



SportAccord Managing Director Martin Gibbs, SportAccord President Uğur Erdener and ASOIF President Elect Ingmar De Vos meet delegates in the Exhibition Hall yesterday

## ENGAGING SESSIONS

Further conference discussions will bring the curtain down on the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 today at the International Convention Centre.

With the Plenary Conference Programme this morning and MediaAccord this afternoon, delegates will be ready to wind down with the sounds of a New Orleans-style brass band during the official closing event (see p12).

Get a taste of the key topics that will be discussed during today's conference programme by checking out **The Daily's** interviews with several of today's speakers.

These include former Rugby World Cup referee Wayne Barnes, Signify CEO Jonathan Hirshler, International Federation of Sports Officials Vice President Janie Frampton (all p6-7), World Netball President Dame Liz Nicholl (p8), Kick It Out Chair Sanjay Bhandari (p10) and Sarah Gregorius, Director of Global Policy & Strategic Relations, Women's Football, FIFPRO (p11).

# IWGA TO CONFIRM WORLD GAMES HOST

The International World Games Association (IWGA) will announce the location for The World Games 2029 at the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit today after finalising its choice at yesterday's Executive Committee meeting.

President José Perurena told **The Daily** the IWGA has selected its preferred destination from a shortlist of three and will inform the unsuccessful candidates before revealing its choice.

Perurena added that the immediate focus will now be on The World Games Chengdu 2025 and on the new World



IWGA President José Perurena

Games Series (WGS), which will serve as test events and qualifying opportunities.

Chengdu 2025 will take place from 7-17 August 2025, with the first WGS scheduled for Hong Kong in April next year and a second event at venues that will be used for The World Games in China.

Perurena arrived at SportAccord two days after

returning from his latest fact-finding trip to Chengdu alongside the IWGA's technical team.

"The facilities for sport and for the athletes are excellent," he said. "The deadline for qualification is April 2025 and we will welcome around 5,000 athletes from more than 100 countries to Chengdu."

"There are about 23 million people in the Chengdu area and the expectation is that every event will be full. It is a big opportunity for spectators to see competitions in baseball-softball, flag football, lacrosse and squash before they appear in the Olympic programme at LA28."

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## ROUND-UP

The main talking points from the Plenary Conference  
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Sarah Gregorius on shaking up sport's structures  
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## THE DAILY



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Email: [editor@squiresmedia.com](mailto:editor@squiresmedia.com)

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# GAMING BENEFITS FOR TOP ATHLETES

## CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

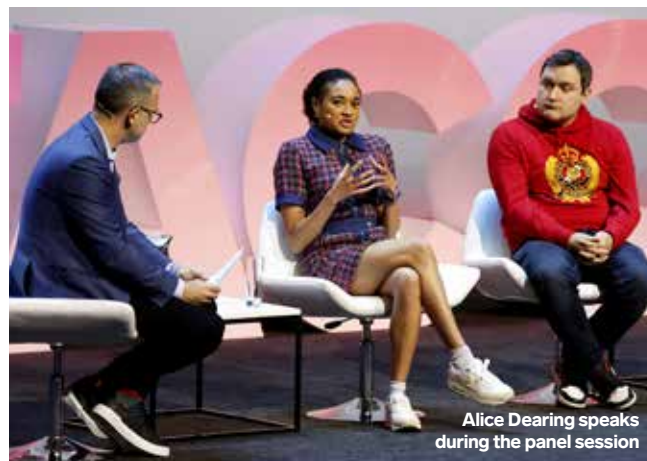
The G2 Esports organisation is ready to branch out into traditional sports as the two worlds continue to forge closer links, according to its Chief Executive Alban Dechelotte.

G2's players compete across numerous games, including hugely popular titles such as Fortnite, and the organisation has established itself as a global brand.

In a Plenary Conference Programme session, Dechelotte compared G2 to City Football Group, which has total or partial ownership of 12 different football clubs around the world.

"We have a global brand, we are truly multi-local and we are exposed to different games so we have different audiences," said Dechelotte, who is also on the International Olympic Committee Esports Commission.

"We are ready to go into sports. If anyone is interested in having a G2 team in your sport, just come to us. Our



Alice Dearing speaks during the panel session

organisation is so agile we could go into a cycling team, for example."

The current International Cycling Union (UCI) WorldTour features teams with investors from a wide variety of sectors – from shampoo producers to hotel chains and supermarkets, showing that the sports market is receptive to new players.

The roundtable session also expanded the conversation from the well-documented debate about merging esports and traditional sports, and instead discussed the less well-known value of gaming

to athletes. Esports' ability to help team-mates bond away from the competition venue was examined, as well as its benefits to athletes' mental health.

"It keeps my mind active and healthy in terms of being able to take myself out of my sport, have a rest, and not have to be an athlete," British Olympic swimmer Alice Dearing said.

"I can just jump into a video game, be my online name and be absolutely terrible at the game and it doesn't matter. It has always been a very healthy escape for me."

## LOOK BEYOND THE BOTTOM LINE

Epic Games Vice-President and Head of Global Partnerships Nate Nanzer has advised International Federations not to use esports simply as a money-making opportunity if they want to achieve sustainable success.

Speaking on the Plenary Conference Programme, Nanzer insisted that the best way to utilise games like the mega-popular Fortnite, which his company developed, is by looking towards participation and engagement.

Nanzer said: "You need to ask, 'What's your objective?' If the objective is, 'We want to do esports because we think this will be a new revenue stream for us', then I don't think that is the best path. But if

you want to do esports because you think it's an authentic way to engage with the community in a way that you are not doing already, then I think you can find success there.

"Essentially, it all comes down to what you are trying to achieve."

Nanzer and Epic Games Vice President and Co-founder Mark Rein both agreed that using gaming broadly to connect with a target audience was the best way of leveraging the power of esports.

Likening the influx of brands to social media platforms such as TikTok, Nanzer also said it was imperative to build a presence on games like Fortnite to appeal to the younger generation.



# CAPITALISING ON THE TAYLOR EFFECT

The Taylor Swift phenomenon that catapulted the Kansas City Chiefs NFL American football team to a global audience also brought benefits for the game itself, as highlighted by representatives of US sports during an insightful panel session yesterday at the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit.

Rob Alberino, Vice President of Content and Production at the Chiefs, said the relationship between Grammy-winning superstar Swift and Chiefs player Travis Kelce transformed the team's reach.

Alberino said everyone in Kansas City is a Chiefs fan – but exposure rocketed elsewhere thanks to Swift.

"She sent it [awareness] to the moon, but we have a laid-back approach. You get people who don't know sport but they do know Taylor," he said.

Brett Gosper, the NFL's Head of Europe & Asia-Pacific, said the benefits were mutual to a degree. "It spiked us in the young female group, but Taylor also

Kansas City Chiefs' Rob Alberino



## CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

inherited a lot of our fans," he said. Scott Kegley, Vice President of Digital Strategy at the NFL's Atlanta Falcons, added: "Each team has something that is culturally relevant to them and these are really big moments for us, but you don't want to insert yourself into a conversation where you don't belong."

Marc Ciampa, Vice President of Content at the New Jersey Devils, said his NHL ice hockey team uses imagery from the hit TV

series The Sopranos in its media, but there was unanimous support for his view that the priority is to make sure the content is appropriate.

Kegley said: "There are a lot of things we can do that are fun, but what are the things that really help us?"

"You have to be aligned across video, social, editorial and digital, because there's more than one way that people consume content."

Access to players was acknowledged as being a key component of a successful strategy.

Ciampa said: "Make the players available – and not only just after practice. Offer dedicated times each month to get them in and do a little bit extra.

"Ultimately, get the players to buy into what you are doing."

Kegley promoted the benefits of featuring players in different scenarios and of showing behind-the-scenes content.

"It will help you to amplify your brand outside your traditional audience," he said.

# THIS IS THE GAME

DISCOVER WOMEN'S SPORTS IN EDMONTON

EXPLORE EDMONTON



## LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO TACKLE ISSUES

World Squash Federation President Zena Wooldridge has urged International Federations of similar sports to tackle some of their biggest issues together.

In the Plenary Conference Programme, moderated by BBC Presenter Sarah Mulkerrins (pictured), participants engaged in a lively discussion about how sports can work together to address evolving challenges.

When it comes to common matters, Wooldridge questioned why there is not more collaboration.

Wooldridge said: "I think there is a real opportunity going forward for racquet sports to work together. So, why are we all dealing with safeguarding, transgender [athletes] and other things on our own?"



"We don't have the resources for the legal, medical and other expertise that we need, but together we are all in a similar space in terms of the outcome we are trying to achieve. So, I think there is much more opportunity there to do that."

A similar call was made for increased co-operation in the sustainability space, with World Rugby Chief Executive Alan Gilpin highlighting the particularly challenging issue of air travel.

"Sport needs to come together more than we traditionally do and try to address some of those issues together," he said.

"In my sport, we fly teams constantly around the world to different events. How can we be a bit smarter about that? How can we start to not just talk about reducing environmental impact, but start to make a difference?"

Professor Andy Miah explores new technologies



## SPORT MUST EMBRACE LATEST INNOVATIONS

### CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

International Federations need to be ready to embrace technological change even if innovation is not a natural part of their DNA, delegates were told during an engaging Plenary Conference Programme session yesterday.

Professor Andy Miah, Chair in Science Communication and Future Media at the University of Salford, set out the technology pathways ahead, touching on aspects such as artificial intelligence (AI) and spatial computing, before hosting a discussion about the sports sector's future trajectories with a panel of experts.

SportsTech Match Co-founder David Fowler said: "I was in Lausanne last week and someone said to me, 'Lausanne

is not the Silicon Valley of sport, it is the Washington, D.C. of sport'. So, it's the political capital of the International Federation world, but it is not the heart of innovation, and nor should it be. However, International Federations and other rights holders need to be prepared to embrace technology."

It was argued that emerging technologies such as AI will not shake up the sporting world as much as some other sectors.

Sulabh Soral, Head of AI at Deloitte UK and Advisory Board Member at the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on AI, said: "I think the disruption in sport is not the disruptive innovation that might happen in the auditing or tax world, for example.

"The disruption is how you think about engaging the fans."

## A SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR ATHLETES

Money, engaging younger audiences and geopolitics were flagged up by Roger Mitchell (pictured) ahead of his spot in the Plenary Conference Programme, expanding on his new book, "Sport's Perfect Storm".

Having laid out the issues in **The Daily** on Tuesday, the Chartered Accountant and ex-CEO of the Scottish Professional Football League joined Moderator David Eades to look for possible solutions.



"Instead of adopting a B2B approach it needs to be B2C – talk to your customers, know your fan and create the output," he said. "There is an element as well of being more risk-sharing with your partners. And we don't talk about

athletes. The Olympic sports don't pay athletes enough for their talent, and football pays too much. There needs to be a new social contract with the athletes with a revenue model based on success."

Mitchell also said sport needs a new generation of leaders.

"The hope is that the younger generation have understood that they have got to do something differently," he added.



# PARIS 2024 TECH IN FOCUS

The Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games is poised to unleash a visually stunning and technologically complex spectacle – and SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit delegates will be given a sneak preview at MediaAccord today.

MediaAccord Moderator James Pearce told **The Daily** that he is particularly excited about the presence of Yiannis Exarchos (pictured), the CEO of Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), the Games' host broadcaster.

"He is responsible for all the video content that we will see this summer, and we will hear from him about some of the new technology," said



## MEDIAACCORD PREVIEW

Pearce, with OBS set to ramp up automated production and a range of other media innovations during its coverage of the multi-sport event.

Professor Andy Miah, Chair in Science Comms and Future Media, University of Salford, will follow that by outlining how immersive technologies are converging with artificial intelligence to transform the sports world.

The event will close with a panel discussion on how International Federations and their partners can make the most of AI, fan data and new distribution models.

Pearce, a Communications Consultant and Media Trainer whose 20 years as a BBC Sports Correspondent included the role of Olympic Correspondent for the London 2012 Games, said: "An Olympic Games is the ultimate test for many media companies.

"MediaAccord is a rare opportunity for all the stakeholders in sport to come together, listen, discuss and learn about the latest trends and developments."

• **MediaAccord: Today, 14:00-16:15**

New research has revealed that sports tourism was responsible for one in seven visits to the West Midlands during the 12-month period that featured the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

A total of 19.6 million people came to watch or participate in sporting events, according to the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC). Sport-related visits also accounted for more than 13% of total visitor spending, adding more than £1.9bn to the region's economy and supporting 18,352 jobs.

"The West Midlands has proved itself as a world-class sports host for many years, and these figures show what a draw these events are for visitors to the region – and what a boost they give to our economy," said Neil Rami, WMGC's Chief Executive. "The Commonwealth Games has helped us to build a pipeline of major sporting events for the coming months and years."

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Wayne Barnes in action during his refereeing career  
Image: Fearless Fred (Flickr)

# ONLINE ABUSE MUST BE SHOWN THE RED CARD

**Former rugby union referee**  
Wayne Barnes believes that there is a chance to help eradicate abuse of sporting officials and athletes in the UK through the Online Safety Act.

The Act was made law in October last year and places responsibility on tech companies to prevent and remove illegal content from the internet.

Barnes, who took charge of the 2023 Rugby World Cup final, thinks developments such as these represent a positive development – and he will delve further into the issue this morning during the Plenary Conference Programme.

“I think there is an opportunity with the Online Safety Act,” Barnes told **The Daily**, prior to his Keynote Conversation with SportAccord Moderator and MC David Eades and participation in a panel session



Wayne Barnes

## SESSION PREVIEW

on the issue. “I think there are two things that the Online Safety Act can do. One is to make sure that you can only engage with verified users so it’s not a bot, but someone who can be identified.

“That doesn’t mean that when you join a social media platform you have to hand over your passport details, but if you breach terms and conditions or if you break a law, you are identifiable.

“So, rather than you have to identify yourself before you join, what you do say is: ‘If I break any law then I can be identified.’

“As soon as you start to show there are consequences, whether that be financial or taking away liberties, that is when I think it will focus minds.”

A recent survey from the Rugby Football Union, the sport’s

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**Signify Group CEO and Co-founder**  
Jonathan Hirshler will warn the global sports movement’s stakeholders about the evolving methods being used to abuse athletes, coaches and officials during today’s Plenary Conference Programme.

Hirshler, whose panel will explore the challenges relating to abuse in sport, told **The Daily** that his ethical data science company is able to offer unique insights into the threat.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, lockdowns caused online abuse to skyrocket. Since then, Signify has focused on spotting how wrongdoers are operating.

“We have been tracking changes to the issue of online abuse across different sports, platforms and jurisdictions and now possess the largest verified datasets on this issue anywhere in the world,”

Hirshler told **The Daily**. “This allows us to identify the tactics used to deliver abusive content, which are constantly evolving.

“Part of our job is to illuminate these and highlight the action needed to tackle them. For example, Signify was one of the first organisations to show evidence of the weaponisation of emojis in sport.

“Beyond delivery methods and tactics, we have also seen the issues evolve. When we started, racist content was the most common category of detected abuse.”

However, Hirshler is optimistic that sporting authorities are stepping up efforts to fight abuse and disinformation – with events like SportAccord providing a platform for exchanging ideas.

- Plenary Conference Programme – ‘Solutions in Action’: Today, 9:55-10:10
- Plenary Conference Programme – ‘Whose Responsibility Is It?’: Today, 10:10-10:55

ing body in England, found  
9% of active match officials  
all levels had been subjected  
se on the pitch, as well as  
Barnes is worried that this  
lead to declining numbers in  
wanting to take up officiating.  
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t of others,” said Barnes.  
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When people hear about  
Cup match officials being  
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ant to be the next World Cup  
official?”

Plenary Conference Programme  
talking Online Abuse In  
Today, 9:40-9:55  
Plenary Conference Programme  
Whose Responsibility Is It?:  
Today, 10:10-10:55

## DID YOU KNOW?

Lawn tennis was first played in 1859 in Edgbaston, Birmingham. Spanish merchant Augurio Perera marked out an outdoor rackets game on his croquet lawn with his friend Major Harry Gem, who was Secretary of the local Bath Streets Rackets Club.

International Federation for Sports Officials (IFSO) Vice-President Janie Frampton is keen to discuss the steps that authorities can take to safeguard referees and umpires against abuse.

Frampton, a speaker on today's Plenary Conference Programme, believes National Associations and International Federations are falling short of their duty to take proactive steps with an issue that has severe implications for sport.

“I don't believe enough is done,” Frampton told **The Daily**.

“There are lots of strategies and talk, but not so much action. The statistics bear this out. There needs to be clearer reporting of incidents where referees truly believe they will be listened to.

Disciplinary action, fines and sanctions need to reflect the importance of the abuse.”

For Frampton, today's panel session on abuse in sport is primarily a learning opportunity.

While she believes abuse of referees is relatively manageable in elite sport, the problem is enormous in grassroots competitions.

“We appreciate there are processes in place, but many are not adhered to,” she said.

“Referees in particular feel there is no point in reporting incidents as nothing happens. The levels of abuse are rising, especially in youth football.”

Frampton, who qualified as a referee in 1991, went on to become just the second woman to operate within professional

men's football. She also served as a FIFA refereeing instructor for 10 years and was recently awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to equality for women in sport.

“Being taken seriously by those within the sport [was one of the biggest challenges to overcome], as well as inequalities in the way I was treated, and processes which were only relevant to men,” Frampton said.

“There are still many inequalities in football – refereeing, playing and coaching, as well as further opportunities around the game. ‘The Code’ is still a barrier, as are processes and procedures around gender inclusion.”

• Plenary Conference Programme – ‘Whose Responsibility Is It?': Today, 10:10-10:55

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# WORLD NETBALL BUILDING ON UNIQUE FOUNDATIONS

## Q&A: DAME LIZ NICHOLL, PRESIDENT, WORLD NETBALL

Ahead of her appearance in today's Plenary Conference Programme panel session on international diplomacy and harnessing the soft power of sport (11:25-12:10), the World Netball President offers a progress report on the governing body's growth pillars.

**What sort of progress is World Netball making with its strategic priorities?**

**LN:** "Since 2021, World Netball (WN) has been delivering three core strategies: To Grow, To Play and To Inspire, underpinned by our commitment to integrity and good governance. During the last 12 months we have made significant advancements in all three areas of our strategic plan.

"Most notably, we hosted our first-ever Netball World Cup (NWC) on the continent of Africa – the NWC2023 in Cape Town, South Africa. This was the 60th anniversary of our pinnacle event, and we are delighted to confirm we delivered the most successful sponsorship and broadcast programme ever seen for a WN event.

"Globally, the netball family tuned in via our OTT platform, NetballPass, or on their TVs, with broadcasters showing the event live in over 90 countries. Again, records were broken, with a YouGov report commissioned by WN showing that the event reached a live linear TV audience of 14.9 million – more than double that of the 2019 edition in Liverpool – and had a total linear TV audience of 27.6 million.

"Our newly launched TikTok account also helped us reach



more young netball fans online, and during the 10 days of the NWC2023 alone we gained over 7,500 followers on this platform, with our content generating 940,000 video views. Our social media content on TikTok, Instagram, X and Facebook contributed to the 1,588 social media videos referencing the NWC2023 that generated 12.7 million views."

**What other developments have there been at WN?**

**LN:** "Whilst in Cape Town, we also hosted our WN Congress, where we appointed our first-ever Athlete Director, Stacey Francis-Bayman, who is now leading the establishment of the WN Athletes Advisory Commission, and its regional

structures. Under our Inspire strategy we launched our WN Foundation, a charity focused on sport for social impact, which has a vision of creating new possibilities for individuals, communities and societies to achieve through netball. All of these things have contributed to our growth in the last year and we are now pleased our Membership has grown to 84 countries."

**What are WN's areas of focus over the next year?**

**LN:** "We will be continuing to work under our three core strategies: To Grow, To Play and To Inspire. Under our Play strategy we will see the return of our Netball World Youth Cup

(NWYC) in 2025 in Gibraltar, with four of our five regional qualifiers for this event to take place in 2024. We are also in the process of further developing our international event calendar as we continue to strive to show the very best of our sport to more people, more often."

**What do you believe are the biggest opportunities and challenges you face at WN?**

**LN:** "We are very proud to be a sport with unique female-focused foundations. This brings fantastic opportunities for us. Some may see the growth of women's sport as a threat to us, but we actually see this as an opportunity. With more people, more broadcasters and more sponsors appreciating women's sport, we know we are benefiting from the rising tide of interest to further grow the reach and impact of our game. We must continue to embrace our uniqueness and authenticity as more eyes turn to women's sport.

"However, the flipside is that many of our Members are under-resourced. We are currently developing an online learning platform where we will be able to provide digital learning for our Members, whilst also allowing our Members to share resources with each other. In addition, we have launched a Strategic Development Fund that has been established as a legacy programme for our next Netball World Cup to be held in Sydney in 2027. This funding will enable our Members to deliver sustainable growth initiatives that align with both our strategic plan and theirs."

**"With more people appreciating women's sport, we know we are benefiting from the rising tide of interest to further grow"**



Dame Liz Nicholl



# THE POWER OF SPORTING EVENTS

## PARTNER FOCUS

**Sport Event Denmark is embarking on a plan to broaden and strengthen its portfolio as a destination for international sporting events by drawing on key assets including infrastructure, insight and innovation.**

CEO Lars Lundov told **The Daily** that his team is acting on the changing priorities in sport globally and is determined to lead the way in delivering events that set new benchmarks for the industry.

Addressing the umbrella theme of this year's conference programme, "The Power of Sport", Lundov said: "The power of sporting events transcends mere physical activity; it's about uniting communities, inspiring the young, and showcasing the beauty of our nation on the global stage.

"In Denmark, we've witnessed the transformative power of these events – from infrastructure development such as fast cycling lanes, easy access to public transport for people and bicycles, and the awakening of a collective spirit and national pride."

Lundov lauded Denmark's hosting of the 2022 Tour de France Grand Départ as "a celebration of resilience,

determination, and the unifying love for sports across ages and cultures" which was followed in 2023 by the World Badminton Championships and The Ocean Race.

"Our hosting strategy has evolved along with the rest of the world of sport," he said. "We are not just hosting events; we're creating legacies, building bridges between cultures, and setting new standards in sustainability and innovation.

"Our approach has become even more focused, selecting events that not only fit our DNA, but also offer opportunities for growth and learning. We've shifted towards a more holistic evaluation process, considering not just the economic impact, but the social and environmental footprints of our events.

"We're dedicated to not only hosting more international events, but also elevating them to new heights, showcasing Denmark's unique strengths and commitment to excellence. The next 12 months are about pushing boundaries, exploring new possibilities, and solidifying

Denmark's position in the global sports event arena."

Sport Event Denmark is a SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 Gold Partner.



Lars Lundov



Image: Lars Moeller



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# COLLABORATE TO ADDRESS RACISM

Greater collaboration and data transparency have been pinpointed as key factors that need to be adopted if sports authorities are to address racism more effectively, according to Kick It Out Chair Sanjay Bhandari.

There are many issues that football's equality and inclusion charity have tackled, but for Bhandari, these two aspects are crucial pillars that underpin a proactive approach to an issue that remains prevalent across sport and society.

"Sports tend to be very fragmented and inherently deeply competitive," Bhandari told **The Daily**.

"This is great for supporters wanting to be entertained by thrilling matches.

"It is not so good for tackling social problems like discrimination that are often felt more acutely in sport as it acts as a lightning rod, amplifying broader social problems."

Bhandari also said that all International Federations should collect and report data on the make-up of their workforces on a

## SESSION PREVIEW

regular basis. He believes that progress cannot be made towards inclusivity if records are not maintained.

Kick It Out has found a significant rise in antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred across football – mirroring trends in wider society – and has launched educational courses in an effort to reduce levels of abuse.

However, progress has been made in football.

"If we look at a 40- to 50-year timespan, football has come a long way and become more inclusive," he said. "Now around 40% of professional players are of black heritage; the women's game is thriving; mass racist chanting – an everyday occurrence in the 1970s and 80s – has largely been eradicated from

the English game; and crowds are more representative of society."

Social media presents new challenges for the sport, however, and has resulted in an increasing number of reports of racism and other forms of discrimination.

Kick It Out revealed a 65% rise in these reports in the 2022-23 season, with a particularly sharp increase in grassroots football.

"Whilst this doubtless reflects a growing intolerance of discrimination and greater confidence to report, it also

shows that people feel more confident to express their discriminatory thoughts, emboldened by a culture of impunity online," said Bhandari.

• **Plenary Conference Programme – 'Whose Responsibility Is It?': Today, 10:10-10:55**



Sanjay Bhandari

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## THE BIG INTERVIEW: SARAH GREGORIUS



**Sarah Gregorius is keen to explore proactive protections at SportAccord...**

**It is recognised as one of the fastest-growing sports in the world. However, with increased awareness of the joys and excitement of women's football comes greater concern about abuse.**

Sarah Gregorius, Director of Global Policy and Strategic Relations for Women's Football at international players' union FIFPRO, believes it is time to tackle the issue head-on and get ahead of the game – especially when it comes to social media.

"I don't know if there is necessarily more abuse being received," she tells **The Daily**. "I think in part there is just much greater visibility now than there has ever been before and different tools available to those who wish to openly abuse and discriminate."

"Social media has played an important role in increasing exposure and driving visibility, but it should not become a case of a trade-off, whereby online abuse is seen as some sort of unfortunate by-product of having an online presence and needing social media for visibility and exposure. More needs to be done to apply proactive protections."

As someone who played professional and international football for a decade, Gregorius can draw on plenty of experience of athletes facing various forms of abuse. She took part in three FIFA Women's World Cups and two Olympic Games.

At FIFPRO, she guides the organisation's policy and strategic development in women's football, overseeing efforts to improve and accelerate the industry. Ahead of

participating in today's Plenary Conference Programme panel session that will focus on how to address the issue of abuse in sport, Gregorius also makes the point that, when everything is stripped away, being a footballer is just another job.

"The online environment for the modern athlete is an extension of their workplace," she says. "We should therefore have appropriate workplace safeguards in place

**"What routinely holds back women's football is the governance and decision-making structures"**

in order to protect players, as athletes and as people, from experiencing abuse and discrimination."

Gregorius would like to see social media platforms adopt a more proactive approach to racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination and prejudice rather than just taking down offensive material. However, she adds that this is just one area of concern and is not unique to women's football.

"It is high on the list, but it should be high on the list across all of football – not just women's football," she says. "Having environments that are healthy, safe and provide for the holistic wellbeing of players as people should be one of the most important things on anybody's list."

Underpinning everything is governance, with Gregorius eager to shake up a structure that she believes is built by men, for men.

"Women's football has proven itself, time and time again, to be an industry with enormous potential and exponential growth capacity, both on and off the field," she adds.

"What routinely holds it back, and holds the players back as a consequence, is the governance and decision-making structures that surround the sport. Many of the most important structures are ones that are built for men's football purposes, meaning at both an international and domestic level there is not significant and focused attention given to the women's game and its players."

"This is how and where inherent structural sexism plays out, and the cascading effects can go far and deep. Many of the issues that women's footballers face can be traced back to this issue – whether it is their working conditions, the way the sport is marketed and subsequent commercial opportunities, or the decisions made around competitions and the calendar."

"There are not often decisions made in football that really have the unique positions and needs of the women's players at the heart of them. We cannot find and implement fit-for-purpose sustainable solutions and pathways forward for the sport if we don't address this fundamental issue."

**• Plenary Conference Programme – 'Whose Responsibility Is It?': Today, 10:10-10:55**

# LOCAL BAND TO SIGN OFF IN STYLE

## CLOSING EVENT

A New Orleans-style brass band will ensure the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 finishes on the right note at today's official closing event.

The professional musicians who make up the Birmingham-based Heavy Beat Brass Band (pictured) promise to wrap up SportAccord 2024 in style with a blast of Mardi Gras music.

Delegates will also hear from Matthew Hammond, Chair of the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC), SportAccord Managing Director Martin Gibbs and SportAccord 2024 Executive Steering Group Chair Ian Metcalfe.

WMGC Chief Executive Neil Rami said: "The closing ceremony will provide a final opportunity for delegates to meet up and look back on a productive week of meetings, events, interviews and excursions as the West Midlands officially concludes its hosting of the 18th edition of SportAccord.

"The Summit has offered global delegates



the chance to see first-hand the region's credentials as a world-class host of major sporting events. While this ceremony may be a formal goodbye to our domestic and international sporting guests, we look forward to following up the many encouraging conversations we have had as we continue to highlight to delegates that Birmingham and the West Midlands is the heart of sport in the UK."

The official closing event is due to take place from 16:00-18:00 in Hall 4 at the International Convention Centre.

## TODAY AT A GLANCE

### CONFERENCES:

Plenary Conference Programme  
(09:30-12:15)

MediaAccord (14:00-16:15)

### SOCIALS:

Morning activity: Private Classical  
Mat Pilates Class (07:30-08:30)

SportAccord 2024 Official Closing  
Event (16:00-18:00)

# SCOTLAND THE PERFECT STAGE FOR EVENTS

Scotland continues to underline its reputation as the perfect stage for major sporting events.

In 2024 and beyond Scotland will host World Athletics Indoor Championships, World Orienteering Championships, The 152<sup>nd</sup> Open and the AIG Women's Open and UEFA EURO 2028.