

SPORT | LEISURE | HOSPITALITY

UP

Unique People

Intelligent perspectives for sector leaders
Issue 2



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with Raj Athwal, Award-
winning & leading football
commercial expert



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Head of Commercial Partnerships
at Formula 1® and Trustee for the
Women's Sports Trust.

From Euro 96 to the Laureus World Sports Awards,
we catch up with a global sports expert

JONATHAN HILL



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Q&A with Zarah Al-Kudcy

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Global sports marketing and commercial expert.



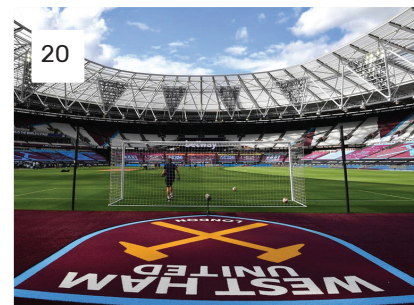
Inside a 'bio-secure' test match

A look behind the scenes of the recent series between England and the West Indies



Revolutionising football

Raj Athwal discusses challenging and pushing boundaries to achieve commercial success in football.



Lockdown life

Martin Gritton, MarComms Manager, talks about the challenges faced by London Stadium during lockdown.

Welcome to the latest edition of Unique People: Sports, Leisure and Hospitality (SLH)

Welcome to the 2nd Edition of Unique People (SLH) aimed at providing intelligent perspectives and industry insights from fascinating leaders in the sports and leisure world.

It has certainly been another interesting, and indeed, challenging few month's since the last edition back in June. It is undoubtable that the sports and leisure industry has had to continually adapt alongside the rapidly developing environment as a consequence of Covid-19.

It was abundantly clear from the very beginning of the Government induced lockdown that the industry would face significant challenges. Organisations have had to temporarily close their doors and competitive sports were postponed leading to widespread disappointment of employees in the sector, participants and sports fans in general.

In recent weeks, we have seen resilience and adaptability from the industry as things began to transition into a 'Covid-secure version' of the way things were. Bio-secure sporting venues, adapted game play and new social distancing provisions have all been introduced to the sector over the past months, which we hope is indicative of momentum building up again.

In this edition of Unique People (SLH), we were delighted to gain insight into the remarkable effort and planning it takes to set up and run an international 'bio-secure' venue through our interview with the team at The Emirates Old Trafford as they prepared for the international test cricket series between England and The West Indies.

We also hear from Jonathan Hill, recently CEO of Laureus Sports Awards, whose top-level sporting career spans over 20 years. Jonathan talks us through some of his career highlights to date including his work on the commercial development of some of the biggest brands in sport such as The Football Association, The All Blacks, The FA Cup, Euro 96 & Wembley Stadium.

In the ever-changing environment, we once again look at some of the industry insights and current trends in the Sports and Leisure industry. We'll explore how the recent Black Lives Matter movement has created ripples across society and the sporting world which we can expect to translate into greater diversity and inclusion and the removal of unconscious bias.

Zarah Al-Kudcy, Head of Commercial Partnership Development at Formula 1® discusses her career, future aspirations and the leadership lessons she has learnt during her fascinating journey so far. We were also delighted to speak with Raj Athwal, who discusses challenging and pushing boundaries to achieve commercial success in football.

And finally Martin Gritton, MarComms Manager at London Stadium, talks about the challenges faced during lockdown and the need to dive in, adapt and continuously learn as you go.

If you would like more information about any of our events, or you would like to share your unique story, or that of your organisation in a future edition of Unique People: Sports, Leisure and Hospitality, please feel free to get in touch with us directly.

As always, we gratefully welcome any feedback you may have to make our publications as valuable as possible.

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Industry insights

Reform to the Financial Fair Play Regulations

In the coming weeks and months we can expect to see a complete reform of the Financial Fair Play regulations within the football world. Following the overturning of the decision against Manchester City's breaching of the regulations by the court of appeal, it has become evident that there is an overall lack of clarity within the rules.

The review of these regulations can impact clubs and football organisations in a whole manner of ways. At the moment, the number of legal loopholes make the rules difficult to regulate and it could be argued that it leaves some clubs at a greater disadvantage to others.

Key figures, such as former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, now global head of development for FIFA, have called for a relaxing of the rules to encourage more financial investment in the game as long as the origins of the investment are legitimate and legal.



The impact of 'behind closed doors' sport on 'home advantage'.

As more and more sporting events are beginning to take place behind closed doors, it is expected that we will start to see evidence as to the extent to which audiences impact performance and results.

Where home sporting fixtures are typically thought to provide the team or individual with a competitive advantage, it will be clear as to whether the number of supports present is the key driver behind this.

As some sporting events have been scheduled in neutral venues, factors such as familiarity of environment and travel fatigue could potentially be removed which could potentially give a better insight into performance.



Increasing diversity and representation conversations

The Black Lives Matter movement has without a doubt contributed to individuals and organisations (across all areas of society and sectors) taking a closer look at diversity, representation and how to tackle and eradicate racism.

Looking at football in the UK alone, only six managers come from a BAME background with only one BAME director and one BAME Chairman or CEO.

Movements like this have led many to consider the potential influence the sports industry can have on social politics and activism. Looking back at the protest of Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics or Jesse Owens in 1936, it is evident that a sporting platform



has been used to convey important social messages effectively in the past.

Following the recent protests and movement, we can expect to see organisations looking to diversify their boardrooms and combat unconscious bias.



The economic impact of Covid-19 on the sports & leisure industry

POSTPONED

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the sporting events calendar. Major global events such as the Euro Football Championships, Tokyo Olympics and Wimbledon have all been postponed, or even cancelled, as a direct result of the situation.

This isn't just a huge blow from the perspective of the fans and athletes, it has also significantly effected the economics of the sports and leisure industry.

The sector has been hit hard, behind the scenes coaching teams, venue staff, marketing and corporate team members all face job loss and hardship.

Cancelled events and the closing of venues also has an impact on sponsorship contracts, broadcasting rights and ticketing revenue, which is having a crippling effect on some organisations within the sector.

In May this year, the Government warned that British sport faced a huge £700m loss as a direct result of the pandemic. MP's reported that the ECB would lose around £380m, RFU £107m and the EFL would face losses of around £200m.

Looking overseas to the impact in the United States, the NFL, NBA, MBL and MLS are estimated to lose \$3.2b in ticketing revenue alone from March to June.

We can expect organisation leaders to focus on short and long term strategies to help maintain revenues and financials at a level which will secure survival.



VAT cuts for the Hospitality sector

It is undeniable that the hospitality and leisure industry has been one of the worst affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In a recent government announcement, VAT cuts worth £4.1billion will come into play for the hospitality, food and drink businesses.

Part of a plan to help drive economic recovery and aid the sector, the VAT cut from 20% to 5% is expected to help organisations recover from the losses of the past months.

It is unknown just yet, the extent to which this aid will benefit consumers and the public, however we can expect organisations within the sector to use this strategically to try and boost their financial recovery.



Opportunity through technology

Faster transmission speeds as a result of new technology and 5G are set to improve virtual and remote viewing for fans.

The extent to which communication and connection speeds have improved is likely to be a welcome development for betting companies and sporting data organisations, as better real time data and information is providing more accurate reporting.

Sports fans will ultimately benefit from these improvements as they can not only rely upon the live streaming options available to them, they can also benefit from rapidly processed analysis and data of the sporting fixtures too.

Transparency and clarity with Health and Safety planning

As recent government guidance has enabled grassroots sports to restart from July onwards, sporting governing bodies are under pressure to supply new, detailed 'Covid secure' safety plans before they are allowed to do so.

The operationalising of grassroots sports has had to be planned in line with new guidance on participation numbers and processes to ensure that social distancing is adhered to.

More so than ever before, sports governing bodies are accountable to the government and any plans to restart will be carefully scrutinised to ensure the safety of participants and supporters.



with **Zarah Al-Kudcy**
Head of Commercial Partnership
Development – Formula 1®

Zarah is the current Head of Commercial Partnerships at Formula 1® and has recently been appointed as a Trustee for the Women’s Sports Trust. With a breadth of experience across the international sports industry, Zarah has led marketing and communications teams at both Cricket and Rugby World Cups. Neil Edwards, Client Director at Brewster McBride, caught up with Zarah to discuss her career, future aspirations and the leadership lessons she has learnt during her journey so far.

Q Can you talk us through your career to date?

A I originally wanted to be a journalist but got an opportunity to work for a sports agency in a communications role. I did four years there and my role involved brands, governing bodies and major events. I think agency side is a great platform to start out with, as it gives you that mix and variation. I then went to Australia in 2012 to work for Athletics Australia; the governing body for elite track & field.

This was the year of the London 2012 Olympics, so there was a huge part of me that thought “am I crazy to head out whilst we have a home Olympics and a diamond jubilee” but I simply had to go where the work was. I then came back and did a stint at Sky Sports in their marketing team and then worked on the Rugby World Cup. I was on the organising committee for the Rugby World Cup 2015, so at least I got that home, major event fix. I led the marketing there which then led

into working with the ICC on the Women’s World Cup and Champions Trophy before moving into Formula 1®. I moved into Formula 1® during the new era where I’ve moved into a much more commercial role.

I’ve really had a mix of experience within broadcasting, agencies, communications and marketing roles, and now I’m in a commercial setting. I feel like the variety has given me a well-rounded mix of skills and experience, which has ultimately been beneficial now I’m in this commercial role.

It’s actually the reason I took this role at Formula 1®. Previously a lot of commercial teams have been very separate to marketing divisions and there’s always been some form of inner tension. These days things are integrated a lot better so I feel I can use my marketing and communications experience in a commercial capacity.

Fact file



| | |
|------------------|--|
| Category | Open wheel single-seater Formula auto racing |
| Country | International |
| Inaugural season | 1950 |
| Drivers | 20 |
| Constructors | 10 |
| Engine suppliers | Ferrari |
| | Honda |
| | Mercedes |
| | Renault |
| Tyre suppliers | Pirelli |





with Zarah Al-Kudcy

Q In January you became a Trustee at the Women's Sports Trust, what does the role entail?

A The organisation looks at increasing the coverage of women's sport by working with industry stakeholders as well as creating role models and ambassadors. It's about supporting the professional athletes & increasing the profile of them as individuals - it was set up on the back of 2012 to try and maintain the momentum created by the Games.



This year we've had a campaign called Unlocked, which has been supported by people like Baroness Sue Campbell, Tim Hollingsworth and Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson. The campaign is about helping athletes at various stages of their careers. Some athletes are fairly young and part of international teams looking forward to their first Olympics, then you've got some that are either close to retirement, or who are retired

and looking to go either into coaching or into a totally different career, such as media or government etc. So we work with them to help and support them with that transition.

I think it's a great example of where we can do more of that in sport. In every job I've had, I've sort of learnt skills as I've gone on. There's always this assumption that an athlete knows what they're doing. They might know what they're doing when it comes to training, however a lot of the time they need some support around other aspects of their career - they're not always going to ask the question of "How do I grow my social media?" or "Why is it important that I have a brand?" or "How do I get into governance?".

During lockdown we have organised weekly online groups with everyone on the programme. They've really got to know each other and have break out rooms to discuss the challenges they're going through. You have a number of different Olympic sports/athletes represented - they've all come together and kind of gone, "What does this mean for you?", so it's been a nice moment.



Fact file

Women's Sports Trust



Founded in 2012, Women's Sport Trust raises the visibility and increases the impact of women's sport through the promotion of diverse athlete role models, increasing media coverage and improving the funding landscape.

They are a leading UK charity focused on using the power of sport to accelerate gender equality and stimulate social change.

They have the ability to reach, engage and stimulate action amongst leaders and opinion formers across sport, business and the media.

They identify and promote a diverse range of role models.

They increase the percentage & quality of media coverage.

They find ways to shift the funding landscape for women's sport.



Q What are the stand out moments in your career?

A The Women's World Cup 2017 definitely stands out for me, especially the fact we sold out Lords.

It was a huge moment for everyone because it took a long time to get there. It was a huge project and we had quite a few push backs along the way. For instance, we were told we were being ridiculous to target a sell-out final. It was a real team effort and it was nice to see it come off. And, for England to win the World Cup too, was the icing on the cake.

I think the Rugby World Cup was also a huge moment for me. To work on a

under performed. Being able to deliver a sold out tournament that broke ticket revenue and attendances records, and just the general vibe in this country (despite the fact the home nation didn't do particularly well) was a huge highlight too.



Now at F1, I'm really excited and proud of the work that we're currently doing and what's in the pipeline. At the start of this season (in March, albeit the first Grand Prix didn't end up being until July) we announced a new global partnership with



Zarah (second from left) and her team at the official schedule launch with the England team (right)



major event like that after not having the Olympics experience myself earlier in my career was great. Almost in reverse of the Women's World Cup, the success came from the fact that we had a great tournament albeit the England team

Saudi Aramco, that's the first new global partner to join F1 in the last 4 years. It is a difficult market out there, so for us to be able to do that I think was again another good team effort.

I'm also excited to have played a part in a new partnership with Zoom Communications, which we did during lockdown. It's the perfect example of how Zoom allows organisations to keep doing business but also how we've used new challenges to drive new opportunities and, in this instance, we created a completely new virtual hospitality programme for the partnership.



Back at Birmingham University as part of the Rugby World Cup 2015 Trophy Tour, with World Cup winner Jason Leonard

Q Your current role at F1 see's you work with number global partners and host venues over a calendar year. What are the specific challenges of such a diverse role?

A My roles leading into working at F1 saw me involved in World Cups or Olympics. These events had long lead times with at least two years to prepare for one major event. This meant everyone was on the same page and focused on that end goal. Earlier roles saw me involved in seasonal sports such as Athletics, Basketball or Tennis - you are always treading water in seasonal sports because you're either in season or you're planning for your next season.

Formula 1® has 22 races throughout the year, all over the world. For the host venue, it's their biggest event of the year and for us it's like having 22 Grand Slams or 22 Super Bowls every few weeks. Being involved in all them is exhausting, but in a good way. It's also phenomenal to see how you can pick up a circuit and drop it in 22 different places and work through all the challenges that come with that.

Challenges are different every week, whether it's the commercials specific to a region or just the delivery of it - you are constantly on the go. If you just look at the regions we race in themselves, some brands are very different. We work with a large number of global brands, they may actually want something different out of their Formula 1 experience on our race weekends in Asia or China, compared to a race weekend in North America, so managing those relationship are always a welcome challenge. It's been fascinating to see how global brands such as Heineken approach different local markets in different ways, so you start to see those nuances as you work through each race and what's important to each of the local markets as well as the global brand. Heineken, as an example, are great activators, so you actually get to physically see how their brand is used on the ground, and how fans engage with them.

zoom

Continues overleaf →



with Zarah Al-Kudcy (continued)

Q What specific hurdles do women encounter as they develop a career as a leader in the Sports & Entertainment sector?

A First of all, I love working in sport. I'm lucky in that I also love sport. I occasionally joke that sport is language – I can go to any part of the world, meet a stranger, and if they like sport I can hold a conversation with them for quite a long time. So I think that automatically breaks down some barriers and earns you that respect. But as we've recently seen with Rugby Australia with their CEO having to step down, there are still cultural issues we still have to overcome. I've been in meetings in the past where often it's not overt, it is more of a subconscious awareness you get when you are told "you sit there" or "you take the notes", it's a cultural change that's needed in areas.

Take the Women's World Cup as a great example. The hurdles we had to overcome were all set by senior men, in various positions. They were being unambitious when setting us targets and objectives for the tournament, despite us having research that suggested a different approach. We worked with them and made the arguments we needed to in order to run it the way we felt best. We went on to deliver a successful tournament – the management at Lord's were great in the end and held their hands up and admitted they got it wrong.

So I think it's about slowly turning the boat when we talk about a cultural change. We would all like that to be faster, but sadly long term change takes time. Having more female leaders in the industry would

be great, but I think timing is the biggest hurdle. Leadership roles don't come up all that often, and whether you're male or female, from sport or not, I think it's about making sure that organisations work with the right people to identify the right talent to fill those positions. But again, that does depend on culture and a collective change across all industries.

To make a change, it's about us going back and understanding why we work in sport. A lot of the time people tell you it's not for the money, you work in sport because it's the purpose & passion it provides people. I think we see that even more now that sport is a community, for a lot of people they go and get involved in sports at weekends for that reason.

If I could get every young girl to understand that a career in sport doesn't need mean being a 'professional athlete' and learn that there's so many benefits to simply playing sport, whether you're good at it, or not. I look back at my time at university and I think, "Yeah I got a degree" but I'm probably where I am now because of the relationships I made and networks I built. It is relationships that win you opportunities to take into day-to-day life. I saw an Instagram post recently that said 94% of C-Suite women played sports at some point, so it's the skill set it gives you as you go through life more than anything. I think that's why I continue to work in it because I think it's the answer to a lot of problems we have as a society.

Q Knowing what you know now, what advice would you have given to yourself as a 20 year old?

A Two pieces of advice; one would have been do a law degree. I wish I had done a law degree. Not because I think I'd be a lawyer now, but it would have just opened a few more doors for me. I've looked into going the agent route, and just having that background would be really useful.

The other one is to be patient. I was extremely impatient until my 30s to be honest. When I completed my journalism course after uni, one of my tutors said the problem with you, is you want to go in and become the editor of the Times straight away, and I was like, "yeah why not?" because you can then just influence everything. I think I'd have advised my younger self that it's important to balance drive and patience.



Zarah alongside Charles Dance on the set of the Rugby World Cup 2015 ad campaign

Q Who has inspired you throughout your career?

A I could probably rattle off a long list for you, but I think there's a couple that stand out. From an athlete point of view, I worked with Luol Deng, a British basket player who is now retired from the NBA – he taught me a lot. I was young when I was a Communications Manager and working with him. I think we were a fairly similar age, however he was wise beyond his years. The team had a lot of issues going on, off court, and even though he was the biggest name in the team, he'd say how can we share the load, how can we build up other people. Just seeing the way he carried himself off the court made me think that, if I can be a bit more like him, that's a win.

At Fast Track there was the Events Director, Michelle Dite. I've never actually worked directly for her, but she's always been that sort of motivator and guiding voice. Again, the way she carries herself inspires me. The way that she leads and the way that she just is. She's a very warm and open person and has time for people. She always wants to hear, or try and find the solution, but she's also a great politician – so if she needs to guide you down a route, she can also do that. I've taken a lot from seeing her operate like that overtime.

Q What to you makes a great leader?

A I think listening first and foremost. I'll probably come up with all the clichés at this point, however I truly believe it. Being willing to do the work that you ask of others, but also willing to step back and give people responsibility to do it themselves. There's nothing worse than a micro manager. I love managing people because I love to see them grow, but equally, I enjoy how they help me develop, because everyone is very different and the way that they behave reflects in the way that you behave with them too.

That comes from my sporting background, I've always loved being part of a team and leading people and helping

people when they need, it but also just seeing them flourish. I think it's knowing when to take a step back, and then also when to provide a guiding hand.



Q What do the next five years hold for you?

A Who knows? Five years ago I couldn't have told you what would happen in the next five years. I think that's been my mantra throughout my career, that opportunities present themselves and it's the way that you take them that counts. I would like to continue to do more in helping to grow and nurture the women's sport, as and where I can. Currently at F1, we are doing a lot in and around diversity within the organisation and I'm really keen

and passionate about being part of that, as well as being involved with projects like the Women's Sport Trust.

Women in sport is a big piece. For me it's just taking those opportunities because the sports industry has changed so much in the last five to ten years. I'd like to think I would still be influencing change for the greater good.

Q Post pandemic, what challenges lie ahead for the world of sport?

A Unpicking the web that is the sports industry. There will be many knock on effects when sport fully gets going again. The challenges at present are getting every facet of the industry back up and running, whether you are a rights holder, broadcaster or brand. I think it's also changing the rhetoric. Pre-pandemic, we have always has the opportunity to sit back and plan and then see what the result is. In the shorter terms we will not have that luxury.

I think one of the great things has been how it's been about normal people during this lockdown, the heroes and the key workers

We are really good at returning to what we think normal was, and yet we've changed, and I think one of the great things has been about normal people during this lockdown, the heroes and the key workers.

I think it's more what do we learn from this and then doing something about it. Keeping those human connections are key, because weirdly, we've become more isolated yet more connected, and it's making the most of that in sport moving forward.

With the Australian media at the IAAF World Championships in Daegu



Revolutionising FOOTBALL

Raj Athwal has spent 25 years at the sharp end of the football industry. His wide-ranging knowledge of football has been accrued with time at Glasgow Rangers, Watford, Coventry City, Accrington Stanley, Port Vale and Burton Albion. This means he has worked at every level of the professional game in England, as well as at one of the two biggest clubs in Scotland.

He has been responsible for generating millions of pounds in revenue, from stadium naming rights via front-of-shirt sponsorships, to all the many commercial partnerships that are needed at every football club.

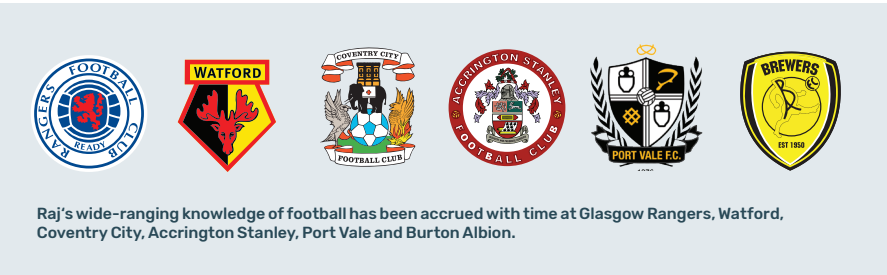
Raj was a member of the Executive Board which facilitated the move from Highfield Road to the £116m Ricoh Arena and was part of the turnaround team when

experiences. It's an amalgamation of experience, knowledge, and a profound understanding of your key asset, 'your audience'. The very mechanics of consumerism are constantly evolving, and to remain in a state of inertia will eventually have far reaching implications submerging the football club into a mere parody of a Sunday league outfit if strategic innovation is ignored.

Embracing employees who provide unconventional, innovative ideas should be viewed as a strength, adding to the diversity of the organisation. As proven at all the clubs I have represented, the league status on the pitch has little or no impact off the pitch if a consistent and progressive business model is adopted.

There are innovative methodologies and plans I adopted at several of the clubs I represented, where I was afforded part autonomy to implement strategies. And I can categorically confirm that I moved on leaving all the football clubs in a far healthier position financially than when I arrived. These methodologies have been learned, honed and refined over twenty five years to bring sustainable financial success to clubs.

The common denominator will always be the emotional tribal attachment. However, beyond the current supporter base and business clients, there is a lack of foresight, and in many cases, a lack of will to reach beyond the parameters of the existing business functionality. Football clubs cannot second guess or manipulate their audiences to fulfil their business objectives. On the contrary, the business has to be equally led and intrinsically educated by the very audience they wish to acquiesce.



Glasgow Rangers was liquidated with the primary role of creating a strategy to generate sustainable revenue. He sourced and negotiated the 32 Red front-of-shirt sponsorship at Glasgow Rangers in 2014.

Off the pitch the football industry urgently required a bolder, progressive approach and the unfortunate circumstances we now find ourselves in will precipitate change that was long over-due.

Owners and decision makers need to accept and realise that operating a football club requires a unique skill-set outside the realms of their own business

There has to be synergy and collaboration between the commercial, community and digital & technological disciplines, which are metaphorically the engine that steers the club to new destinations which, in this particular case, are the consumers; locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Each club needs to ascertain what are their identity and values? Who is their audience? Based on such factors, they can begin to strategise for the future without compromising their key business objectives. The next stage is to ensure they mitigate any inhibited discourse. Lead from top down with a buy in from bottom up.





Jonathan Hill

With 20 years of top-level experience in the global world of sports marketing, Jonathan has held senior level positions in leading sports marketing agencies such as IMG & WPP. Throughout his career he has driven the commercial development of some of the biggest brands in sport, working with the Football Association, The All Blacks, The FA Cup, Euro 96 & Wembley Stadium. Jonathan has recently concluded his role at Laureus as their first independent CEO. His role focused on driving the business & digital transformation of the Awards & the global charitable Foundation to use sport as a platform to transform young lives.

Q Can you talk us through your career to date?

A I graduated from university with a German & French degree and a desire to work in either sport or wine, primarily because these were two things that I enjoyed most. I ended up on a graduate scheme running a Swiss Freight Forwarding desk at a company called LEP International, which was actually a brilliant grounding in the fundamentals of trade and business. I really enjoyed my time there, however I suspected this wasn't my calling in life, so moved on from there to become part

I worked my way up the ladder and ended up running the sales division for NBC SuperChannel before making a big career decision to leave that very well paid position to go and work for The FA on Euro 96 as Marketing Manager. I took a huge drop in salary in accepting the job, so it really was a career defining moment but one that I would never regret. What it did mean was that I was able to work with UEFA and their then sports marketing agency ISL on a truly global sporting event which gave me access to

My first big commercial deals were done around Euro 96 and I also had the honour of choosing the slogan 'Football Comes Home' for the tournament – a refrain which has followed me around ever since! Working on Euro 96 also introduced me to IMG and at the end of the tournament I was lucky enough to be invited to work for them within their football division. I worked under two individuals, Andrew Croker and Paul Smith, and I had seven fantastic years working in the world of football across the globe. I had sole responsibility for Europe, which included the creation of both the SPL and the Dutch Eredivisie Leagues (using the Premier League model) and running the commercialisation of the Russian League & Russian Cup, which involved some very 'entertaining' club owners, to say the least. IMG were able to introduce me to other non-team sports like tennis and golf and their different commercial models, so the time I spent with them really was instructive.

Continues overleaf →

My first big commercial deals were done around Euro 96 and I also had the honour of choosing the slogan 'Football Comes Home' for the tournament

of a number of ITV airtime sales teams (including Thames and LWT) which was both great fun, and a fantastic introduction to the importance of content and targeting audiences. It was also the first time I really saw the importance and power of sport as a platform.

senior people, both within government, football and with senior decision-makers at brands. Again, circumstance meant that I had a very rapid rise to become Commercial Director, which was a very high-profile role and thankfully I think most people would agree that it was one of the most successful tournaments England had hosted since 1966.





with Jonathan Hill (continued)

The FA then came calling again. Adam Crozier asked me to help in the commercial transition of the old Wembley Stadium to the new Wembley Stadium as Commercial Director. I did that for 18 months pretty successfully, creating and realising the commercial programme and the corporate sales strategy that underpinned the economics of the stadium. I was then approached by the wider group to work for them as Group Commercial Director in Soho Square, which meant that I wasn't just looking at grass roots development, I would also be working on The FA Cup & the England properties, which of course both had global impact and commercial value, which again exposed me to the global broadcast, media, agency and partnership worlds at the highest levels. Over the seven years I ran the commercial side of The FA, I took revenues from around £300m to nearly £800m over their four year cycle.

Over the seven years I ran the commercial side of The FA, I took revenues from around £300m to nearly £800m over their four year cycle.



The FA then decided to relocate from Soho Square back to Wembley, and as much as I loved it there, it felt like a natural time to move on. I then worked as COO for a small, boutique football rights agency called Kentaro. The main element of their business was the commercialisation of football, FA and confederation broadcast rights across the world. We also created one-off events and tournaments such as Brazil's friendly games across the world. The likes of SportFive and Pitch International came out of that space which was as competitive as it was fast-moving, however the business model in effect fell away when UEFA centralised the television rights from the federations into one pot. It was however, a great experience, for me having gone from two much bigger organisations to something much smaller with more direct responsibilities.

I was then head-hunted by the global agency network WPP. Martin Sorrell had tried to buy IMG but was outbid,

so he decided to create his own sports marketing agency within the wider WPP network which we created as ESP Properties. This was again great fun as it was in essence a start-up albeit within a much bigger organisation. The business model allowed me to speak to rights holders across the world of sport (and not just football) with the goal of giving them access to WPP's clients. The USP at the time was that the Group media trading arm of WPP invested one in every three of all advertising dollars across the world, representing brands from over 300 of the Fortune 500 companies. Whilst the principle was great, Sorrell found out what other big agency networks trying to get into the sports space had found out previously, in that it was hard to persuade existing agencies to give up their hard-earned relationships with brands but it was still a fantastic way to access senior decision-makers within the sporting landscape.

This led on to being head-hunted again for my most recent role as CEO of the Laureus World Sports Awards – jointly owned by Richemont and Daimler. Daimler wanted their first ever independent CEO to drive the awards forward having started the platform in 2000 under the tutelage of Nelson Mandela as Patron. It's a great platform with a network of over 200 projects around the world which use sport to help give disadvantaged children a better chance in life. My role was to help transform the organisation into a modern, fit-for-purpose platform with a digital and commercial focus at its heart. I brought in a Japanese bank called MUFG, who are the 5th largest bank in the world, to be a Global Partner alongside Mercedes Benz and IWC Watches. This helped that transformation and I trust that after three years, I have left them in a stronger place to face the challenges of being a charitable platform in a post-Covid world.

A formidable CV

With a wealth of global sports marketing experience under his belt, Jonathan boasts an impressive CV that includes some of the highest profile sports related organisations in the world.

Below are some highlights of his career to date:

Chief Executive Officer



Global Commercial Director



Chief Operating Officer

KENTARO

UEFA Marketing Advisory Committee Member



Group Commercial Director



Commercial Director



Senior International VP, Football Division



Commercial Director, Euro 96, The FA



Q Your time at The FA included Euro 96 & the new Wembley Stadium, how do reflect when you look back at that time in your career?

A I think Euro 96 was a unique event and a unique summer. We had beautiful weather and everything just came together. Given that the UK media had predicted a hooligan-driven fiesta within England, I think it turned out to be one of the greatest sporting events we have ever hosted. It was a brilliant introduction into the commercial world of sport for me. I learnt a lot about some quite technical areas, creating the technology group of partners to power the event and it's fair to say I pretty quickly understood the importance of ensuring contracts were clearly defined and understandable, particularly in a relatively unpredictable sports world. I have memories and friendships from the event that will last a lifetime.

When I went back into Wembley Stadium to help The FA, it gave me the platform to be able to show the main FA Board that I could create a broad commercial programme to support the whole FA ecosystem. It was a real privilege and honour to have the role, and there was very much a sense of stewardship to be

able to be part of the executive leadership team at the organisation. I thoroughly enjoyed everything I did there, from building a very commercially focused team to genuinely supporting the grassroots of the game.



We secured the FA Cup sponsorship with EON, which was a very successful £40m deal, the biggest in The FA Cup's history. We also did some brilliant grassroots deals and actually, my favourite ever commercial deal was the £2m a year deal with Tesco which involved delivering skills training to boys and girls aged 5-11, which was an area very close to my heart. I did that deal with the then CEO of Tesco, Sir Terry Leahy, and those who have dealt with Sir Terry know that he's a very hard-nosed and focused businessman, so to be able to do the deal with him was both personally and professionally rewarding,

showing the real depth and breadth of what The FA could offer.

Driving the National Football Centre, now known as St George's Park, through The FA Board when others had tried and failed, was also something I am really proud of and is hopefully a legacy that has contributed to the success of the younger England teams which will continue going forwards. All of this, aligned with the ability to trade the England brand and The FA Cup from a broadcast perspective with broadcasters and media partners across the globe, set me up well for my future roles.

I also worked with some great and inspirational colleagues such as Sir Trevor Brooking and Adrian Bevington and had some fantastic experiences staying in the team camps in Portugal and memorably in Baden-Baden, Germany in 2006. To simply be a part of that was great for someone who loves football, loves sport and likes being at the heart of sporting events.

Q You have been involved in a number of major commercial and broadcast deals, how has the industry and demands changed?

A If you start with the media space, some things remain constant in relation to sport. In essence, it's about the live product and 'unscripted drama' that delivers a big, and critically, a quality and otherwise hard to reach audience; these are constants that underpin the value of sport. Back in 1992, football was the driver for the creation and growth of the pay TV Model, and at the time, football was happy, and still is to an extent, selling the relationship with its audience to someone like Sky in return for a significant, guaranteed amount of money. What's happened over the last 5-10 years with the advent of the big social media players is that this relationship is changing quickly.

Arguably Facebook now owns a significant relationship with the audiences, to the degree that sports rights holders can't, or don't, benefit

directly from that relationship. Sports right holders have had to move from that B2B model to a more B2C model where every rights holder has to demonstrate to potential partners that it has a direct relationship with its fan base. As such the dynamics of media rights trading are changing and models are emerging that reflect technological change, which is why we see the multi-layered rights segmentation that we now do. As the social media platforms become the new Sky TVs of the sporting world, we will see these models change even quicker and the democratisation of access to sporting events (for example on a single game basis not necessarily bundled up in a wider tech package) will continue apace.

It's also reflected in the sponsorship world and the deals being done now. There's a need for measurable data in terms of how brands can interact with their consumers

and target them via any partnership. 20 years ago, brand awareness and perimeter boards were disproportionately more important than they are now. They are still relevant of course, but having a more authentic, deeper relationship with a sports audience or community is increasingly more important for rights holders and for brands as well. The nature of sponsorships and the creation of content for the right audiences at the right time has become more scientific than ever before. You'll see that in deals moving forward, in that you have to understand your segmented audience base to remain relevant and authentic in today's world. The new fan is consuming content in a very different way to how people did 20 years ago, this will be the biggest single change going forward, and post Covid, the way in which we engage and talk to different audiences will be key.



with Jonathan Hill (continued)

Q What are the 'stand out' career moments that have put you on track to achieve what you have?

A I'm a great believer in being in the right place at the right time. Having plied my trade as a striker in the amateur football world for 30 plus years, I think you have to work incredibly hard to be in the right place at the right time. There's an innate sense of knowing when to be in the right place and then good things often happen.

There have been some seminal moments in my career. An example of that was my switch from the TV world into sport, which was a stand out career moment that I wasn't wholly aware of at the time.

I've been lucky enough to work for some brands in the world of sport that have been incredibly powerful and meaningful such as IMG and WPP. I hope to have made a real difference within those businesses and the time I spent with The FA helped set me up for the more managerial and senior leadership roles I have had thereafter.



Jonathan Hill in Tel Aviv with the Peres Peace Centre project, supported by Laureus Sport For Good Foundation



Q What makes a great leader in the sports & entertainment industry?

A You could split the answer up between sports leaders and sports business leaders. I was very lucky to work for and with some incredible England Team Managers when I was at The FA. I firmly believe that there are character traits, philosophies and skill sets that football coaches exhibit that are transferable into the business world. Terry Venables in Euro 96 was the great cajoler and motivator, he had a passion that led his team to want to perform for him – it created a defining and great team spirit. I remember sitting for dinner with Terry and David Davies, who was The FA Communications Director at the time,

My favourite within the sports sector was Fabio Capello. Fabio wasn't a great communicator as his English wasn't so good, but he commanded respect because he led by example and could evidence his experience and skill set from what he did as a player, as well as a coach. He gave a real innate confidence to everyone around him and whilst he was a complex guy, you understood what he wanted and it led people to want to deliver it for him.

If you then put these traits into the sports and entertainment worlds then I think

Terry Venables in Euro 96 was the great cajoler and motivator, he had a passion that led his team to want to perform for him



and Terry used the salt and pepper pots to take us through what his formation was going to be for the Holland game in Euro 96. His obvious passion for his job just made you believe in him and want to support him. If you can manage and harness that passion in business, then you have a real chance of success.

Sven-Goren Eriksson was a different type of communicator, he was slightly more distanced but was still very empathetic, and empathy is clearly a great quality for a leader to have. He was very open to listening to the views of his players, but unafraid of disseminating that information, making it his own and feeding it back to his players as his vision and expectation. He was also very firm, I remember being in Germany listening to a telephone conversation he was having with Alex Ferguson about Wayne Rooney and how insistent he was that he'd come back from England to rejoin the squad and I think Sir Alex (once he had calmed down) respected Sven's argument and logic. Persuading someone to do something they may not at first recognise they want to do, is all part of the management process.

Martin Sorrell at WPP was a pretty unique and singular business leader. Martin had a very single-minded vision to build WPP from nothing, a process which wasn't always easy for him. At one point it looked like he'd borrowed too much money and everything would implode, however he kept going and combined his business courage with intellect, which ultimately led to his success. He exhibited qualities that any good leader should show, clarity of vision and a clear roadmap to implement the vision. You need to be an open and accessible leader. Martin famously answered all of his emails within an hour.

In the end, I think leadership, and for example being a CEO, can be at times a rather lonely role, but you need to be confident in your decision making and not be afraid to take those difficult or bold decisions. Not everything will go right all the time, however I genuinely believe you must learn from mistakes and across your career you'll hopefully have more successes than mistakes and it'll drive you forward. Finally I think humility is also a key attribute in a leader – listening to people will always be best for your business and shows confidence in the team you've brought together to deliver your vision.

Q What specific skills did you need when working for a global organisation such as the Laureus World Sports Awards?

A Laureus was, and is, a very unique organisation in that it has two very heavyweight shareholders in Daimler and Richemont, who together turnover over more 100bn euros. So, I had to manage upwards to my immediate Laureus Board, that had representatives from Daimler and Richemont on it, but also up to the main Daimler and Richemont boards. The ability to communicate in verbal and written format to a group of senior executives was a real skill I needed as the executives had big, important day jobs, however Laureus was their primary corporate social responsibility platform on a global basis. They were extremely interested to ensure their investment was being nurtured and protected, and also had to be confident that I could drive it forwards as CEO.

With our base in London, we managed over 200 global projects and additionally

nine different Laureus Foundations across the world. Being able to develop a strong cohesive team and having the London team work collaboratively and supportively with the nine satellite businesses was really important. We had 68 global Academy Members and some very famous sportsmen and women ranging from Boris Becker, Michael Johnson, Nadia Comăneci to Emerson Fittipaldi. All were strong-willed individuals that needed to be managed in the right way, with the right tone and style of communication. We also had a panel of 1,000 sports journalists who created the Awards shortlists of sportsmen and women across the year, so you needed a global mind-set to be able to create engaging and usable content for them to share with their own social media communities and organisations.



Jonathan at a cycling event with Laureus Ambassador, Sir Chris Hoy



New Laureus Global Sponsor deal, Japanese bank MUFG, in Monaco 2018



Jonathan welcoming Prince Albert of Monaco at the awards in 2019

Q How are you approaching the next phase of your career – what's important to you?

A I'm committed to go back into the more mainstream sports sector. I enjoyed the Laureus experience, but ultimately it was about a one-off Awards show and I missed the cut and thrust of the wider sports industry, so my objective is to get back into mainstream sport and hopefully make the type of difference there that I have done in my previous roles. I've got a lot of experience in the football sector but have been lucky enough to build experience across a range of sports, so I would love to be able to help any entity within any sport to push itself forward to be and remain relevant in the ever changing world we live in.

I also think that ultimately, the quality and philosophy of the people I work with is of paramount importance. It's something I've learnt as I travelled through my working life, you must be working with like-minded people who share a vision, a philosophy of life and business, because business has to be fun.

You have to enjoy what you're doing and get up in the morning and look forward to going to work and hopefully I can do that within a strong and forward-looking sporting franchise and again, both apply, and pass on my experience, knowledge and contacts.

Q What do you like to do to get away from work and relax?

A Getting married and having a family has obviously played a big part in answering this question! I have three children, Lizzy and Lola who are 15 and 13 respectively, and James who is 11. Having the whole family life to enjoy outside the work environment is for me, the greatest of counter-balance to your professional world.

Thankfully all my kids enjoy sport and I still play 11-a-side football and try to run 10km every other day to keep myself fit. The girls love playing hockey, cricket, netball and football and are both very strong swimmers and James also plays football, hockey and cricket and is a very good tennis player. I still chair an amateur football club I started in London many moons ago (Nottsborough FC) and coach James's U12s year at football. I recognise that, to an extent, I now vicariously live out my sporting life via my children, however the key is that they enjoy everything that sport can bring them, in the same way that I have always enjoyed the many benefits that sport brings.

My wife Sarah likes to get all of us out as a family on bike rides and walks, which during the Covid-19 lockdown period has been fantastic and a real release. To be able to do this as a family has really been one of the great joys of an otherwise obviously challenging time.

London Stadium Lockdown life

Martin Gritton
Marketing and Communications Manager,
London Stadium

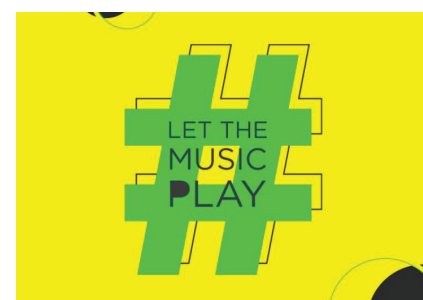


For all the lack of events, the last four months have been an interesting challenge. On a personal note, starting a job in lockdown is not ideal, but has been a great opportunity to take stock and get up to speed in a role that would normally not indulge such allowances. More often, it involves jumping in the fast lane and learning as we go.

As an organisation, the obvious challenges of cancelling and postponing events that are key milestones in the calendar is more than unfortunate. In addition to Premier League football, we cater for gigs, athletics, rugby and even baseball (as demonstrated by last summer's superb MLB visit to the Stadium). This has a huge impact on whole industries, not just fans, some of which are currently facing their biggest ever challenge to survive and recover. It is important we lend our weight to the discussion and help however we can.

We recently supported the **#LetTheMusicPlay campaign**, which mobilised a coalition of the music industry to highlight the dire situation facing the live music sector. UK venues, concerts, and festivals supported 210,000 jobs across the country and added £4.5bn to the economy in 2019. The collective power of the music and events industry delivered a stunning result, securing a £1.57bn support package for UK theatres, galleries, museums and other cultural venues. As we still have no plan from the Government for live music to resume, it is unclear how this money will be distributed, so it is still an uncertain time

for the people we work with in the music world. However, it will be welcome news and some much-needed positivity for live events and venues.



Beyond the Stadium, we are part of the magnificent Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which has seen some significant development since London 2012. It has come into its own as a community resource during lockdown; recently on World Urban Parks' **'Go Green for Parks'** Day, we supported the vital work park staff have contributed during the pandemic. Parks have been an invaluable lifeline for many people struggling over the past few months, with popularity soaring during lockdown. More than 70 per cent of park users saying that open space has had a positive impact on their physical and mental health, which you may have found yourself. It has been of comfort that there is always a park nearby.



The return of Premier League football meant we had live events to look forward to and work on, albeit behind closed doors and with some understandably strict conditions. I am delighted to say everything has gone to plan and the eerily quiet stadium looks great with the adapted seat branding, which was turned around in an incredibly short space of time. We continue our preparations for a return to normality, whatever that might be for live events. Welcoming people back to London Stadium when it is safe to do so will be a great boost for the team and fans; roll on 2021...



Inside a bio-secure test series



Emirates Old Trafford recently hosted two matches in the England v West Indies behind-closed-doors Test Series as well as the First Test against Pakistan. As one of the first venues to host international sport since the global pandemic took hold, we spoke with the leadership team to find out how they prepared to host the event, what they have learnt, and what the future now holds for the industry.

Before the first Test Match we spoke with Steve Davies, Operations Director, Angela Hodson, Sales Director and Liz Cooper, Partnerships Director, to understand what steps have been taken to prepare the venue for international sport and how the club has approached this challenging time.



Steve Davies
Operations Director



Angela Hodson
Sales Director



Liz Cooper
Partnerships Director



Q What is it about Emirates Old Trafford that allowed it to be selected as one of two venues to host these International Test Matches?



Angela: We were selected based in our ability to create and become a bio-secure venue. Here at the Emirates Old Trafford we have a 150 bedroomed Hilton Garden Inn hotel, alongside a significant amount venue space, our biggest room can hold up to 1,200 people. We also have a large pavilion with many multi-purpose rooms and everything here is interconnected by a bridge link. The venue is based over a 17-acre site with huge car parking facilities. All of this space was a big factor in us being selected.

We are well known to the English Cricket Board and have delivered some huge events over the years. There has been £60m of development over the past 10-12 years which has turned Emirates Old Trafford into a standout venue. Building the hotel was a master stroke, as not only does the hotel service cricket, it also services the conferencing and events business which is equally as important and generates around £4-5m annually.



Underlying everything is the confidence in our staff and venue to deliver. Last year we held the Ashes and multiple World Cup matches and in 2017, the One Love Manchester concert, which were incredibly successful events. It's testament to the staff, our capabilities and how we've grown over the years, which has allowed us to be selected to host the upcoming Test Match Series.



Q What specific measures have you had to put in place to ensure the venue is bio-secure?



Steve: We have had to do everything from scratch. The key part is how it remains bio-secure in every single process, like feeding people and letting them sleep in the accommodation to training in the facilities.

We have had to introduce procedures to ensure people are healthy to be in the venue and we are constantly monitoring everything that is happening within each environment. The ground itself is 17-acres in size and is fenced off to the outside world, which makes it almost an island of sorts. To even gain access you are required to take a Covid-19 test and must test negative. We have a 3rd party company doing this for us called Pronetics who are also working with Premier League football too.

Providing you test negative, you then have to complete a health questionnaire which is reviewed by an occupational health company which determines, irrespective of whether you test negative, if you are safe to be on site. Then of course, those on site have temperature tests and these people are then as risk free as possible in this current climate.

We also had to look at increasing and adapting our cleaning regime. We are supported by The Hilton Group with this as their standards are used as a benchmark in the industry. We have also had to work with medical experts and with the Government to create our own

guidelines in compliance with the highest standards.

It's incredibly clever, the way the site has been split into three zones and groups of people only allowed into specific zones. One of which is the green zone - only players and media are allowed in. We have access cards that you need to be able to enter each zone and your temperature must be taken to be safely allowed into each zone. The amber zone is for the operations team and catering teams and the red zone is the outer ring which is used for deliveries and external arrivals.

We have identified who, how, and when each person can enter a zone. It's so secure that only really essential staff can get on site. For the ECB to get this over the line they had to present operational plans to the Government for approval.



Inside a bio-secure test series (continued)



Q What is a typical match day going to look like for a player?



Liz: The West Indies created a video that shows 'a day in the life of' some of the players in their squad when they were quarantining and training on site at Emirates Old Trafford. It shows what it's like for players - from getting up in the morning, heading to training, having lunch, playing in the games room and using the massage facilities etc. It really does give you an insight into what our facilities have to offer and we've had some really positive feedback.

They have to wear gloves and a mask when getting their food, so it's really not as fluid as it would usually be in the mornings, but after breakfast, when they head down to the changing facilities, it's as normal as we could possibly get it.

For us of course, health & safety has to be the number one priority, but the trick is making sure that it's not obvious. We still want to create a great experience for them and so far, I think it's working. The reality is, there's an acceptance of

The reality is, there's an acceptance that people will inevitably break the two-meter rule. You can see it watching the football, it happens. Lots of science and investigation has gone into this. The key is avoiding the players spending a consistent period of 15 minutes face-to-face with one another.



Steve: They've generally really enjoyed it. Coming from the West Indies where Covid-19 has been considered much less of a big deal to the UK, where we have really strict rules on wearing face masks and keeping a distance of 2m. Prior to their arrival, I think they were worried about how this would all pan out, but generally we have had really positive feedback from them.

Although we have created zones, we have still been really strict with enforcing two-meter social distancing. When they have breakfast in the morning for example, they are each sat at their own separate table.



Q How supportive have the ECB been on offering support both operationally and commercially?



Steve: They've been superb. From day one they have been really helpful. We're the experts in how to run our own site, whether that be hotel, conferences or cricket, but we aren't the medical experts here, nor can we claim to be. Where the ECB have really helped is with the medical expertise. The thought processes we had prior to this were based upon what we've seen on the internet, so having them come in with research-based plans and information on what the right things to do was really helpful.

Second to that, operationally they've been on site and worked with us and it's been a great collaborative project. They've helped us with putting signage, sanitisers and one-way systems in place. You can see how well we've gelled together and so far, it has been a dream working with them.



Liz: We've been talking with their Commercial team around the branding piece and looking at additional value for our partners as well as theirs. A lot of the assets that sit with our commercial partners are around tickets and hospitality, and clearly, we aren't delivering on either and the commercial partnership income is really important to us. We've had to be quite creative with how we manage to replicate those assets in a different way. The ECB have been flexible in terms of offering additional space and sharing that among their commercial partners. I think it's testament to the good relationship we've got with them.

Q How challenging has the pandemic been for the team at Emirates Old Trafford?



Angela: We saw early signs in February, but in March everything simply stopped. No new enquiries were coming through, so we knew it was going to be bad. Some of the big events we had planned in were cancelled and many were trying to reschedule for September. Our thought process at the time was that by September, we would be in a much better position. As time has gone on and without clear Government guidelines on the opening of the events industry, more and more organisers are now rescheduling again into 2021.

We aren't effectively losing business, we're just seeing it disappear from the back end of this year. It's going to be a real challenge to deliver big events, it's difficult to socially distance even with the one-meter rule. It's not just looking at how many people we can get in one room, we have to consider experience and how we move people around and service those people. The teams are having a lot of challenging conversations at the moment with our clients to overcome these issues.

Ticketing was similar in that it just stopped. People just stopped buying

hospitality tickets in March. We are currently going through a refund process with buyers of tickets for the Pakistan Test Match. We're still waiting to see what's going on with Australia IT20 before we can start organising and planning what to do with that. It's been a huge challenge.



Liz: In terms of domestic cricket, our members are so important. They have been so supportive and have Lancashire and the red rose in their DNA, which has been incredibly helpful. Clearly, they are all waiting with bated breath to see what the schedule is going to look like and whether they are going to be able to come and watch live cricket.

The commercial partnerships have been a real challenge. It was a question of - how on earth are we going to deliver on £1.6m worth of assets? We created a communications strategy focused on all of our fans, stakeholders and supporters. We have a comprehensive social media strategy - our comms team has been amazing, so much so, that the ECB asked our Head of Comms to present our strategy to all the other counties. The content that has gone out has been exemplary and feedback has been fantastic.

Q What advice can you offer other venues that are looking to re-open?



Liz: I think it's about being able to think outside the box whilst knowing your audience. You have to keep communicating, keep talking and face it head on. You can't be afraid to have difficult conversations.

Communication and constant contact are key. We know our partners, members and contacts really well, it takes a lot of energy and effort to keep everyone connected consistently, but it's worth it. We are in unknown territory, we didn't even know if we would still have a business. We lost millions in the space of a few months, it was incredible. You have to think about what has made your business successful so far and focus on that.

We came up with virtual hospitality. We thought about delivering picnic baskets, sending champagne out and putting key figures on Zoom calls to recreate the hospitality experience. We spoke to our partners about it and they thought it was a great idea. It sounds cheesy, but you need to look at positives and try and make the best of a really dreadful situation.



Angela: It's been about staying as flexible as we can with clients and empathising with the situation. As much as we are having a tough time, so are they. We want to make sure we retain relationships in the future, and I think we will definitely be defined in the future by how we have handled ourselves in these



Steve: From my point of view, it has been extremely challenging. I'm sure many of us will look back on this and think of it as one of the toughest moments in our careers. Nobody I know has experience of how to put a cricket match on behind closed doors in a bio safe environment during a global pandemic. I'm fortunate that the team that we already had there had done some exceptional stuff. My background prior to this, I was an Operations Director at theme parks and zoos. There wasn't a day that went by that I didn't worry about something like a rhino escaping or someone in the tiger enclosure etc. You have to be mentally prepared for challenges.

The challenge has to stay with you and your team, you need to be prepared and be thorough. It sounds miserable, but you have to work with the worst-case scenario in mind. In this case, it's someone testing positive for Covid-19 and getting seriously ill. If we work and prepare for this being the worst case, then we will deliver the best. I genuinely think we will look back on this in years to come and think 'Wow, that was really hard, however it's something I'm really proud of'. I won't for a second think it's been easy though.



recent challenging times. We are just having open and honest conversations with people and talking through each individual case to try and find solutions and ideas for how to proceed.

Steve: For me, one thing I would suggest is to seek expert advice. What you read on the internet and the government guidance is purposely loose, so it's key that you get expert advice that is specific. We're lucky that we have had access to specific medical advice, and we would be more than happy if anyone would like to pick our brains for this information. Ensuring you really understand the science behind it, really does help instil confidence in your guests and clients.

Inside a bio-secure test series (continued)

Post series we caught up with CEO Daniel Gidney, where he talked us through the wider impact on the club and how they are preparing to reopen Emirates Old Trafford.

Q How big an achievement has it been to stage these Test Matches against the West Indies?

A I've had a long career spanning 30 years, having been a sports CEO for best part of 15 years and I've been involved in many major sporting events from the Olympics to music concerts. This year has been more complex and challenging than anything I've ever done in my career. I can't overstate the amount of planning and work that has gone into this. When we realised we were going to go down a bio-secure route, I spoke to Steve Davies, the Operations Director, and we agreed that we needed to get ahead of it. There were a couple of people on the executive team who thought it would be better to wait until we had more clarity, however I thought that we needed to act, so we could be ready to hit the ground running as soon as we needed to.

We initially created a 50-page PowerPoint on how we would run a bio-secure event based on our experience and comprehensive knowledge of our site. We knew then that there were many processes to go through. There was a formal submission of interest process with the England and Wales Cricket Board and I think the combination of us having a 150-roomed, 4 star hotel on site, 17 acres, and a tremendous amount of parking, put us in the best position to host a bio-secure Test Match.

Space is a big issue. At 17 acres we have the biggest site out of any UK cricket ground, but when you look at the medical overlay that's required in terms of the thermal testing and everything that goes with the Covid-19 pandemic, there's just no way a smaller ground could have coped with what's required from an ECB overlay, let alone the requirements for people to stay on site. It's been a huge challenge, but great to finally see some cricket being played here at Emirates Old Trafford.



Q In what ways, will Covid-19 impact on the way future events are held at Emirates Old Trafford?

A I think giving people confidence in your site and going above and beyond the Government guidelines. The West Indies team for example, have come from a country with very few Covid-19 cases on a private charter plane paid for by the ECB. They have come into the UK and been asked by our Government to quarantine for 14 days. When they arrived, we arranged for them to go through Manchester Airport via a VIP terminal, so they didn't have to go through the entire airport to ensure their safety. We and the ECB went above and beyond the guidelines in order to give them the confidence that we were doing everything we could to keep them safe.

Q You are launching an initiative called Safe in One Place – can you talk us through the idea behind it?

A We wanted to create a brand that basically said what it does on the tin. It's all very well saying that you are 'Covid-19 compliant', but what does that actually mean to people. A lot of people will say that they're now certified in regard to Government guidelines, but again, what does that actually mean in practice?

Safe in One Place came about because we have the 4-star Hilton on site that's actually connected to the ground via a bridge, so you can go from the conference space to the hotel without going outside. We have 700-800 parking spaces onsite that can be used for parking, which in turn allows people who are nervous about taking public transport to come via their own private vehicles and park onsite.

The ability to be able to drive yourself to the site, stay in the attached Hilton that has the Clean Stay branding (which I believe is industry leading in terms of cleanliness in the hotel sector) is brilliant. You are even given a digital key that allows you to avoid interacting with anyone on



The key leaning points are the need to ensure people feel confident with our safety measures and realise that we are doing everything in our power to keep them safe, and I think that will help us tremendously in the future with our event organisers.

To put into perspective, cricket has had 3,500 PCR tests done on a weekly basis for players and venue staff, and we're the only sport in the UK, as I understand, that have had zero positive tests. So far, the ECB has managed a brilliant medical environment with the running of PCR tests, and I think that breeds confidence.



site. You can simply download the key on your phone, go into the lift, up to your room and your phone opens your hotel room door. In the restaurant each table is at a 2m distance and you have to wear masks to go to your table and gloves to collect your food, but you can still order food to your room, so you can in fact enjoy an entire stay without interacting with any staff at all.

We need to recognise that everyone is unique, and we have created an environment that says everyone is welcome and safe. If you want to go to your room and conference without interaction, we can look after you, or, if you want to engage a bit more (whilst adhering to the 1m distance rule) we can do that too. I think it's about recognising that people are different.



Q The ECB and Government have played a key role in getting matches back on – has the Government done enough to help get the conferences and events sector moving?

A The ECB and Government have done a great job in terms of getting sport back on. To have international sport here as one of the first countries in any part of the world to do that is credit to the UK Government and the ECB without a doubt.

The C&E business has become a bit lost and I don't blame the government solely for that. I think the problem is that the events industry is slightly fragmented. The industry has SIC codes – the Government treat you as a certain industry if you have got one code. The problem with this is if you've got multiple codes, for instance if you are a wedding venue, event venue or a stadium that does conferences, the Government sees you all as different.

The sector is a £70 billion industry that employs 700,000 people. The problem is, these codes have fragmented it, so the Government hasn't seen us the same as they would see cricket or football. I think there's been more clarity over the

past four weeks where the industry has tried to come together to give a unified message. I don't think the Government has seen conference delegates as visibly as people going and visiting a pub when it comes to getting things reopen. I think that has pushed us down the list.

Some people believe that the conference businesses will be last to open alongside theatres, but I think we are very different to theatres. You only need to look at what we are doing here behind closed doors to provide a safe environment for the ECB. We have a large amount of people who have been moving around indoors using one way systems, multiple hand gel dispensers, cleaning points and thermal measurements to stay safe. It shows that we're managing a complex plan to get people moving around indoors. This would be no different to what we would have to organise for a conference, so I think the Government haven't yet seen this and the events industry has been pushed to the bottom of the pile.

Q What are the financial implications of COVID-19 on Emirates Old Trafford?

A There were two things that enabled us to get to this point in the year, one was having record financial results in 2019 and the second, was the Metro Bank refinance, which was significant and halved our interest rate. We engaged with the bank early, who gave us an immediate capital repayment holiday until the end of the year. In addition to this, Metro have supported us with a short term working capital extension. 2019's results and the Metro refinancing have certainly enabled us to get to where we are now. I saw most of our budget disappear within the space of five days in March which was very challenging for us. Without any international cricket this year there would have been a minimal financial contribution from the ECB into country cricket. I think a number of counties would have gone bust, each county benefits from a large seven-digit sum from the ECB annually.

The Government announcing the October 1st date is important to us too. It is the biggest quarter for our conferencing and events business because it generates approximately £4/5m turnover just in that quarter. If those events weren't allowed to reopen by October, that would have been very challenging for us. We now need to focus on getting the guidance confirmed, working with our clients and confirming events with those who have been waiting.

Without a doubt, it has been very challenging for us financially, but we will get through the year now without need for external finance. Back in March I had four emergency triggers of things that I may have had to implement in order to help the club survive. Thankfully, the ECB, along with the C&E business at the end of the year, has supported us and we won't have to recourse back. Getting through this year (whatever our record) even with a record year last year, will be a greater



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