

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

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In partnership with

Programme

12:30	Doors Open
13:00 – 13:15	Welcome – Denis OSWALD, CIES Director
13:15 – 13:45	The Fans Behind the Figures: A Cross-Country Study of Women's Football Spectators – Geneva DECKER (USA), Grégory GOMIS (France & Senegal), Thiago MARINO (Brazil), Julian Joep SCHLUMPF (Switzerland)
13:45 – 14:15	What Role Does Club Communication Play in Shaping Fan Resistance to Stadium Naming Rights? – Marko BOSNJAK (Croatia & USA), Rudolf DEMA (Cameroon), Risa KABASAWA (Japan)
14:15 – 14:45	FIFPRO for Coaches? Assessing the Landscape of Representative Bodies for Professional Football Coaches – Ryan GOUSSE (USA), Antonia LINDEMANN (Germany), Vitor RECCHIA (Brazil & France), Tristan WENDEL (USA)
14:45 – 15:00	Coffee Break
15:00 – 15:30	Funding the Olympic Dream: Understanding How Governance Influences the Reach and Impact of Athlete Support – Simon GRUNWERG (UK), Daniela HUAMAN (Peru, Spain & UK), Phillip WILSON (New Zealand)
15:30 – 16:00	Balancing Stakeholder Interests in Ticket Resale for High-Demand Sporting Events: Guidelines for Event Organisers – Marco Mario ACCINNI (Italy & Germany), Liam CURRY (Ireland), Gina FRANCO (Colombia & USA), Joshua ONOJA (Nigeria)
16:00 – 16:15	Coffee Break
16:15 – 16:45	Regulate, Sanction, or Educate? Examining Governance Measures to Reduce Acute Head Injuries in Elite Contact Sports – Michael CHIOMENTO (Italy & USA), Lacey HALLENDORFF (South Africa), Jake ZAPPIA (Australia)
16:45 – 17:15	From Stadiums to 'Safe Havens' – How Can the World of Sports Proactively Unlock the Civil Defence Potential of Sports Infrastructure? – Tomasz BUCZKOWSKI (Poland), Dhananjay JAYARAMAN (India), Blandina MDEBWE (Malawi), Nicolas RAGAZ (Switzerland)
17:15 – 17:30	Closing remarks – Denis OSWALD, CIES Director
17:30	Apéritif

THE FANS BEHIND THE FIGURES

A Cross-Country Study of Women's Football Spectators



Geneva DECKER (USA), Grégory GOMIS (France & Senegal),
Thiago MARINO (Brazil), Julian Joep SCHLUMPF (Switzerland)

Executive Summary

The global rise of women's football is impossible to ignore. More people are tuning in on TV, match attendance is on the rise in general, and brands are buying in. But behind this momentum is a key driver: the fan.

This project set out to answer a deceptively simple question: *Why do people attend women's football matches?* Through a multi-country study spanning Brazil, England, France, and the United States, we examined the motivations, behaviors, and barriers of current fans – and potential new ones. With over 1,300 survey responses and in-depth qualitative analyses, this paper offers a comparative, data-rich exploration of the fan experience in four distinct football cultures. These countries offer a mix of mature, growing, and still-developing women's football ecosystems, making them ideal reference points for comparative insight:

- **Brazil** provides a South American lens where football passion runs deep but the women's game has historically struggled for visibility and investment,
- **England** is home to the rapidly growing Women's Super League, stirred by the 2022 EUROs,
- **France** boasts world-class players but still struggles for consistent fandom, and
- The **United States**, as a longtime powerhouse of women's soccer, offers a context where women's football has an identity mostly independent of men's club structures.

Importantly, each of these countries has hosted or will soon host major women's international competitions. France hosted the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup and again welcomed athletes for the 2024 Paris Olympics; England hosted the UEFA Women's EURO competition in 2022, which broke attendance records and ignited domestic interest; Brazil will host the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup (a major milestone for the region), while the U.S., previous host to multiple Women's World Cup events, is poised to co-host the 2031 edition. Looking ahead, the 2035 tournament is likely to be awarded to the UK nations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. These events mark important opportunities for fan engagement, national pride, and long-term growth of the sport.

The foundation of our research is an online survey distributed in English, Portuguese, and French, which was completed by over 1,300 people across the four countries. After data cleaning, we analyzed 1,271 responses from women's football fans, men's football fans, and non-fans. By understanding not just who attends women's football matches, but also the *why* (or why not), we gain valuable insight into what the sport needs next.

Across all four countries, the game itself was cited as the top motivator for attendance. Yet how fans engage – and what they need to engage more deeply – varies.

Brazil stood out for its low match attendance and limited merchandise engagement, even among fans. It was also the only country in the study in which fewer than half of respondents had ever attended a women's football match. Improving the game's visibility through social media practices (e.g. women's team-specific Instagram accounts) and offering dedicated season ticket programs are clear first steps. Currently, just 6% of Brazilian fans hold a season ticket – and only one club, Atlético Mineiro, offers one specifically for the women's team.

England, by contrast, shows promise in audience crossover: more than 60% of respondents who aren't women's football fans have been to the stadium. But how could men's fans be persuaded to go to the stadium? Just over one in two participants answered that family members and friends could convince them. This factor was also the most frequently mentioned answer in the United States (53,85%) and scored highly in France (50,00%) and Brazil (37,21%). But a significant portion also cited unawareness of matches as a reason for non-attendance, pointing to a missed opportunity. Clubs need to rethink how they promote fixtures – and whom they're reaching.

Findings from our **France** sample paint a portrait of a quiet but loyal fanbase. Imagine Claire, a 41-year-old secondary school teacher from Nantes, who tuned in for the first time during the 2019 Women's World Cup and now watches Division 1 highlights on her phone most Sunday evenings. Statistically, Claire is close to the "average" French respondent: the average age of the 137 participants is 40,8 years old, and two out of three participants, 89 total, identify as women. Here, the matchday experience could benefit from more atmosphere. Optimizing crowd energy around smaller stadium sections could be a small lift with a big impact.

In the **United States**, the data tells a different story. Fans had, on average, supported women's football for over 8 years, and 228 individuals hold season tickets for a women's football club – the highest number among any country surveyed. Their fandom appears personal, with many citing formative experiences: national team success, playing or coaching, and personal identity (i.e. being a woman in sport).

Among non-fans and men's football fans, match attendance is often situational, not ideological. Over half of these respondents in the U.S. said they'd attend a women's football match if given a free ticket. Their primary motivator? The chance to go with someone they care about. Football might not be the hook, but social connection could be. This points to a strategic opportunity: to leverage social dynamics and lifestyle experiences to convert curiosity into loyalty.

Our recommendations, tailored by country, respond directly to these insights. Based on our analysis, we propose actionable strategies tailored to each country's unique context:

- In **Brazil**, basic digital infrastructure (e.g. each women's team having its own dedicated Instagram page) and season ticket programs are urgent.
- In **England**, where many non-fans have already attended a match, the opportunity lies in smarter outreach: creating more awareness of fixtures, experimenting with ticket strategies, and capitalizing on the social appeal of attending with friends and family.
- In **France**, the focus should be on enhancing the emotional and sensory aspects of matchday through concentrated seating, small-scale fan villages, and environments that create intimacy and energy.
- For the **U.S.**, we urge clubs to double down on purpose-built stadiums and continue experimenting with fan-first designs while also tapping into the untapped potential of multigenerational audiences and the casual attendees.

Ultimately, what emerges from this work is a simple yet powerful finding: *people don't show up just for the football*. They show up for what it represents: community, identity, the shared moments. When clubs understand these deeper motivations and implement strategies to reflect these needs, they unlock new ways to keep people coming back. When fans feel seen and included, the ripple effects are felt across media coverage, sponsorship, and grassroots participation.

Women's football is not a scaled down version of the men's game. It's its own phenomenon. And the fan is showing us where it can go next.

WHAT ROLE DOES CLUB COMMUNICATION PLAY IN SHAPING FAN RESISTANCE TO STADIUM NAMING RIGHTS?



Marko BOSNJAK (Croatia & USA), Rudolf DEMA (Cameroon),
Risa KABASAWA (Japan)

Context

In the rapidly commercializing world of modern football, clubs are increasingly looking for ways to bolster their revenue through strategic partnerships. Stadium naming rights have emerged as a prominent financial strategy in the sport. However, European football clubs face significant challenges in implementing stadium naming rights agreements due to fan resistance, particularly when it involves renaming historic stadiums. The emotional attachment fans have to their clubs' stadiums, which often represent local heritage and tradition, complicates the acceptance of corporate sponsorships. Unlike North America, where the commercialization of sports is widely accepted, European football clubs often struggle to balance the financial benefits of naming rights with the emotional and cultural significance of stadiums for their supporters. This tension creates a complex environment for clubs looking to secure revenue through commercial partnerships, highlighting the need for a strategic approach to communication and fan engagement.

Research Question

This study seeks to address the following research question: ***What role does club communication play in fan resistance to stadium naming rights?*** The research aims to explore how the methods employed by clubs to communicate stadium renaming decisions influence fan sentiment and determine the level of resistance or acceptance to such commercial ventures.

Methodology

This research adopts an explanatory approach to explore the dynamics of fan resistance to stadium naming rights. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify key variables associated with fan resistance, which informed the development of a theoretical framework guiding the study. Based on this framework, case studies and qualitative interviews were carried out with club representatives and fans. The study focuses on

three prominent European football clubs including **Newcastle United**, **Atletico Madrid**, and **Celta Vigo**, chosen for their contrasting cultural, financial, and historical contexts. These cases provide valuable insights into how different communication strategies can be employed to manage and mitigate fan resistance to stadium naming rights.

In addition to case studies, the research includes primary data collected through interviews with club officials and fan groups. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders such as commercial representatives, supporter trusts, and fans, providing a comprehensive view of the factors contributing to fan resistance and the potential strategies to address them. The study also draws upon secondary data including market analyses and historical examinations of stadium naming rights in Europe and North America.

Case Study Summaries

1. **Newcastle United**: Re-Naming Gone Wrong

In 2011, the new owner, Mike Ashley, rebranded the historic St. James' Park to "Sports Direct Arena.". This abrupt change triggered intense backlash. The name was reverted a year later due to fan resistance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Lack of communication and absence of financial transparency led to a near-universal rejection.
- Fans viewed the move as exploitative and disrespectful to tradition.
- The case illustrates that abrupt commercialization without supporter involvement is unsustainable.

2. **Celta Vigo**: Financial Necessity and Regional Fit

In 2018, Celta Vigo renamed its stadium to "Abanca-Balaidos" in partnership with the Galician bank Abanca. The club was in financial difficulty, and the reason behind the stadium naming right agreement was clearly communicated to the fans.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The regional identity of Abanca and its connection to the local community eased fan resistance.
- The club communicated the financial necessity clearly, ensuring fans understood the rationale.
- The agreement enabled stadium upgrades and long-term stability, aligning tradition with pragmatic needs.

3. **Atletico Madrid**: New Stadium, New Identity

Atletico Madrid transitioned from the historic Vicente Calderon to the new stadium "Metropolitano" in 2017, leveraging a naming rights deal with Chinese sponsor Wanda. Even after Wanda, Civitas, and Riyadh Air became the stadium naming rights sponsor, illustrating a dynamic sponsorship strategy aligned with global brand expansion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- New stadiums provide a clean slate, reducing emotional resistance.
- Fans initially felt nostalgic loss, but the modern facility and competitive success eased concerns.
- Progressive rebranding was more easily accepted as it was not tied to a historic name.

Discussion

The study finds that the primary barrier to the successful implementation of stadium naming rights in Europe is fan resistance, which is deeply grounded in the emotional and cultural significance that fans attribute to their clubs' stadiums. For many fans, the stadium is not merely a venue for football matches; it represents their club's heritage, identity, and collective memory. Renaming such a venue, especially without proper communication and fan engagement, risks alienating fans who perceive these changes as a commercialization of their club's soul. The case of Newcastle United is a poignant example, where the lack of fan consultation regarding the renaming of St. James' Park to "Sports Direct Arena" in 2011 led to widespread opposition from fans. In contrast, Atletico Madrid's strategy of incorporating elements of tradition in their stadium's new name helped mitigate fan backlash, despite the controversial nature of the deal.

Furthermore, transparency regarding the financial benefits of naming rights agreements is crucial in reducing resistance. Fans are more likely to accept the commercialization of their club's stadium if they understand how the revenue generated will be reinvested into the club—whether for player acquisitions, stadium renovations, or improved fan experiences. The case of Celta Vigo exemplifies this, where clear communication about the financial necessity of the deal with Abanca helped secure fan acceptance, as the club demonstrated how the agreement would support its long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for clubs considering stadium naming rights deals:

1. **Establish Fan Advisory Panels:** Engage fans in structured consultations before finalizing naming rights deals. This will ensure their voices are heard, and they are part of the decision-making process.
2. **Transparent Communication:** Share the reasoning and value of the naming rights agreement. Providing information regarding duration and the financial benefit of the deal. Transparency ensures that trust is kept, providing respect to the fans.
3. **Re-Naming of Existing Stadium with Heritage:** Proceed with caution, unless a proper communication plan emphasizes why the partnership will be beneficial for the club.

4. **Preserve Heritage Through Hybrid-Model:** Consider hybrid naming approaches that combine the traditional name with the sponsor's name to preserve the club's legacy while creating commercial opportunities (e.g., Estadio Abanca Balaídos).
5. **Select Value-Aligned Sponsors:** Ensure that the brands chosen as sponsors reflect the culture of the club and the community it serves. Sponsors should align with the club's values and its connection to the local fanbase.
6. **Frame Revenue as Reinvestment:** Communicate that the sponsorship revenue will be reinvested into the club's development. This may include player acquisitions, stadium renovation, lower ticket prices and youth development programs.
7. **Stadium Legacy Safeguards:** Build clauses that preserve the heritage and legacy of the venue. This can include commitments to supporters incorporating elements of the old stadium with an emphasis on tradition.
8. **Monitor Fan Sentiment:** Ensure that fans are being accounted for through surveys and social media feedback. Builds trust with supporters whilst maintaining consistent communication regarding the fan's opinion.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the success of stadium naming rights deals in European football hinges on the ability of clubs to communicate effectively with their fanbase. Fan resistance is not an inherent feature of naming rights agreements but is often a response to a perceived threat to the club's identity and heritage, and the lack of transparency for the club's commercial strategy. By engaging in transparent, respectful communication and considering the emotional and cultural significance of the stadium, clubs can mitigate fan resistance and secure the financial benefits of naming rights deals.

The research contributes to the growing literature on stakeholder governance in sport, emphasizing that the commercialization of football should be handled with sensitivity to fan values and cultural identity.

In a rapidly commercializing football landscape, clubs must balance the need for financial growth with the preservation of their cultural heritage. By adopting the recommendations outlined above, clubs can navigate the complex dynamics of stadium naming rights and ensure that both commercial and fan interests are respected, paving the way for sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships.

FIFPRO FOR COACHES?

Assessing the Landscape of Representative Bodies for Professional Football Coaches



Ryan GOUSSE (USA), Antonia LINDEMANN (Germany),
Vitor RECCHIA (Brazil & France), Tristan WENDEL (USA)

Executive Summary

Our research aims to answer the question, “Is there a need for an international representative body for football coaches?” For players all around the world, FIFPRO is the centralized organization that represents them, supports them, and speaks on their behalf, but coaches do not have this on a global scale. Many coaches feel isolated, especially when they face problems like job loss, legal issues, or limited access to career growth. We wanted to understand what support coaches already have through national associations, what is missing, and whether a global body could help fill those gaps.

Why This Research Matters

Football has changed a lot over the years, and players now have more rights and stronger support systems. But the coaching side has not evolved in the same way. Many coaches still experience unfair treatment, unstable working conditions, and few chances to grow. Job hiring is often done through informal connections instead of open, fair recruitment. Coaches who move across borders often struggle to get their licenses recognized in new countries. Meanwhile, the rules that govern coaches’ rights are still much weaker than those that protect players.

A major concern is that coaches have no voice or representation within important FIFA legal bodies like the Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) or Players’ Status Committee (PSC). Without this representation, coaches are left out of critical decisions that directly affect their careers.

How We Did This Research

To get a global view, we mapped 70 national coaches’ associations around the world and were able to find a contact for around 50 of them. We received 26 completed survey responses from associations across all continents, for a 52% response rate. In addition,

we interviewed coaches, association leaders, FIFA stakeholders, and others involved in global football. We also studied case examples, especially FIFPRO, to understand how global organizations can be built and how they evolve over time. Finally, we used secondary research from articles, social media, public reports, and data on coach welfare and access.

Key Findings

1. Legal Support Is Common but Uneven

In our survey, 81% of associations said they provide either legal support or legal representation. At first glance, this might suggest that the current system is working. But this high number actually signals how widespread legal problems are in coaching. Coaches often face contract termination, unpaid wages, or other disputes. Some associations can only offer advice, not full legal defense. And with no presence in FIFA's legal committees, coaches are at a major disadvantage. After the RSTP (Regulations and Status for Transfer of Players) reforms in 2017, coaches were not considered a party from a regulatory perspective, meaning they could not cite the RSTP when making claims, and it took 4 years before something addressed that. FIFA's 2021 amendment to the RSTP (Annex 2) improved coach protections, but our results show that these changes are not always applied or enforced well and that coaches are still not a part of the social dialogue on a global scale.

2. Lack of Standard Contracts and Unequal Protections

Most associations in our survey said their countries do not use standard contracts for coaches. Out of 26 responses, 15 said there is no basic contract model in place. This leads to confusion and unfair treatment, as coaches may not know their rights or what happens if a club breaks the agreement. Even in countries where standard contracts do exist, they are often ignored. One association noted that these contracts are “not worth the paper they're printed on.” Without enforcement, even good rules fail to protect coaches.

This lack of structure leads to real problems. Eleven associations said the most common issue coaches bring to them involves contracts, including being fired unfairly or not being paid. Coaches in these situations often don't have legal support. Before FIFA's 2021 reforms, there were no clear international rules for coach contracts, and national laws often fell short. Even after the reforms, many of the same problems remain. This shows that better enforcement is needed, and it's possible a global body could help create, support, and oversee fair contract standards around the world.

3. Mental Health and Well-being Are Overlooked

Very few associations said they support coaches with mental health or personal well-being. Many coaches face stress, pressure, and burnout. They often work in unstable jobs and feel isolated when problems arise. We found out that 66% of the coaches working in the top divisions across the world are able to keep their same job for more than 1 season. In some countries, such as Ecuador or Costa Rica, the turnover rate for coaches is at 100%, meaning that no manager starting the season can expect to finish it. Although some countries are more developed than others, there is a “fire the coach to increase supporter welfare” culture in the football world. When faced with bad results, managers have a tendency to work more

to try to save their jobs, but this often affects their mental health and the quality of their work. Only a handful of national associations, often the most developed, offer help in this area. With only very few employees (some only have volunteers), the vast majority of domestic bodies are either not aware of the problem or lack the resources to undertake initiatives. Our research suggests this is a key area for future development.

4. Barriers to Entry and Unequal Access

We found that many groups of people, specifically women, people from lower-income countries, or minority communities, face extensive barriers to becoming coaches. One reason is informal hiring practices predicated on racially biased social hiring networks, where job opportunities go to personal contacts rather than being advertised publicly. Another is that coaching licenses are often not recognized across continents. For example, a coach from South America, regardless of coaching longevity and skill, may not be able to work in Europe without going through an entirely new certification process, even if they've worked professionally for years.

5. A Strong Desire for International Collaboration

Our survey showed that many national associations want to be more connected. They want to share knowledge, resources, and strategies. Smaller or newer associations especially want help to grow and develop. The idea of a global group was popular in our research, with 24 out of the 26 survey respondents saying they would support the creation of an international body for coaches. The main reasons cited were increased connection, help with finances, legal protection, and training opportunities.

The Three Pillars

Throughout our research, three main topics were identified, that often ranked high in the list of priorities defined by the national associations in the survey:

- **Legal Representation:** Our findings demonstrate that football coaches frequently encounter complex and challenging legal issues, including contract disputes, wrongful dismissals, compensation disagreements, and unresolved payments. Many domestic bodies exist only to address this topic, however they are more in reaction than prevention. Although FIFA introduced regulatory reforms in 2021 intended to offer better protections to coaches, our analysis reveals that these measures are insufficient and often inadequately enforced, leaving many coaches, particularly those working outside elite professional levels, vulnerable and unsupported. Even developed associations have difficulties supporting the coaches working abroad. Coaches currently have no representation in key FIFA legal bodies such as the Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) or Players' Status Committee (PSC), severely limiting their capacity to advocate effectively in disputes and creating an incomplete social dialogue in the world of football.
- **Access and Inclusion:** The global landscape of football coaching continues to reflect profound structural inequities. Women and minority coaches remain significantly

underrepresented across all levels of the game, especially in top-tier professional environments. Our research uncovered persistent barriers rooted in informal recruitment practices, cultural biases, unequal access to training and licensing opportunities, and insufficient support structures that perpetuate systemic exclusion. Another major issue highlighted by associations is the difficulty in validating coaching licenses across continents, significantly hindering international mobility and career progression, and helping the coaches who are already at the top to stay there.

- **Well-being:** Professional coaching is associated with high stress, chronic job insecurity, intense public scrutiny, and frequent episodes of burnout and psychological distress. Despite the increasingly recognized importance of mental health within professional sport, our research found that coaches typically lack access to specialized mental health resources or dedicated support mechanisms tailored specifically to their unique occupational demands. Interviews and survey responses indicated widespread unmet needs, including mental health stigma, limited awareness of available resources, and inadequate organizational policies addressing coaches' psychological health and resilience.

These pillars show where coaches need the most help. They are the foundation for what a future global organization could focus on.

What We Recommend

Based on what we found, there is a strong case for creating an international representative body for coaches. The main priorities to be addressed are:

- Give coaches a voice in global football decisions.
- Help national associations grow and serve their members better.
- Work toward global standards for contracts and licensing.
- Push for fairer recruitment and better mental health support.
- Increase job stability across all leagues.
- Build stronger “social dialogue”—a process where all football stakeholders (like FIFA, clubs, players, and coaches) talk together to solve problems and shape the future of the game.

While this will not be easy, especially given the differences between countries, it is clear that many coaches and associations would welcome the support.

Final Thoughts

Coaches are key to the success of football, but they often face the game's challenges alone. Our research shows that they are ready for a stronger support system, and most national associations who answered our survey are open to the idea of working together on a global level. With shared effort, a fairer and more supportive environment for coaches around the world is possible.

FUNDING THE OLYMPIC DREAM

Understanding How Governance Influences the Reach and Impact of Athlete Support



Simon GRUNWERG (UK), Daniela HUAMAN (Peru, Spain & UK),
Phillip WILSON (New Zealand)

Introduction: The Core Paradox of the Olympic Movement

Elite athletes are at the heart of the Olympic Games, a multi-billion-dollar global sporting enterprise. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) reports redistributing 90% of its revenues to the wider Olympic Movement to organise the Games and support athlete development, and promote the global growth of sport. This dissertation, *Funding the Olympic Dream*, investigates a paradox within this system: despite the scale of financial resources in circulation, many Olympic athletes experience financial insecurity and must navigate their careers with inconsistent and often inadequate support.

This research moves beyond normative debates around athlete remuneration to examine the governance structures that determine how Olympic revenue is translated into tangible support. It maps the complex, multi-layered pathway through which funding flows from the IOC through International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and examines how effectively these structures deliver support to athletes. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach – incorporating a global athlete survey and in-depth interviews with athletes and institutional stakeholders – the study suggests that the disconnect between Olympic revenue and athlete support cannot be fully explained by a lack of available funding, but instead reflects underlying governance challenges. These include limited financial transparency, fragmented accountability, and constrained opportunities for athletes to participate in the systems that govern their professional lives.

The Problem: A Disconnect Between Resources and Outcomes

The financial reality for many Olympians contrasts sharply with the commercial scale of the Games. This research highlights a consistent pattern of financial instability affecting athletes across sports and national contexts, including within high-income countries.

Key findings from the global athlete survey include:

- Nearly one-third (29%) of respondents reported earning less than USD\$10,000 annually
- 16% felt their income was sufficient to allow them to focus on training without significant financial stress.

- 67% reported taking on paid work unrelated to their sport to support their athletic careers.
- Over half (53%) relied on personal savings or direct financial support from family, underscoring the importance of private resources.

This disconnect reflects structural issues within the Olympic financial ecosystem. While the IOC distributes a significant volume of funding to the Olympic Movement, the financial trail often becomes opaque once resources enter intermediary institutions such as NOCs and IFs. There are no universally enforced standards for transparent reporting on the use of these redistributed funds. This diffusion of accountability makes it difficult to assess how much funding directly supports athletes versus covering administrative, marketing, or other institutional costs. As a result, while large sums are allocated, the impact on athletes remains inconsistent, unpredictable, and often insufficient.

Systemic Challenges: How Structure Shapes Support

The financial instability experienced by many athletes reflects a set of interrelated systemic challenges embedded within the structure and operations of the Olympic Movement.

First, the system is shaped by **funding constraints and institutional dependencies**. NOCs and NFs rely on a combination of government funding, IOC redistribution, and the commercial revenue they are able to generate independently. When public funding stagnates – as seen in Canada – or becomes subject to political shifts, the ability of these institutions to deliver consistent support is often compromised. This financial dependency is further compounded by a commercial model that disproportionately benefits larger markets, leaving smaller NOCs reliant on Olympic Solidarity funds, which carry administrative requirements that strain limited institutional capacity.

Second, athletes and institutions alike must navigate considerable **bureaucratic complexity**. The support ecosystem comprises a fragmented network of NOCs, IFs, National Federations, and government agencies, each operating with its own mandate and eligibility criteria. This creates confusion for athletes seeking support and contributes to overlapping responsibilities, which can lead to inefficient use of resources that might otherwise be more effectively targeted.

A final structural issue concerns the **insecure and short-term funding cycles** on which athlete support often depends. Many systems operate on a year-to-year, results-based model in which funding is contingent on past performance. This structure can create sustained pressure, limit flexibility in response to injury or natural variations in form, and hinder long-term career planning. For some athletes, this instability contributes to premature retirement, as sustaining a career becomes increasingly difficult under ongoing financial uncertainty. These systemic dynamics directly shape the athlete experience, creating a landscape defined by reactive support that rewards past success rather than enabling future potential, wide disparities across sports and nations, and athlete representation structures that are often consultative in appearance but limited in influence.

Pathways to Reform: A Three-Pillar Approach

Addressing the challenges outlined in the research requires targeted adjustments across key areas of the Olympic Movement. This dissertation outlines a practical framework built on three interconnected pillars, intended to strengthen existing structures and improve the effectiveness of athlete support within the current institutional landscape.

Pillar 1: Enhance Transparency and Oversight

A lack of transparency around downstream funding is identified in this research as a persistent governance challenge. To address this, the Olympic Movement could take steps to improve visibility into how redistributed funds are used by recipient organisations.

- **Recommendation:** Introduce **baseline reporting standards** for all recipients of redistributed Olympic revenue (including NOCs and IFs). This could involve a standardised template requiring a disaggregated summary of funds allocation across key categories, such as direct athlete support (stipends), indirect support (such as coaching or facilities), and administration.
- **Recommendation: Consider linking funding eligibility with transparency measures.** Meeting reporting standards could become a condition for accessing future IOC funding, particularly from central programmes such as Olympic Solidarity. A tiered approach would help ensure requirements are proportionate to organisational size and capacity.

Pillar 2: Strengthen Athlete Representation in Governance

For athletes to have a meaningful role in decisions that affect their careers, their participation in governance structures needs to be formalised and strengthened.

- **Recommendation:** Mandate **formal voting positions for athlete representatives** on the executive boards of NOCs and IFs. This approach, already implemented in countries such as New Zealand and Canada, embeds the athlete perspective within strategic and financial decision-making processes and moves beyond a purely consultative role.
- **Recommendation: Formally engage with independent athlete associations.** The Olympic Movement should recognise the legitimacy of independent athlete unions and establish official channels for structured dialogue. These bodies offer a representative platform that can advocate for athlete interests and contribute to institutional accountability.

Pillar 3: Improve the Structure and Stability of Athlete Support

To address the financial precarity that characterises many athletic careers, support systems could be adapted to provide greater stability and predictability.

- **Recommendation:** Develop **tiered or baseline support models**. Athletes on a formal Olympic qualification pathway could be provided with guaranteed access to

core services, such as coaching and medical support, along with a basic subsistence stipend. This would establish a more stable foundation of support, reduce uncertainty, and promote more equitable development.

- **Recommendation: Adapt and scale effective national models.** The Olympic Movement should facilitate knowledge sharing around successful support systems, such as Belgium's dual-career employment programme, or Italy's integration of athletes into state forces. These approaches may offer useful models for embedding athlete support within longer-term institutional structures.

Conclusion: Aligning the Dream with Reality

The gap between revenue distributed within the Olympic Movement and the lived experience of athletes reflects a governance framework that has not fully adapted to the professional realities of modern sport. The current system – characterised by decentralised accountability, limited transparency, and constrained athlete representation – frequently falls short of its stated mission to support the individuals central to the Games.

Addressing these issues does not require extensive structural reform. Instead, it calls for a committed and coordinated effort among stakeholders. By enhancing transparency in financial flows, empowering athletes with a meaningful role in decision-making, and establishing systems that prioritise stability over uncertainty, the Olympic Movement can work towards closing the gap between its principles and practice. The recommendations presented here offer a practical, evidence-based roadmap for this important evolution, helping to ensure the 'Olympic dream' remains a sustainable and attainable pursuit for athletes worldwide.

BALANCING STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS IN TICKET RESALE FOR HIGH-DEMAND SPORTING EVENTS GUIDELINES FOR EVENT ORGANISERS



Marco Mario ACCINNI (Italy & Germany), Liam CURRY (Ireland),
Gina FRANCO (Colombia & USA), Joshua ONOJA (Nigeria)

Context

The international ticket resale market for sporting events has grown substantially in recent years. In fact, in 2019 the market was valued at \$17.7 billion and, within the next decade, is expected to reach almost \$90 billion. However, this exponential growth is accompanied by its own series of challenges, each one impacting various stakeholders within the ticketing ecosystem. An example of such challenges is inflated pricing, which fans often carry the brunt of and must succumb to in order to attend sporting events. Such practices not only undermine fairness, damage the public's trust in sporting organisations and limit access for genuine fans, but also pose a risk to consumers. Indeed, purchasing resale tickets at inflated prices, particularly from unauthorised sellers, opens consumers up to a heightened risk of fraud and counterfeit tickets potentially leading to denial of entry and financial losses.

Research Question and Outcomes

These developments in the ticket resale market pose the question: *How can organisers of high-demand periodic events manage unauthorised ticket resale in a way that balances stakeholder interests and ensures consumer protection?*

While the primary audience of this research is event organisers, this project recognises that a resale policy cannot succeed without considering the wider ticketing ecosystem. Therefore, it adopts a 360-degree approach, integrating perspectives from organisers, consumers, authorised and unauthorised platforms, technology providers, and market innovators.

This research aims to provide:

- Practical, evidence-based recommendations for organisers experiencing pressure to control resale while maintaining access, fairness, and revenue.
- An analysis of current resale governance models focusing on regulatory, technological, and collaborative approaches.
- The identification of transferable practices and stakeholder-aligned strategies enhancing consumer protection and market sustainability.

Methodology

To achieve this, the study employed a mixed-methods approach grounded in an initial literature review, which informed its scope, design, and data collection. Primary data was gathered through three key methods: a global consumer survey with 239 responses, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders across the ticketing ecosystem, and an analysis of official documents from selected case study events, such as terms and conditions. This was complemented by an extensive review of secondary sources, including laws, jurisprudence, and academic literature, ensuring a comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of ticket resale practices and governance.

Limitations

This research is subject to limitations related to scope, jurisdictional variability, and generalisability. Due to the evolving nature of ticketing laws and technologies, some findings may become outdated, and recommendations, especially regarding flexibility, may not be applicable to regions with strict resale bans. Additionally, since this project focuses exclusively on large-scale, periodic events, its findings may not directly apply to local or frequent events. Overall, the project is intended as a contribution to ongoing policy dialogue, rather than a definitive blueprint.

Case Study Analysis: Comparing Governance Models of Ticket Resale

Research findings from the case study analysis reveal how organisers of major sporting events, namely FIFA World Cup 2022, UEFA EURO 2024, Paris 2024 Olympics, and the All England Lawn Tennis Club (known as ‘Wimbledon’), navigate the complex challenge of managing ticket resale. Each organiser faced trade-offs between maintaining fairness, generating revenue, ensuring event security, and protecting reputation. While all prioritised equitable access and affordability, their approaches to resale governance differed based on national legal contexts, market dynamics, and operational models.

All four events authorised resale through official platforms with strict price caps, typically at face value or with minimal fees. To protect ticket integrity, organisers implemented measures such as nominative tickets, digital-only access, limited transferability, and ticket purchase limits. Enforcement strategies ranged from light-touch monitoring to intensive policing, as seen at Wimbledon, which deployed real-time monitoring, legal penalties, and partnerships with law enforcement to combat unauthorised resale.

Legal frameworks significantly influenced enforcement capabilities. France and Qatar adopted prohibitionist models with criminal sanctions, while the UK and Germany relied on civil and consumer protection laws to manage resale. The degree of enforcement also varied: Wimbledon organisers exercised full control via centralised models, whereas FIFA, UEFA, and the IOC delegated operational responsibilities to local committees, requiring extensive coordination.

Technology played a pivotal role, with blockchain, dynamic QR codes, and mobile ticketing apps used to track and control ticket distribution. However, limitations in real-time enforcement, especially during large-scale events like the Paris 2024 Olympics, highlighted the need for scalable solutions. Organisers also recognised the reputational risks of unchecked resale, with excessive prices and fraudulent tickets undermining public trust and event values.

Despite tensions, the analysis identified growing support for collaborative governance models. Interviewees from event organisations, resale platforms, and legal teams advocated for shared enforcement tools, consumer education, and potential revenue-sharing with currently unauthorised platforms. While collaboration faces legal and ethical hurdles, many stakeholders see joint action as key to improving transparency, market sustainability, and consumer protection in the evolving ticket resale landscape.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Research findings from stakeholder interviews reveal broad support for regulated, transparent, and technology-enabled ticket resale systems. Authorised platforms like Ticketmaster advocate for organiser-controlled resale environments with fraud prevention tools, regulated pricing, and secure identity verification. Independent platforms such as Ticombo call for a more open market governed by EU-wide rules, highlighting the need to balance organiser control with consumer choice and competition.

Technology providers like Secutix emphasise giving organisers full control through software tools that enable traceable, identity-linked tickets and deter large-scale profiteering. Meanwhile, innovative platforms like Ticketoo, Dopamine, and Upfan showcase new resale models that prioritise security, fairness, and fan accessibility through features such as AI pricing, dynamic QR codes, and app-free user experiences.

While these stakeholders differ in approach, they align on key principles: resale should not be banned but made safe, fair, and traceable under organiser-defined rules. Together, they signal growing industry interest in collaborative, tech-driven resale governance that protects fans and preserves event integrity.

Consumer Perspectives

Consumer research highlights strong dissatisfaction with unauthorised ticket resale and a clear demand for fair, secure, and transparent ticketing systems. Most respondents were experienced eventgoers, digitally literate, and globally mobile, yet many had faced challenges identifying official platforms, overpaid for resale tickets, or encountered fraud.

Most respondents believed unauthorised resale platforms exploit fans and hinder fair access, and nearly half opposed profit-driven resale entirely. While some acknowledged the convenience of resale when official tickets are unavailable, most supported stricter controls and greater organiser accountability.

Consumers expressed a strong preference for organiser-led resale, loyalty-based pre-sales, and transparent pricing. Dynamic pricing and corporate allocations were widely criticised for undermining fairness and accessibility. Technological solutions such as digital ticketing, AI fraud detection, and identity-linked tickets were welcomed, provided that privacy was protected. However, biometric tools and invasive data collection raised concerns.

Overall, fans called for improved education, better platform identification, and stronger regulatory oversight. Trust in organisers is closely tied to their ability to safeguard the resale process, making consumer-centric ticketing an essential strategy for maintaining brand integrity and event sustainability.

Discussion

The research findings highlight the complex governance dilemma surrounding unauthorised ticket resale at major sporting events, where organisers must balance fairness, revenue, security, and reputational protection in a fragmented global environment. Legal contexts shape feasible enforcement strategies, with fixed-location events, like Wimbledon, enabling stricter control, while roaming events must adapt to diverse jurisdictions. Centralised governance, as seen at Wimbledon, offers consistency but is resource-intensive, whereas delegated models (FIFA, UEFA, IOC) allow flexibility but face coordination challenges. Consumer trust is undermined by confusing resale systems, rigid policies, and lack of transparency. While organisers often morally condemn resale, many fans differentiate between exploitative practices and legitimate peer-to-peer exchanges, signalling a need for more nuanced policies. Regulated resale can enhance efficiency, flexibility, and consumer welfare if integrated with fair pricing, transparency, and technological safeguards. Looking ahead, collaborative governance models that combine organiser oversight with platform expertise may offer a more adaptive and balanced solution.

Recommendations

Based on the survey results, interviews with stakeholders, and the comparative review of the case study events, this study culminates in a comprehensive set of evidence-based recommendations. These recommendations aim to assist organisers of high-demand periodic events to more effectively combat unauthorised ticket resale, while also protecting consumer trust, future market viability, and their commitments to fairness and access.

1. Data-Driven Policy and Enforcement

- **COLLECT AND ANALYSE RESALE DATA:** Organisers should systematically gather and analyse data on resale volumes, prices and buyer behaviour to detect trends and inform targeted enforcement strategies.
- **INVEST IN ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGIES:** Event organisers should adopt technological tools such as dynamic QR codes, Bluetooth beacons, blockchain systems, and identity verification to actively prevent unauthorised resale and fraud.

2. Consumer Protection and Education

- **ENHANCE CONSUMER EDUCATION:** Organisers need to prioritise comprehensive education campaigns that inform fans about the risks of unofficial resale and guide them to safe, authorised purchasing channels.
- **INCREASE TRANSPARENCY:** Greater transparency in ticket allocation, pricing and resale policies is necessary to build consumer trust and reduce frustration over unclear ticketing processes.

3. Market Regulation and Platform Collaboration

- **ADVOCATE FOR PLATFORM CERTIFICATION:** Rather than eliminating resale markets, organisers should work towards certifying platforms that meet fairness and consumer protection standards.
- **BALANCE PRICE CONTROLS:** Event organisers should implement clearly-communicated, moderate price caps on authorised resale platforms to eliminate profit-making opportunities for resellers while preserving legitimate peer-to-peer exchanges.
- **COLLABORATION OF PLATFORMS AND STAKEHOLDERS:** Event organisers should collaborate with resale platforms, legal experts and governing bodies to enforce resale policies and create unified standards.
- **IMPROVE PLATFORM TIMING:** Official resale platforms should open earlier in alignment with initial sales and remain active for longer to reduce reliance on unofficial channels and increase flexibility to consumers.

4. Reducing Unauthorised and Social Media Resale

- **IMPLEMENT FLEXIBLE REFUND POLICIES:** Offering refund options where feasible can reduce fans' need to turn to unauthorised channels.
- **MONITOR AND ACT ON SOCIAL MEDIA LISTINGS:** Organisers should actively monitor social media for ticket listings and work with platforms to take down unauthorised resale posts.
- **EARLY AND VISIBLE POLICY ENFORCEMENT:** Clear and consistent enforcement of ticketing rules, such as cancelling tickets or issuing bans, deters unauthorised resale and builds public trust.

5. Continuous Improvement and Stakeholder Engagement

- **REGULAR POLICY REVIEW AND POST-EVENT EVALUATION:** Event organisers should routinely review ticketing and resale policies after each event using internal data and stakeholder feedback, focusing on enforcement outcomes, consumer satisfaction, and technology performance. Embedding a culture of continuous evaluation and policy adjustment, especially in response to emerging technologies, will help ensure systems remain effective, adaptable, and aligned with both operational demands and fan expectations.
- **ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE AND CO-CREATION:** To ensure practicality, fairness and acceptance of ticketing policies, experts can involve fans consumer advocates and experts in designing their ticketing policies.

Conclusion

To conclude, this project found that resale is a structurally complex issue shaped by legal, technological, and behavioural factors, not merely a regulatory gap. Governance models must navigate trade-offs between control, flexibility, enforcement, and equity, while recognising that consumer attitudes toward resale are more nuanced than institutional narratives suggest. This research recommends adopting proportionate, data-driven, and collaborative approaches that leverage technology, certified platforms, and clear communication to build fairer, more transparent, and trusted ticketing systems for the future.

REGULATE, SANCTION, OR EDUCATE?

Examining Governance Measures to Reduce Acute Head Injuries in Elite Contact Sports



Michael CHIOMENTO (Italy & USA), Lace HALLENDORFF (South Africa),
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Executive summary

Acute head injuries (AHIs) are now regarded as one of the most urgent welfare challenges in contact sport. Lawsuits, mounting neurological evidence, and sharper public scrutiny have forced governing bodies to demonstrate that their rules, sanction systems, and educational programmes meaningfully reduce brain-trauma risk. This research examines a pressing question:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of current education-and enforcement-based interventions for the primary prevention of AHIs in elite contact sports?

This comparative study of men's and women's elite-level Rugby Union (rugby), Australian Rules Football (AFL/AFLW), and Football analyses how these two governance levers operate in competitions with differing resources and cultures. By evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of interventions, this research identifies how education and enforcement can be best utilised to reduce harm.

Literature and Analytical Framework

While existing literature is rich in medical protocols and diagnosis, less attention has been paid to primary prevention through governance. This study responds to that gap through an interdisciplinary lens:

- **Humanities:** Examines resistance to change through gender dynamics, “fabric-of-the-game” narratives, and cultural norms.
- **Management:** Considers trade-offs between safety, performance, and commercial sustainability, and how stakeholder legitimacy affects compliance.
- **Law:** Assesses regulatory authority, liability exposure, and sanction proportionality.

Analysis through these lenses enable a nuanced understanding of the factors that affect successful implementation.

Methodology

The research uses a mixed-methods, comparative case study design - first analysing sports individually, before comparing the results. This was done through:

- **Quantitative:** Comparing injury and sanction data over time to understand AHI trends in:
 - AFL: injury data from 1997–2023; sanctions from 1999–2023
 - Rugby: injury and sanction data from 2003–2023
 - Football: injury data from 1998–2024; sanction data 2009–2020Women's competitions data was limited, and definitions sometimes varied.
- **Qualitative:** Conducting 34 semi-structured interviews with players, sport governing body officials, medical staff, player unions, referees, coaches, and team administrators.

The research evaluated three primary variables:

1. Rates of change of incidence (how often AHIs occurred) and severity (how many days were lost because of an AHI),
2. Change in on-field behaviour,
3. Cultural transformation.

Key Findings

1. Sanctions appear effective when clearly and consistently applied.

World Rugby's Head Contact Process and the AFL's Match Review Officer system coincided with behavioural change. In rugby, a spike in red cards from 2019 to 2021 preceded a decline in tackle height and concussion rates in men's World Cups. In the AFL, concussion incidence fell by 16% between 2011 and 2023, even as detection improved.

However, AFLW showed persistently high injury rates despite more severe suspensions, suggesting that without adequate education or medical resources, enforcement alone cannot reduce risk. Evidence in football remains limited. Its most impactful change—red cards for elbows (2006)—correlated with a 35% drop in head injuries in the Bundesliga. However, changes are very rare, and globally, sanctioning remains fragmented and inconsistently enforced.

2. Education is the least developed but most promising lever.

All three sports recognise the importance of education, but delivery remains inconsistent and rarely evaluated. Rugby's "tackle school" for first-time offenders shows a 94% non-reoffending rate, highlighting education's potential as a behavioural intervention. The AFL offers more holistic education from grassroots to elite, including annual face-to-face sessions for elite players, but struggles justifying rule changes mid-season.

FIFA's education is limited, with the "Suspect and Protect" campaign its most visible offering. The effects of this is evident through pre-existing research showing only 39% of coaches and 33% of players were aware of concussion protocols at the 2023 Women's World Cup. Education's promise is constrained by a lack of consistency and prioritisation.

3. Legitimacy requires inclusive, medically informed consultation.

Consultative panels involving clinicians, players, coaches, and referees help produce clearer rules. Rugby's consultative processes have fostered broad stakeholder buy-in. Football's reforms, by contrast, are slowed by fragmentation among national bodies.

4. Gender and resource disparities create structural safety gaps.

Technologies like replay review, judicial transparency, and consistent post-match discipline are achievable in elite men's leagues but are often absent in women's or lower-tier competitions.

Time-loss also has a greater impact in smaller, less resourced leagues, disproportionately affecting women's competitions. Evidence suggests primary prevention will fall behind in these competitions without proper coaching, educational infrastructure, evaluation, and tailoring.

5. Evaluation is crucial for effectiveness.

Where federations consolidate injury, sanction, and compliance data—like World Rugby—governance becomes more proactive. In fragmented systems, like football, data silos slow reform and obscure accountability.

6. Fundamental elements of the sport present challenges.

Tensions emerged between sport preservation and safety improvement. All three sports possessed elements that threatened AHI risks considered untouchable due to their centrality to the sport's identity. Rugby's tackling, Australian Rules Football's marking contests, and football's aerial duels all contributed significantly to AHI risk but were seen as untouchable due to their fundamentality.

Recommendations

The research proposes six mutually reinforcing governance actions:

1. Set data-driven governance standards: Negotiate clear AHI risk thresholds with athlete unions, monitor them, and tie them to leadership accountability.

2. Build inclusive consultation mechanisms: Establish consultative structures with regional and gender diversity. Mandate medical involvement in safety decisions and facilitate structured cross-sport knowledge exchange.

3. Strengthen consistent, scalable enforcement: Implement consistent sanctioning frameworks, evaluate systems for disparities, and design scalable punitive measures that consider injury outcomes.

4. Embed education within enforcement: Use mandated education as both a sanction and a mitigation tool, integrating learning into disciplinary processes to reinforce player responsibility.

5. Deliver tiered, sport-specific education: Combine centralised content creation with regional tailoring, embed concussion education in coaching certification, and ensure elite-level delivery incorporates credible messengers.

6. Adopt supportive non-enforcement tools: Consider non-enforcement mechanisms such as coaching grants, roster adjustments, and competition format changes to address specific safety risks.

Conclusion

AHI prevention must be viewed in totality. Rules and sanctions set the boundaries, and education shapes culture, but no lever works in isolation.

The most effective systems combine clarity, credibility, and adaptability, underpinned by transparent governance and reliable data. Equity, responsiveness, and courage must define the next phase of reforms to protect athletes while preserving the essential characteristics that define the sport.

FROM STADIUMS TO 'SAFE HAVENS'

How Can the World of Sports Proactively Unlock the Civil Defence Potential of Sports Infrastructure?



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Reimagining Sports Infrastructure for Civil Protection and Community Benefit

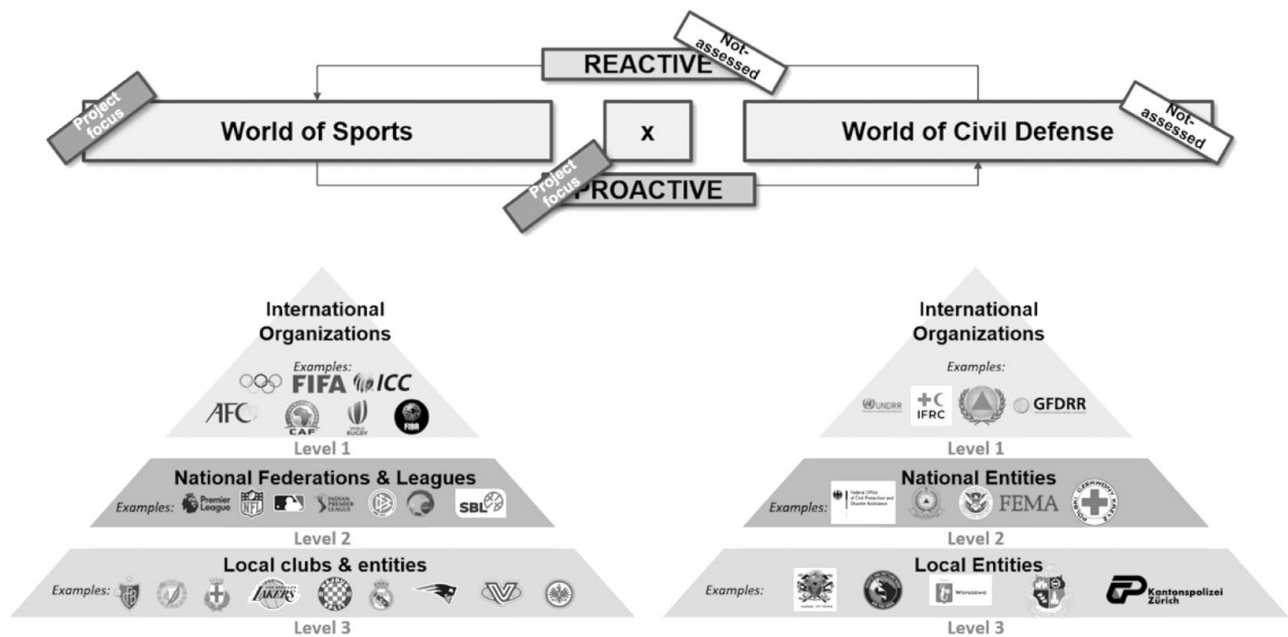
In an era marked by increasing environmental crises, public health emergencies and security threats, sports infrastructures that define urban landscapes can serve more than their conventional purpose for entertainment. Our research project makes a compelling case for reimagining sports stadiums, not merely as commercial entertainment venues but as integral community assets. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, stakeholder interviews, analysis of stadium design guidelines and international case studies, the study argues for a proactive, collaborative and institutionalised approach to embedding civil resilience features into stadium design and governance.

The project explores the need to close the gap between sports infrastructure and public emergency readiness. While stadiums have occasionally been repurposed during emergencies, this process has been largely ad-hoc, reactive, and informal. This project repositions the stadium not as a passive asset, but as an active resource in community resilience, capable of hosting not only moments of celebration, but also offering protection, coordination and care in times of crises.

Core Argument and Conceptual Approach

At the heart of this study lies a forward-looking question: **'How can the world of sports proactively unlock the civil defence potential of sports infrastructure?'**

This research calls for a fundamental paradigm shift: from viewing stadiums solely as commercial or entertainment assets to recognising them as public goods with essential civic value. The study is framed by a dual-pyramid model: the sports ecosystem (comprising international bodies, national federations, and clubs) and the civil defence ecosystem (comprising global institutions, national agencies, and local responders). By mapping stakeholders across these two pyramids, the research identifies key gaps and opportunities for strategic integration.



Analysis and Key Findings

One of the central findings of the study is that stadiums are, by design, already well suited to support emergency operations. Architecturally, they feature large open spaces, modular concourses, PA systems, signages, CCTVs, medical rooms, kitchens, strong ICT infrastructure, and sanitation facilities, all of which can be repurposed rapidly in the event of a crisis. Furthermore, their high accessibility makes them ideal gathering points during evacuations, pandemics, or large-scale disruptions. Many clubs already employ trained stewards, security staff, and medical teams. With modest investment, these personnel could be cross trained for emergency roles. However, the study also shows that these physical attributes are not matched by institutional readiness. The use of stadiums in past emergencies, from the chaotic conditions at the Superdome in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina to the more organised response seen at Warsaw's Stadion Narodowy during COVID-19, highlight a recurring theme: while the infrastructure exists, there is a significant lack of policy coherence, legal clarity, and operational preparedness.

Case Studies Demonstrate Feasibility

The case studies presented in this research provide compelling evidence of both the potential and the challenges associated with repurposing stadiums for civil defence functions. Each case offers a unique lens through which to examine the structural, logistical, and institutional realities of emergency stadium use. The Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, California, was used in 2007 as an emergency shelter during the wildfires that displaced thousands of residents. Its expansive layout and accessibility enabled rapid accommodation of evacuees, yet the experience also exposed gaps in preparedness, particularly around sanitation and long-term coordination with emergency services. In contrast, the Stadion Narodowy in Warsaw was swiftly and

efficiently converted into a temporary COVID-19 hospital during the height of the pandemic in 2020–2021, demonstrating how large-scale sports infrastructure can be adapted into public health facilities when backed by strong government coordination and investment. The Athens Olympic Sports Complex, originally built for the 2004 Games, became an ad hoc refuge for migrants during the 2015 refugee crisis, illustrating how legacy infrastructure can serve vulnerable populations in moments of geopolitical disruptions, although often without long-term planning or adequate support. Finally, the Stade de France played a reactive but powerful role during the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, when it became a temporary lockdown site, sheltering thousands of spectators during the unfolding crisis. These examples collectively highlight that while stadiums can be rapidly mobilised in emergencies, the absence of formalised procedures, pre-designed dual-use elements, and integrated governance structures often results in improvisation rather than resilience. The case studies underline the importance of shifting towards a proactive approach and serve as foundation for the framework proposed in this study.

Stakeholder Readiness Varies by Level

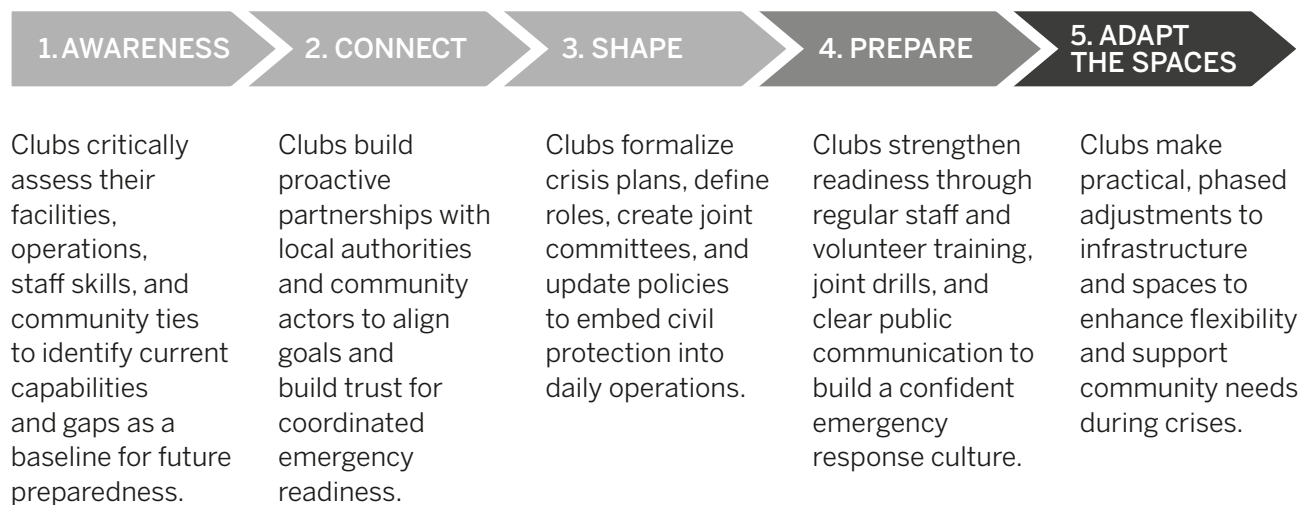
A key insight from the stakeholder interviews is the disparity in readiness and awareness across levels of the sports pyramid. Local clubs and stadium managers often demonstrated a willingness to support emergency functions and, in some cases, had already implemented practices that align with civil protection goals. Brentford FC, for example, has established a close relationship with the NHS and local community organisations, hosting vaccination centres, CPR training sessions, and first aid programs within its stadium premises. Meanwhile, other clubs we have interviewed have also explored crisis-response options, albeit with fewer formalised protocols. However, at higher levels of governance, especially among international sports federations, the stance is more cautious. They acknowledge the potential of multipurpose stadiums but emphasise the limits of their mandates, especially when national laws and municipal jurisdictions take precedence. Nonetheless, both organisations are open to using their soft power to influence policy and infrastructure design by embedding broader community objectives into their stadium development guidelines.

Proposed Framework and Recommendations

To operationalise this vision, the research outlines a **Five-Pillar Framework** that identifies the key steps for stadiums to fulfil civil defence and community support functions:

1. **Infrastructure:** Assess and adapt physical elements (e.g., tunnels, kitchens, medical zones).
2. **People:** Train staff and volunteers for emergency roles.
3. **Processes:** Establish standard operating procedures and agreements.
4. **Technology:** Utilise platforms for crisis communication and logistics.
5. **Resources:** Ensure access to emergency supplies, energy, and water.

Level 3: Clubs and Stadium Operators



Clubs can support their communities through a structured and proactive approach. The first step is to assess existing assets such as stadium facilities, staff capabilities. Additionally, the community needs to identify how the club could contribute during emergencies. This should be followed by engaging with key stakeholders, including emergency services and local charities, to build partnerships and establish collaborative planning mechanisms.

Once these relationships are formalised, clubs can develop standard operating procedures, create scenario-based contingency plans, and draft formal agreements that clarify roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation. Regular training and simulation exercises should then be conducted to ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately prepared. Finally, clubs can make targeted spatial adaptations, such as repurposing lounges, to ensure their facilities are inclusive, flexible, and capable of serving as effective support spaces in times of crisis. By doing these things, clubs can really become helpful partners in their communities when things get tough.

Conclusion

Our Final Project reframes the role of sports infrastructure from purely commercial and entertainment-driven to socially responsible, multi-use public goods. Stadiums are some of the most recognisable, well-equipped and well-resourced facilities in urban settings and possess the latent capacity to serve as resilience hubs, spaces that offer safety, care, and coordination during crises.

The paper calls for collaborations across the sporting and civil defence ecosystems, arguing that the world's increasing vulnerability to disaster makes this integration not just possible, but essential. By embedding civil defence into the DNA of stadium design and governance, we can ensure these modern sport facilities also become sanctuaries of safety in times of need.

25 YEARS





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