.

He also told delegates at the EU Sport Forum 2016 that the Commission would be launching courses “targeting the better



▲ Yves Le Lostecque, European Commission head of sport policy

integration of migrants” through its Education, Youth and Sport division.

Le Lostecque’s announcement preceded a panel discussion about the role of European grassroots sport in

relation to the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis. According to statistics, 1m refugees entered the continent in 2015, with a further 130,000 coming in the first few months of 2016.

While the panel acknowledged that grassroots sports clubs could be the first opportunity for refugee integration, it said challenges around funding and manpower existed. **(For more on sport and migrants go to pages 38-40)**

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=t8F10>



Turn over: Who has been asked to lead the County Sports Partnerships review?



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NEWS IN BRIEF



▲ Designer and golfer Ernie Els

Wentworth lines up £20m improvements

Wentworth Golf Club will plough £20m (US\$28.4m, €25.9m) into revamping its course and facilities, with improvements earmarked for its tennis, health centre and clubhouse facilities.

The club will undertake “extensive work” on its West Course, led by four-time major championship winner and Golf Designer of the Year 2015 Ernie Els. **Read more:** <http://lei.sr?a=2v1j4>

Para-sport extravaganza at Gold Coast 2018 Games

Around 300 athletes will contest 38 medal events at Gold Coast 2018 – the largest para-sport event in the history of the Commonwealth Games.

At Glasgow 2014 there were 22 para-medal events across five sports: athletics, swimming, powerlifting, lawn bowls and track cycling – a previous record.

New disciplines, such as the first-ever wheelchair marathon will take place during the Games.

Commonwealth Games Federation president Louise Martin CBE said that the move represented “ambitious and welcome growth” in para-sport. **Read more:** <http://lei.sr?a=Q5c3s>



GETTY IMAGES

▲ Ex-England batsman Marcus Trescothick has backed the Mental Health Charter

Sport for mental health needs support

Eight in 10 people believe the government should plough more finance into sport and physical activity programmes which combat mental health issues.

According to a study commissioned by the Sport and Recreation Alliance, the Professional Player's Federation and mental health charity Mind, 84 per cent of the 1,000 respondents called for more Treasury money, while 80 per cent agreed that their mental health improved when they were more physically active.

The research, published ahead of the year anniversary of the Sport and Recreation Alliance's Mental Health Charter, found that 85 per cent believed

“As a sector with the capacity to reach so many, there are still opportunities to create new initiatives which can educate”

that healthcare professionals should promote physical activity as treatment.

Former England cricketer Marcus Trescothick, who has spoken openly about his own depression, said there were “many opportunities to create initiatives” to educate and involve people.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a8f3u_P

ECB cuts the number of County Championship cricket fixtures

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has made changes to the domestic calendar resulting in fewer County Championship matches.

From the 2017 season, the number of County Championship



▲ T20 fixtures will be played in July and August

rounds will be reduced from 16 to 14.

T20 Blast will also be played in July and August to “best make use of the summer holiday period”.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=3q2d3>





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▲ Barça president Bartomeu

DEVELOPMENT

FC Barcelona gears up for the future with €600m project

The Catalan giant lifts the lid on the “most important sports project in the world”

FC Barcelona has unveiled the blueprint for an ambitious sports district which the club is billing as “the most important sports project in Europe and the world”.

The Catalan giant has lifted the lid on the €600m (US\$651.9m, £467.4m) project – called Espai Barça – which includes the development of the iconic Nou Camp stadium, a 6,000-capacity ‘Miniestadi’ for its youth teams and a multi-sports and concert centre.

The latter is being designed by US sports architects HOK and Spanish studio TAC Arquitectes, while the stadium redevelopment will be overseen by Japanese architects Nikken Sekkei and Spanish firm Pascual i Ausio Arquitectes.

Nikken Sekkei beat competition from AECOM, Arup Sport, Gensler and Populous for the design contract.

The Nou Camp’s capacity will expand from 99,000 seats to 105,000, cementing its place as the largest



▲ The redeveloped Nou Camp will be at the heart of the €600m district

“This is every Barça fan’s dream, one that will become a reality and legacy to be enjoyed by future generations. The project will generate new opportunities”

stadium in Europe by a distance, as well as FC Barcelona’s status as one of the biggest football clubs in the world.

“This is every Barça fan’s dream, one that will become a reality and a legacy to be enjoyed by future generations,” said a club statement. “The project will generate new opportunities for our social and economic development, increase revenue and the value of the club’s assets, boost sponsorship, improve conditions for our athletes, achieve

environmental sustainability and create venues for a 21st century Barça.”

Deloitte’s most recent Football Money League revealed that FC Barcelona had become the second-richest football club in Europe, behind La Liga arch-rival Real Madrid with revenues of £426.6m (€560.8m), and the project will only increase its financial muscle.

Last year, FC Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu said that he wanted the club to be the first to generate revenues of €1bn (US\$1.1bn, £727m).

Work on the Nou Camp is scheduled to start during the 2017/18 season and is expected to be finished before the start of the 2021/22 season.

Proposals to revamp the stadium and build the surrounding complex were revealed in January last year.

Read More: <http://lei.sr?a=L1o8Z>



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EQUALITY

Sexism still rife in football

A quarter of females working in the football industry have suffered some kind of bullying, with 15 per cent claiming to be victims of sexual harassment, a survey has found.

Conducted by equality body Women in Football and Professor Sue Bridgewater, the study has laid bare the challenge facing the football industry when it comes to gender equality, two years after an original survey was taken.

The 15 per cent of respondents who claimed to have been victims of sexual

“There is still a considerable way to go before there is a level playing field for women”



▲ Heather Rabbatts is the only female board member for the Football Association

harassment has more than doubled from 7 per cent in 2014, while 19 per cent had been barred from certain areas of the game based on their gender, compared to 7 per cent in 2014.

FA board member Heather Rabbatts said there was still a “considerable way to go before there is a level playing field

for women working across the game”, but added that “experiences of many women in the game are increasingly positive”.

Indeed, 60 per cent of the 505 professionals surveyed found that the opportunities for women in football were increasing.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=s3q2o>

Bristol named as the UK's European City of Sport for 2017

Bristol has pledged to involve every corner of its “diverse community” after being unveiled as the UK's European City of Sport for 2017.

After the award was accepted by the Bristol Partnership for Sport and Active Recreation on behalf of the city, the council indicated that women and girls in sport would be a key theme during the year.

In 2017, Bristol's County Ground will host ICC Women's Cricket World Cup matches, while female sport is “showing exceptional growth and success” following the launch of the



▲ Diverse sports groups will a focus during the year

Bristol Girls Can campaign, which encourages physical activity participation.

Mayor George Ferguson will also dedicate £5,000

(US\$7,151, €6,443) from his discretionary fund to contribute towards black and ethnic minority sports groups in the area. St Jude's

Women's Group, Docklands Youth Centre, Bristol West Indies Phoenix Cricket Club and the Bristol Brothers football team are among the groups who will benefit from the additional funding.

Ferguson said that he “took an early decision to investigate the potential of sport” soon after becoming mayor in 2012, and the bid followed a mayoral commission on sport overseen by Colin Sextone, the chair of the Bristol Partnership for Sport and Active Recreation.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=l5X0x>





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NEWS IN BRIEF



▲ IOC president Thomas Bach

Thomas Bach confirms Rio 2016 refugee team

Forty-three promising athletes are in the mix for selection to compete at this summer's Olympic Games in Rio in a team made up entirely of refugees.

"By welcoming the team of Refugee Olympic Athletes to the Olympic Games Rio 2016, we want to send a message of hope for all refugees in our world," said IOC president Thomas Bach.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=d9o4u>

Sportscotland sets aside athlete fund

Thirty-two Scottish athletes aiming to win medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang will receive sportscotland Athlete Personal Awards grants.

The sports quango has set aside £192,000 (US\$271,576, €248,398) for the first year of the two-year investment, using money from its National Lottery fund and additional investment from the Scottish government. The athletes will use the funds for additional training support, competition and living expenses.

Individual beneficiaries include swimmer Cameron Brodie.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=C6n4i>



▲ The development will include a man-made beach and a moat for kayakers

BIG designing new Redskins stadium

After months of speculation, National Football League (NFL) franchise the Washington Redskins has confirmed architects Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) will design its new home and unveiled the first details of the project.

Described by the Redskins as "a new stadium concept", BIG's creation – a transparent wave-like structure – is designed with a particular focus on how it will be used on non-match days.

"The one thing that everybody is excited about is the idea that the stadium is designed as much for the pre-game events as the game itself," said architect Bjarke Ingels.

"We have found a way to make the stadium a more lively destination without ruining the turf for the football game"

"We have found a way to make the stadium a more lively destination throughout the year without ruining the turf for the football game."

Redskins owner Dan Snyder wants to relocate the franchise from its current 82,000-capacity ground at FedEx Field.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=3A3D6>

Prominent sportswomen criticise media representation in Wales

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson is among the high-profile figures to criticise the Welsh media for failing to give enough prominence to women's sport.

In an open letter sent to BBC Cymru



▲ Tanni Grey-Thompson signed the letter

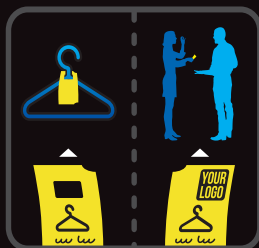
Wales, ITV Wales, S4C and Media Wales, the 20 high-profile female signatories said the under-representative picture was "deeply concerning".

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=o1j1y>



Turn over: Which city has been named the UK's European City of Sport 2017?

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Martyn Ashton

Mountain biking legend Martyn Ashton suffered a life-changing injury while doing a stunt in 2013. Now he's back on the bike with dreams of starting a new sport

Kath Hudson • journalist • Sports Management

Martyn Ashton's story is worthy of a movie: a mountain biker who does loads of crazy stuff, suffers an accident and then makes a comeback, as gnarly as ever and an inspirational role model for disabled sport.

His two Road Bike Party videos made him an internet sensation, receiving 14m views and earning him a loyal following – fans wanted to buy him rehabilitation equipment after his accident.

Ashton and his friends, Danny MacAskill and Chris Akrigg, bounced off rooftops, back flipped and bunny hopped in all sorts of places where bikes really shouldn't be. Like Parkour on two wheels, it's magic in motion, making impossible stunts look easy and while having huge amounts of fun.

Tragically, in September 2013, while performing a show at a Moto GP in Silverstone, Ashton crashed from a 3m height and damaged T9 and T10 vertebrae, leaving him paralysed from the waist down.



Ashton is a former British and World Champion mountain bike trial rider

Months lying in a hospital bed followed and when he was finally allowed to sit up, the lack of feeling below his naval meant sitting unsupported felt like sitting on a balancing ball, which makes it all the more incredible that he can now ride a bike down a mountain.

Ashton remained upbeat – he says practising positivity is as important as eating breakfast – and before long took up hand cycling, got in touch with Disability Sport Wales and tried other sports too.

A blog post written 13 months after his accident, however, showed how much he yearned to get back on a bike: "I love riding bicycles, so no amount of hand biking or swimming will change that desire for two wheels," he wrote.

"The freedom of rolling through single track with sweeping turns between trees, or the sensation of dropping into a steep root-riddled downhill run. I don't need to find new sports to replace bikes.

"I need to get back on a bike, I need to ride with my mates, enjoy the outdoors and the terrain that is out there for me to ride. I don't know how I will do it, but I know I must – because that's who I am, that is what I do. I ride."

And that is exactly what he has done. In June last year, less than two years after he was paralysed, Ashton got the old team back together, plus Blake Samson, and went to Antur Stiniog trail centre in North Wales to film *Back on Track*.

It took about six months to bring the plan together. A bike was built using Mojo suspension and a Nicolai frame, with a Tempo sit-ski, designed for use in paralympic snowsports.

"I thought 'wouldn't it be funny if an ex-pro rider made a downhill mountain biking video?'" says Ashton, laughing. "I just wanted to present something which looked easy and fun. We laughed



Ashton needs to be strapped onto his bike as he has no feeling in his legs

ALL PHOTOS: DAVE MACKINSON



Turn over: All the latest news and analysis




Ashton (second from right) hopes he can inspire others with similar injuries to get active

A beginner can do something which can make them feel as elated as Chris Hoy winning a gold medal – it's just that Hoy has had to go to that level to get the elation



Ashton and his friends back doing what they do best – riding



Ashton was back in the saddle just two years after being paralysed in an exhibition stunt

“If I can get 10 people to do this, then we have a sport! Some people are already doing it, so my idea has now become their sport”

for two days and in the evenings as well. I had done it – I was back on a bike and back with my friends.”

When asked if returning to the saddle was as good as it used to be Ashton says it is: “The first moment you do anything new on a bike, you think ‘Wow!’ and you just have to keep pushing things to get that same buzz again.

“A beginner can do something which can make them feel as elated as Chris Hoy winning a gold medal, it’s just that he’s had to go to that level to get the elation. You have to keep pushing and keep hunting for the feeling.

Back on Track, filmed in Wales, has already received six million views online

“For me, this was new so it felt just as crazy and bonkers as any other situation I’ve been in.”

Ashton is keen to use his breakthrough to inspire other disabled people into sport and he says what has been really gratifying is having videos sent to him of people doing the same thing.

“One guy had even gone to Mojo and got the same bike built! I was really chuffed about that because it feels like we’re cheating the world, we’re breaking the rules and defying the situation.”

After receiving six million views for *Back on Track*, Ashton is now incubating a plan for a second video, but also has a further ambition: to organise a downhill mountain biking competition for disabled people. He envisages riders being timed racing down a mountain, with an able-bodied partner who can assist them in any way necessary. “If I can get 10 people racing then it’s a sport,” he says. “Some people are already doing it, so my idea has now become their sport.”

To make his vision become reality, he is looking for a race organiser and sponsor to get on board: “I need a very bold sponsor to give it the feeling of this being important. It’s not my style to do something low key, I want to get the sort of exposure that a really good race would get.” ●



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Should professional football matches only be played on grass?

The total risk of injury is the same on football turf as it is on natural grass



Professor Jan Ekstrand
Vice-chair of UEFA medical committee

The Professional Footballers' Association Scotland (PFAS) has questioned the use of artificial surfaces in Scottish league games after 73 per cent of professional players said they'd prefer to play on a "deteriorating grass pitch" than a 3G one.

According to the PFAS' 3G Pro-Player Survey – which questioned 700 players – the fear of injury and inconsistencies in pitch quality were the players' main concerns for the use of artificial surfaces.

In response, the Scottish Football Association issued a statement saying there was no evidence suggesting artificial turf caused more injuries than natural grass – and that of the 11 stadiums with artificial surfaces in Scotland, nine have either been installed or upgraded since 2012. We asked the experts for their views.

John Hughes
Manager, Inverness
Caledonian Thistle



Players are not happy with artificial pitches. They're not conducive to football

At first I was all for installing artificial pitches at football stadiums, as there's another economic side to them – which I can totally understand in terms of the local community and academies and the finance. But now I think we should all be playing on grass.

It's not great for football unless it's wet. The surfaces can become sticky and create extra bounce. Players simply aren't happy with it.

If they go in for a slide tackle and if it's not wet, players can get burnt. I believe it's not conducive to football.

In terms of it being in the top flight in the Scottish Professional Football League, it's not for me.

I would make every club pay a bond, let's say £50,000. If your pitch meets the criteria right through the season, you get your money back.

If you put that bond in place, everybody would look after their pitch and it would be a lot better to play football in Scotland.

The reality is that artificial football turf is not very popular among elite coaches and players. This is probably based on the bad experiences they had in the early days of artificial turf, but there is no scientific substance behind it. Perception is one thing and reality is another thing.

We carried out a study on top teams which played all of their home matches on artificial turf and their away matches on natural grass in order to compare the incidence of injury on both surfaces.

The results of all of the studies – the ones we carried out on elite football but also other studies on amateur and youth football as well as in other regions, such as America – are all entirely consistent: the total risk of injury is the same on football turf as it is on natural grass.

We see the same result in all studies: there is no increase in injuries when playing on FIFA-certified football turf. Some studies show a small difference in the injury pattern, with an increase in ankle ligament injuries on football turf but a decrease in muscle injuries.

I have to say that our studies only focused on injuries that caused absence from either training or matches. There might have been sore muscle or back pain issues that were not part of the studies but that some players and teams have reported.





JEFF HOLMES/PA WIRE

Hamilton Academical's New Douglas Park is one of the stadium's to have an artificial pitch

Eric O'Donnell

Managing director,
Sports Labs



3G pitches help ease the burden on grass pitches which can only be used for eight hours a week

In an ideal world, football at all levels would be played on high quality, natural grass pitches which are well maintained. The reality here in

Scotland, however, is that neither the weather nor the financial climate is perfect at the moment. 3G artificial playing surfaces therefore have a vital role to play across the game.

Fundamentally, 3G pitches are here to stay and greatly help to ease the burden on grass pitches, which can only be used for football between five to eight hours a week.

Considering that pitch maintenance budgets are continually under threat – given the financial challenges faced by local authorities, who look after the vast majority of public pitches – it is obvious Scotland is faced with real

difficulty in supporting its national game in facility terms."

Developments in pitch technology means 3G pitches are only becoming safer and closer to mirroring the performance characteristics of natural grass. These developments, along with the stringent testing standards in the European Union, make these facilities safe to use.

The impact 3G surfaces have on the development of football is significant – the increase in access, hours of use and the ability to address the climatic challenges of playing football in a country like Scotland are undeniable.



Fraser Wishart

CEO, Scottish Professional
Footballers' Association

Our survey showed that 73 per cent of players would rather play on a deteriorating grass pitch than an artificial surface. The results of the survey are the opinions of the players, who play and train week in, week out on these surfaces, and they should be taken into account by the clubs and governing bodies when they are looking to introduce artificial surfaces.

There are currently 11 artificial surfaces in the professional game in Scotland, but of these only the two in the Scottish Premiership are subject to random spot checks. Interestingly, 72 per cent of players taking part in the survey said artificial surfaces shouldn't be allowed at the top level.

No one is claiming players only get injured on artificial surfaces, but more than 70 per cent of those questioned said not only did it take them longer to recover after playing on an artificial pitch, they were also more concerned about picking up an injury when playing on it.

We're not saying there is no place in the game for artificial surfaces, but it is clear that further discussion is required involving players, managers, surgeons, physios and even groundsmen to determine at what level. We're simply asking the clubs to listen to the players and the experts when they are making decisions on the future of their playing surfaces.



Dennis Crowley

**How do you go from being a tech innovator to launching a professional sports club?
Entrepreneur and founder of FourSquare, Dennis Crowley, is about to find out**

Tom Walker • managing editor • Sports Management

Serial internet entrepreneur Dennis Crowley is working on his next venture. This time, however, the New York-based founder of Foursquare and Swarm won't be at his workspace, masterminding an app or a new piece of tech. Rather, he'll most likely be either standing next to a soccer pitch, assessing young talent, or pitching for a sponsorship deal.

Crowley's latest project is Stockade Football Club, a men's semi-professional team based in Kingston, New York, US. The club will begin its first season this May, playing in the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL), the fourth level of the US soccer pyramid.



Dennis Crowley founded social media platform FourSquare in 2008

"We're starting from scratch," says Crowley, who spent two years at Google after the tech giant acquired Dodgeball, another social media platform he created. "We're building a brand and creating an identity – and of course getting a coach and recruiting players. The plan is to do it in a way which allows us to develop a story around it."

GEOGRAPHY

Crowley says the motivation for launching a club stems from two sources – his love of soccer and the location of his new home. "I currently split my time between New York City and our new house in the Hudson Valley," he says. "During the process of moving and making Kingston a permanent home, my wife and I simply fell in love with the area."

"I realised that there's a huge amount of interest and enthusiasm towards soccer in Hudson Valley – but no team for people to support. Lots of people play the sport and many drive down to to see Major League Soccer (MLS) games in New York City, so there's definitely a market for what we're trying to achieve."

What Crowley wants to achieve is to create enough excitement to fill the 1,500-capacity Dietz Stadium in Kingston – a venue which opened back in 1949 and until now has acted mainly as the home for Kingston High School's Tigers football team. "We're not talking about creating an MLS franchise here – we're building a division four soccer team," he explains in the somewhat modest setting.

BACKGROUND

When asked how he plans to transfer his considerable skills in creating social networks and utilise them in setting up a venue-based sports



Crowley (centre) with the club's coaching and management team



Turn over: Should professional football matches be played on grass only?



The club will play at the 1,500-capacity Dietz Stadium



The first player trials were held at the beginning of March under the watchful eye of head coach George Vizvary (left picture)

I know that people in the Hudson Valley will be very excited about us, but what I'm really interested in exploring is whether we can get people outside New York state – or even outside the US interested

venture, Crowley says the synergies between the two are stronger than they might at first seem. "My background is in building tech companies which are supported by user communities," he explains. "Working on Stockade FC feels very similar to that."

"You start with an idea which is a little bit crazy, but the more people you tell about it, the less crazy it becomes. You then get people to buy into it – to love the brand and the product – and before you know it, they've become supporters of it."

To help local people fall in love with the Stockade brand, Crowley has made sure the club's "story" is infused with the area's rich heritage. "Kingston is steeped in American

The club's brand is built around local history



history and the town dates back to the original Dutch settlers of the mid-1600s," Crowley says. "Kingston was also the first capital of New York state."

The club's name and logo reference a historic wooden stockade fence – 16ft tall, made out of logs – which protected the mid-17th century Dutch settlement, known as Wiltwyck. That history is still alive in Kingston, located 91 miles north of New York City.

"To this day there's an area called the Stockade District – and the Dietz Stadium where we play is only a five-minute walk from it," he says.

TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS

While the club might be the only team in its geographical market, the global nature of soccer

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Crowley hopes to garner national and international interest in the Stockade project

and the world's leading clubs means Stockade FC will have some powerful rivals. Manchester United, Liverpool FC, Real Madrid and Barcelona all have huge followings in the area. In New York City, for example, there are sports bars which declare themselves "United-friendly", due to being located close to venues decked out in Liverpool flags.

Crowley relishes the challenge and is even planning on taking the "super clubs" on at their own game – by securing support outside the team's immediate market.

"I know that people in the Hudson Valley will be very excited about us," he says. "But the question is, can we get people outside Hudson Valley excited too – people in New York City, people outside New York state, outside the US, even?"

Merchandise was made available in February – before the club had signed a single player



Whether there's an opportunity for that is one of the things we're really interested in exploring."

The efforts are already in full swing. Stockade FC's first ever game might still be 10 weeks away, but an online shop offering international shipping for a range of branded merchandise has already opened. No surprise, perhaps, given Crowley's skillsets.

If the experiment does work and Stockade FC manages to secure a space in soccer fans' consciousnesses, Crowley is keen to help others faced with the same task.

"If we get Stockade to the point where we think we've made something great – something that people love – we can then start turning our attention to how we might be able to help other clubs get off the ground," he says.

"My hope is that we can inspire those who don't have a team in their hometown to do what we're doing – to go out and build one." ●



A sporting welcome

Sport can be a powerful tool to support social cohesion and integrate immigrant communities – and some of the best initiatives have been launched by members of the public

Kath Hudson • journalist • Sports Management

Immigration has become one of the biggest issues of our time and it is rare for a day to go by without it hitting the headlines.

According to Migration Watch UK, the UK population has increased by an average of around 400,000 a year since 2000 and currently stands at nearly 65 million. The ONS estimates the UK population is expected to reach 70 million by 2027, on the current assumption of 185,000 a year, although in 2014 net migration was more than this at 312,000.

The greater the number of arrivals, the greater the importance of integration, both to counter problems which can arise through social exclusion, but also to build strong communities where all ethnic groups mix and play a part. Sport can be a useful tool in this respect: non-verbal communication and shared experience can overcome language barriers – you don't need words to celebrate a goal – plus sport can be a great leveller and a great way to get to know people.

Toby Green founded Harbour FC after seeing refugees play football on a piece of grass



Despite this, initiatives using sport to integrate immigrant communities are still thin on the ground, partly because sports providers have been slow to drive them forward and also because funding has been limited. For example, inclusive martial arts provider Sanjuro had to discontinue a programme for victims of torture because the funding stream stopped.

In recognition of the fact that funding to integrate refugees and asylum seekers is limited, a consortium of funders has just launched The New Beginnings Fund. Administered by The London Community Forum, it will support local groups working to welcome refugees and asylum seekers into communities.

Funding is obviously important to make widescale change, but programmes don't have to cost the earth in order to make a difference. Harbour Football Club in Swindon is just one example of how even small projects can be effective, if driven by an energetic individual.

Toby Green started the club when he saw refugees playing football on a piece of grass. Having experienced the isolation of living abroad and then



Refugee players in action for the Harbour Football Club in Swindon, UK



Green (left), found a local sponsor for pitch fees

HARBOUR FOOTBALL CLUB PICS: TO CARLOS BETANCOURT



Turn over: Dennis Crowley, the tech entrepreneur behind Stockade FC



SHUTTERSTOCK SPECTRAL-DESIGN

Football is an
international language,
played on all continents
by people of all ages

Most of them didn't have the right clothes – one guy wore shoes you'd wear to a job interview

making friends through playing football, he was keen to extend a welcome. "There's been a lot of negativity around the refugee crisis and I wanted to show there are people who welcome migrants into the community," he says.

"A local business gave me funding to hire an artificial pitch for two hours each Sunday and I persuaded some coaches to give their time to help run the sessions.

"A local football club donated the balls and boots. Most of them didn't have the right clothes and one guy wore shoes you'd wear to a job interview."

With people donating time and kit, this has been an inexpensive scheme to set up and Green says it is something which sports clubs and leisure centres could easily offer in their off-peak hours.

Around 15-20 people come along each week and are all abilities: some have never played before and don't know the rules, others quickly progress into local teams playing in the Sunday league, making new friends and becoming part of the community.

Also based on football, the Devon-based charity Plymouth Hope was started in 2009 by David Feindouno with the aim of promoting social inclusion.

Feindouno says the programme has three aims: to get people to exercise regularly (these are hard-to-reach groups who have very limited incomes), create a platform for immigrants to make friends and to use football as an integration tool as people progress to the local league.

The initiative has gone from strength to strength, winning support from national charities like Sported and Children in Need. The team has joined a football league, added youth activities to the programme and volunteers visit local primary schools to talk about racial awareness.



MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

However, Feindouno says it has been difficult to find funding as the concept is difficult to convey in grant applications. "We are using sport to change behaviour: many of the people we help have behavioural issues, but conforming to the rules and discipline of a sport helps them manage their emotions," he says. "Many people don't understand the benefits which sport has and so it can be hard to persuade people to give funding to allow people to play football."

Feindouno says sports clubs and leisure centres could help the cause by allowing groups such as Plymouth Hope to use facilities at a discount. "Our volunteers work hard to raise money and it goes quickly on hiring facilities," he says.

As sports and health and fitness providers are tasked with getting everyone active, and often struggle to engage with hard-to-reach groups such as these, it makes sense for them to team up with groups like Plymouth Hope and Harbour Football Club. Initiatives like these may not add to the bottom line, but they do use sport to create a better society and engage communities. ●

Sport can alleviate the feeling of isolation and anxiety among young people who are forced to move to another country



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The EU Sport Forum 2016

As the refugee crisis and growing inactivity puts Europe under increasing strain, grassroots sport is being put forward as the solution. Matthew Campelli reports from The Hague

Matthew Campelli • news editor • Sports Management

The Hague – the Dutch capital best known as the international city of peace and justice – became a city of sport for a few days this month when hundreds of industry delegates across the continent descended on the city's Kurhaus Grand Hotel for the EU Sport Forum 2016.

Located on the seafront, just metres from where the city held the Beach Volleyball World Championships in 2015, and close to where the 2014 Hockey World Cup took place, the location of the forum had all the sporting credentials to host such a conference, and there was much to discuss.

At the heart of the debate was the refugee and migrant crisis that is currently engulfing Europe, as boat after boat of displaced humans search for sanctuary against terrorism and oppressive regimes elsewhere. More than 1m migrants travelled to the continent in 2015 alone, with a further 130,000 making the journey in the first few months of 2016 (see page 38).

Also on the agenda was sport and its relation to health and the prevention of disease. Sir Graham Watson, president of EuropeActive, told delegates the “one in every five European children were overweight or obese”, while the over-65 population is expected to double in the next 50 years, putting “huge pressure on healthcare and social security systems” across the Union.

“Inactivity costs more than €80m (£62bn, US\$88.8bn) per year, 6 per cent of the total budget of European health expenditure,” said Watson. “Facing this challenge, grassroots sport can contribute significantly to get more people more active more often.”



Tibor Navracsics, the European Commission commissioner for sport, has placed grassroots sport at the centre of the agenda

Indeed, grassroots sport was put forward as a solution for both growing levels of inactivity and the mass-integration job required in Europe following the influx of refugees and migrants.

As a result, Tibor Navracsics, European Commission commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport, is putting grassroots sport at the heart of his agenda to create a better Europe, and the Hungarian and his colleagues used the forum to make it known that physical activity is no longer being banished to the margins by the EU.

“Sport is an underdeveloped strand we think should become more important to the EU. Sport as a tool for development has been largely unexplored, but sport is

a common language that transcends borders,” said European Commission deputy director general for education and culture, Jens Nymand Christensen.

To begin, Navracsics has commissioned a ‘high level group’ to devise innovative schemes in which sport and physical activity can be used as forces for good in health, the economy and social inclusion during a challenging period for Europe. Such initiatives will be well-funded and put forward as legitimate means improve people’s quality of life.

Watson co-chairs the high level group with Niels Nygaard, president of Denmark’s National Olympic Committee, which has to present findings to Navracsics by the mid-2016.

Wolfgang Baumann, secretary general of The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA) and another member of the 15-strong group, gave the forum a snapshot of what was on the table.

“I recently came across an interview in an Australian newspaper with a renowned professor who was asked what he thought were the major



Turn over: How sport is being used to integrate refugees and migrants



“ Sport is an underdeveloped strand we think should become more important to the EU. Sport as a tool for development has been largely unexplored, but sport transcends borders ”

future challenges the world had to face, and he gave a threefold answer,” said Baumann. “One – the increase of terrorism, two – the increase of global warming, three – the increase of physical inactivity.

“You might call us dreamers, but we certainly believe grassroots sports can play an extremely important role in coping with all these challenges, not just the challenge of physical activity, but the other two to a certain degree.”

Topics being discussed by the high level group include grassroots sport’s effect on social inclusion, as well as skills development, which not only speaks to the integration of migrants from other cultures, but to the millions of disaffected young Europeans who are unemployed and losing their way.

The high level group will devise initiatives in which grassroots sport can be used to help host communities in Europe integrate refugees

Using grassroots sport to boost the economy, and health, and to inspire urban planning and infrastructure will also form part of the recommendations.

“How do we measure success? Of course this has to do with the quality of our final recommendations,” explained Baumann. “They should be new, beyond traditional target groups, cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, efficient, and of course, according to the competences of the European Commission. These are not just buzzwords but a serious framework for our work.”

While Europe feels at its most fragile than at any period since the end of the Second World War, it would be a feather in the cap of the industry if grassroots sport can genuinely be used as a beacon of hope by the continent’s decision-makers. ●

NEUWLAND/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Train like a pro

Sports performance training is set to become a consumer trend in 2016

Kath Hudson • journalist • Sports Management

Just because members of sports clubs or gyms aren't elite, it doesn't mean they can't train like Usain Bolt: sports performance training, backed up with feedback from wearables, is tipped as one of the hot trends for this year.

Elite athletes not only have superior talent to the rest of us, they also have initial access to the latest research and training techniques. While we

can't do much about the talent side of things, we can certainly learn a great deal from athletes when it comes to training techniques.

"Many fitness industry trends are old news on the sports performance side," says Ryan Collier, director at Genefit. "High intensity training (HIT) became big in gyms a few years ago, but it has been used in swimming for 30 years."

Jon Johnston, CEO of Matrix, says he is seeing an increasing number of gyms putting a focus on the sports performance side, with whole areas or floors dedicated to the concept. "Many of our university and college clients are focusing on sports performance," he says. "Also, a number of local authorities and trusts are now providing specific elite and performance training areas. For example, Life Leisure in Houldsworth Sports Village in Stockport is the regional base for British Weightlifting."

So what does sports performance training actually involve? According to the experts, elements include HIT, big lifting, working with wattage and power in cycling, monitoring heart rate zones and using technology as well as video analysis.

At his sports performance gym in Putney, decathlon legend, Daley Thompson has created a concept which combines traditional sports equipment – ropes, ladders and vaulting horses – with cutting edge cardio and strength equipment and Myzone technology, all pulled together with his experience, knowledge and sense of fun.

Ian Daniell of Core Health & Fitness, who consulted on Daley's Gym, says technology, like Myzone and Training Peaks, is helping to fuel the trend: "People are developing a greater understanding and they want to know their power on a bike and their heart rate zones," he says.

Going forward, Collier believes periodisation will soon become adopted: "Athletes take a year long view to their training: beasting themselves during the off season and working more on skills and tactics



Many clubs now combine traditional sports training equipment with modern technology

SHUTTERSTOCK/BARANO



PA ARCHIVE/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Members of sports clubs and gyms are being given the chance to train like Usain Bolt



The High Performance Club

Health club operator Fitness First is an early adopter of sports performance training and fully embraced it at a concept club in Melbourne, Australia which opened last May. The High Performance Club is progress-driven, science-based and results-focused, teaching members how to train like an athlete to get superior results.

The ethos behind it is that you don't have to be genetically gifted to have the body of an athlete – you just have to train like one. Fitness First has invested heavily in research and technology to deliver the concept, such as the MoveLab which uses video technology to allow members to test their athletic performance, analyse their movements and perfect their technique. The concept also uses a team of physiologists, sports scientists, strength coaches and top trainers.

Adrian Holdsworth, national development manager of Fitness First Australia, says the feedback has been fantastic: "Many members were surprised at the lack of traditional equipment, but after experiencing the product and gaining a better understanding, the results have been wonderful. Club staff have been great in helping us carve out a niche proposition which appeals to people who are in need of something more innovative and progressive with their training."

Although the concept will not be rolled out, some of the most successful techniques and technology will be.

"We approach our concept clubs like car companies approach Formula 1: we test ideas and use tech, which are then introduced at other clubs whenever appropriate and possible," says Holdsworth.



Fitness First is among the early adopters

Clubs need to make sure staff are trained in the latest techniques and are able to make them accessible – especially as members might feel what elite athletes do is irrelevant and beyond their capabilities



Members can benefit from performance training tailored to their needs

during the season. I think we will see more of this happening among the general public."

Unlike some trends, which threaten to cut the gym out, as people download and have a go at their own programme, this trend favours the health and fitness/sports industry, as expert advice is needed for activities like dead lifting and Olympic lifting, which can result in injury if not done properly.

To make the most of the trend, fitness providers need to make sure staff are trained in the latest techniques, and are able to make them accessible to their members, especially as many people will feel what elite athletes do is irrelevant to them and beyond their capabilities.

"Attend courses regularly, find out about the new and crazy science and interpret that for the general public. Tailor it so that it's accessible and relevant to them as well," says Collier. ●

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Getting them hooked

In the first of a series of three articles on fan engagement, we look at how clubs and rights holders get fans connected and excited ahead of events

Tom Walker • managing editor • Sports Management

It's increasingly important for professional clubs and major events organisers to keep fans connected and engaged. The battle for consumers in a crowded, tech-driven marketplace – where gaming and other forms of entertainment are available at the press of a button – has resulted in sport having to reinvent the traditional customer journey.

Buying a ticket at the turnstile, queuing for half-time refreshments and leaving at the final whistle is an experience which only exists at smaller clubs – and even there things are changing. See page 34 to read how Stockade FC, a newly created club in the US is yet to play a game – but has already launched an online shop and attracted a social media following.



Social media offers huge opportunities for clubs to reach out to fans

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

A number of elite clubs are investing time and effort in the way they are engaging with their fans. English Premier League (EPL) club Manchester City FC (MCFC) has been able to create a fun personality to its brand

by its readiness to interact with fans. It regularly maintains conversations on social networks through replies and retweets.

MCFC's cross-city rival Manchester United, meanwhile, was a latecomer to Twitter – it only joined in April 2012 – so had to play catch up. By using Twitter to break exclusive news and offer unique content to fans, however, United has now become the platform's most followed EPL club with 7.2m followers.

While top clubs prefer to do their own engagement work, there are now a range of companies offering specialised fan engagement services. One of these is global marketing agency VML, which in 2011 was tasked with building a new EPL website. Today, VML's work covers many of the league's digital needs.

"Over the past three years we've provided the Premier League with a new platform to engage football fans through online/digital which they didn't have before," says Cameron O'Brien, one of the VML team members working on the EPL project.

"Central to this strategy is the dramatisation of every moment of Premier League action online. We used an enormous database of match data – from more than 20 years of Premier League history – to create three primary states for digital properties: pre-game, live game and post-game.

For O'Brien, the run up to matches is an ideal moment to "hook" supporters and get them involved. "The pre-game engagement is all about building anticipation and excitement – using historical results, current form, expert analysis and fan opinion to create predictive analysis.

"When it comes to channels, we've developed each channel differently for the delivery of this strategy. Mobile is the first access point for match updates, while social media forms the centre point for discussion and debate.

"Adding to that, we created a website which acts as the rich and immersive experience."



Manchester City regularly interacts with its fans over social media





PHILIP WILCOCKS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Deepening relationships with fans also means they are less likely to lapse in their support when results are bad – and far more likely to watch and attend games

While the Premier League is now a global brand – and so can undertake fan engagement activities outside its geographical market – it doesn't mean it can take its "home market" for granted. Other global players are already moving into its territory with their own engagement activities.

One of these is the National Football League (NFL), which has organised regular "International Series" games in London since 2007 and is now planning a permanent franchise in the capital.

As the regular NFL season is relatively short – the teams play just 16 games – each match is seen as a major event. This is reflected in the way the London-based games are marketed to potential UK audiences.

A five day-long "NFL Week" takes over central London each October and in 2015 the entire length of Regent Street – a major artery for transport – was cut off to make space for fan zones, entertainment areas and a large stage on which player interviews and live music were performed. Each of the six

Fans are eager to share their experiences on social media – offering clubs free brand exposure

teams playing in London had their own area and the week-long festival was supported by an NFL UK Fan Pass app, further engaging with fans who might not have a match ticket but wanted to join in.

The mobile Fan Pass – which remains active after the International Series – allowed fans to create, organize and customise their experiences at fan events around the city. Created in partnership with tech firm Crowdtorch, the app offered fans a chance to schedule events they were keen to attend, utilise maps to find their way around each event and share experiences across social media. For those attending the game, it built up excitement by offering a chance to win exclusive NFL experiences.

The International Series is an important part of NFL's strategy to expand into new markets and the fan engagement initiatives are seen crucial to its success. NFL UK's head of marketing, Sarah Swanson, says the Fan Pass is an example of how the league is planning to expand globally.



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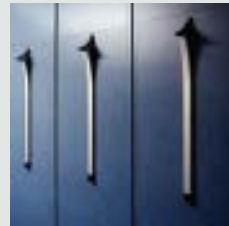
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PA WIRE/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

The NFL has established an engaged fan base in the UK and plans to create a permanent franchise in London

"In September 2015, we hired an international content manager," she says. "Not just for the UK market, but to cover other international markets too. His job is to bridge the gap between what's coming out of Los Angeles (the NFL HQ) and what we're trying to do internationally."

BOTTOM LINES

Having an engaged fanbase is important for even the most established of brands.

"Fan engagement initiatives have a huge impact on the Premier League's bottom line," O'Brien says. "At the most direct level the more time fans spend interacting with the league, the more exposure they have to sponsors and partners, which makes the media offering more valuable."

"Deepening relationships with fans also means they are less likely to lapse in their support when results are bad – and far more likely to watch and attend games, which ultimately increases revenue through ticket sales and broadcast rights."

O'Brien adds that efforts to connect with fans is crucial when looking to expand a club's or league's reach. "In more engaged fans the league is also more likely to be front of mind and associated with positively, leading to greater advocacy, which helps



The NFL Fan Pass supplemented the NFL's huge physical presence in central London

to spread fandom. This is particularly important in the developing world where fans have less of a regional affinity to any one team or league."

ADVICE

There is plenty of help available for those wanting to improve their engagement initiatives, with entire events now concentrating on the topic. February 2016 marked the third anniversary of the

Annual Sports Fan Engagement Conference – held in Charlotte, US – while this year's Sports Fan Summit in Melbourne, Australia, has chosen "Fan engagement in the Digital Age" as its theme.

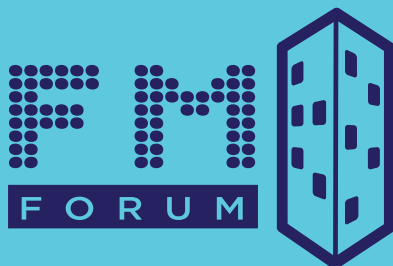
O'Brien says the key for any successful initiative is to place the identity of the club or event at the very heart of engagement. "Start with your product and work from there," he says.

"The sport itself is your biggest asset, so make sure the focus is on that and you never deviate too far away from it. Fans love to talk to each other about their passion and will always be your biggest advocates."

"Make sure you give them the tools to aid those passionate conversations by delivering insight and analysis – which they can then discuss, use and share with each other." ●



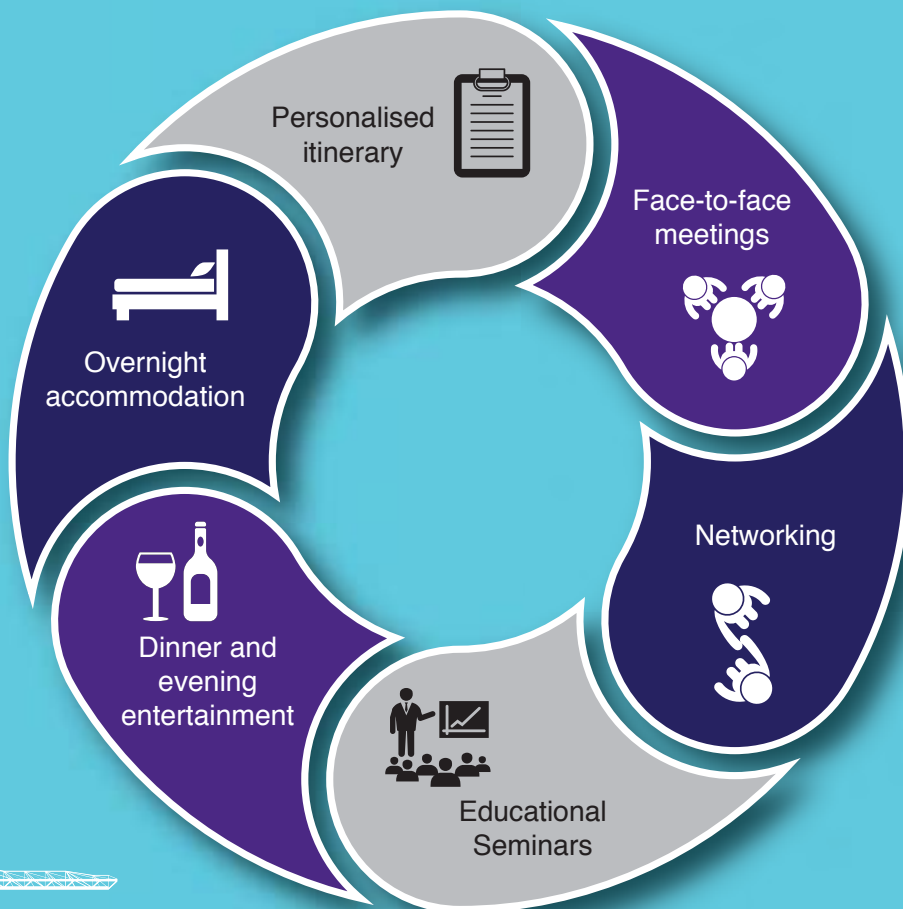
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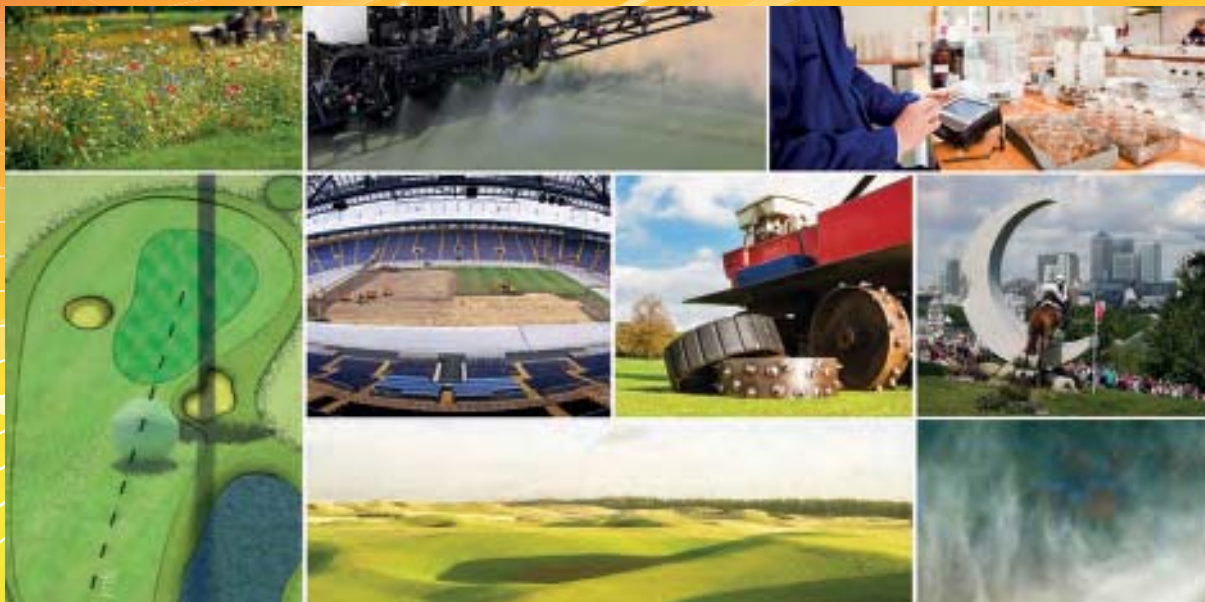
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Game changers

A look at the technology and innovation currently making waves across the world of sport



The Great Run Company organises some of Europe's most popular mass runs

Great runners to benefit from technology

The Great Run Company – which organises mass participation events across the UK – has signed a new partnership deal with navigational tech specialists **TomTom**.

TomTom has become the official wearable technology partner across the full Great Run series of events in 2016. As a result, all Great Run participants will have the opportunity to trial TomTom's product range to help improve their performance and general fitness. TomTom will also have a presence at all Great Run events during the year.

Great Run Company chief executive Mark Hollinshead

said: "Fitness and performance is obviously very important to our runners, and therefore the partnership with TomTom, and their product range, is the perfect fit."

Tom Brown, TomTom vice president for UK, said: "This partnership is the ideal platform for us to showcase our fourth generation GPS running watch, the TomTom Runner 2. The integrated music player, built-in heart rate monitor, real time GPS information and 24/7 tracking make it the perfect training partner for participants preparing for race day."

www.greatrun.org



The system was created by Josh Springer

Queues go down with Bottoms Up

A new beer system is revolutionising the way draft beer is dispensed at busy venues – and is already becoming the industry-standard for serving draft beer at US sports events.

Bottoms Up was created by American Josh Springer, who wanted to create a more profitable (and speedier) way of selling beer to fans at stadiums and events.

The automated, hands-free system cuts queueing times, brings down staff cost and cuts waste – while also adding advertising and promotional opportunities.

When a Bottoms Up cup is placed onto its specially-designed dispenser, the system automatically fills in the desired amount, leaving the server free to process the transaction and to engage customers for additional sales.

The system is capable of pouring multiple servings simultaneously, nine times faster than a traditional tap.

While cutting queuing times to a minimum, the fully-automated system increases profitability by guaranteeing no spills and no bad pours by staff.

The Bottoms Up MAG (magnet advertising graphic) which seals the cups can also be used as an advertising platform. Whether the space is branded by the venue or sold to a third party, it creates revenue opportunities outside of traditional avenues.

www.bottomsupbeer.com



Military grade cycle for Team GB Olympic hopefuls

UK Sport and British Cycling have teamed up with multinational security organisation **BAE Systems** on the development of an advanced ergometer in advance of the Rio 2016 Olympics.

The system designed by BAE measures work-rate and energy loss, replicating the forces of the velodrome “more accurately than any other testing tool”. It was also designed to be easily portable, meaning it can be used in a laboratory “ensuring accurate data capture”.

Paul Barratt, the lead biomechanist for the GB cycling team at the English Institute of Sport, said “highly-accurate testing tools” such as the new ergometer helped to “ensure athletes are performing at their most competitive” before competition.

“BAE Systems has created a portable and accurate system we believe will be integral to the teams’ training regimes and will help us to achieve our medal target at the Rio Games,” he added.

“The cycling ergometer is a unique system which we hope will boost the



The ergometer will help Team GB cyclist perform at this year's Rio Olympics

success of the British Cycling team and is one of a number of projects on which we are working this year with UK Sport,” added BAE Systems’ UK Sport Technology Partnership Henry White.

British Cycling’s request for an adaptable tool that could be customised for different riders and

events led to the development of the equipment. It strengthens the eight-year relationship between UK Sport and BAE, who have worked together to apply cutting edge technology usually reserved for the armed forces for elite Olympic athletes.

www.baesystems.com

Multi-story skating

Guy Hollaway Architects look set to develop the world’s first multi-storey skatepark in the UK port town of Folkestone after their design received planning approval from the local council.

The park will host a variety of popular urban sports including skateboarding, BMX-ing, rollerblading and scootering, with additional trial cycling facilities, a bouldering gym and a boxing club. A cafe and rooftop function room with



The facility will be the first of its kind in the world

views across the nearby harbour will also feature.

The skatepark will serve as a national and international attraction, besides offering access to young people

involved in the local skate scene. People who live in the district of Shepway will be able to use the facilities at special low prices if they have a regular monthly subscription.

The structure will be clad in two layers of perforated mesh, creating natural ventilation for the skateable levels and giving the building a translucent glowing effect during the evenings.

Construction work will begin almost immediately, and the £10m facility is expected to take between 18 and 24 months to complete.

The centre is being funded by The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust.
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