

SPORT | LEISURE | HOSPITALITY

# UP

Unique People

Intelligent perspectives for sector leaders  
Issue 5

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of purpose within sport

Can developing mental  
toughness improve the  
performance of your team?



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# Better... stronger... faster

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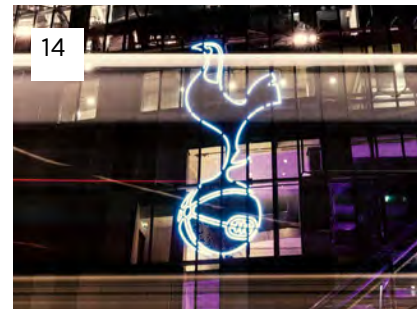
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## Welcome to the latest edition of Unique People: Sports Leisure and Hospitality

Welcome to the 5th Edition of Unique People (SLH) aimed at providing intelligent perspectives and industry insights from fascinating leaders in the sports & leisure world.

Since our last edition in early December the industry has worked through a challenging start to 2021. The tier system gave way to another full national lockdown and many organisations moved into hibernation mode, with little understanding as to when we might emerge. The last week has brought positive news in the way of a roadmap to normality.

It was clear from the very early stages of the pandemic that the industry would face a number of significant challenges as we all navigated our way through an ever changing set of circumstances. As the sport and leisure sector now focuses on the key dates and milestones that lie ahead in 2021, the resilience and adaptability shown across the industry will be needed once again.

As we head into the spring, we know now more than ever that sport and leisure plays a critical part in the lives of so many. As we adapt and drive through the current challenges, we head into a new period of normal where the industry will be full of opportunity and positivity. With the return of live events and mass gatherings on the horizon, we must rely on the talent we engage with and the strength of the teams we have built to emerge successfully.

In this edition of Unique People, we were delighted to interview Tommy Yule – Head of Performance Support and Scott Simpson – NPI Senior Pole Vault Coach at British Athletics alongside Alex Cook – Data Intelligence Partner at PwC. British Athletics have commenced a ground-breaking partnership with industry experts PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to improve how the Olympic and Paralympic World Class Programmes work with performance data and analytics.

We also hear from Vicky Gosling – CEO at GB Snowsport. With the Beijing Winter Olympics only 12 months away, Vicky talks us through her career to date and how she is approaching the next 12 months in the lead up to the games.

We once again look at a range of industry insights and current trends. We talk with Lloyd McMillan and Tim Davy at Sponsorship and Marketing agency E10, about the growing importance of purpose in sport. We also caught up with the Director of Positive Synergy, Paul Trainor. Paul outlines how we can develop mental toughness to improve the performance of our teams.

And finally, Sunil Patel, Co-Founder and CEO of Whisper, speaks to us about the challenges of running one of the fastest growing production companies in Europe alongside his co-founders, broadcaster Jake Humphrey and former F1 driver and current F1 commentator David Coulthard.

If you would like any more information about any of our events, or you would like to share your unique story in a future edition of Unique People: Sports, Leisure & Hospitality, please feel free to get in touch with us directly. As the industry starts to move forward we look forward to speaking and working with you in the months ahead.

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## Industry insights



### Is an end to restrictions in sight?

As the Prime Minister announced his initial roadmap out of lockdown on Monday 22nd February, it signified what will hopefully be the return of major events in the sports and leisure industry. Though it was described by Boris Johnson as a “one-way road to freedom”, it is clear that caution must be taken to ensure that these steps forward towards a new kind of normality don’t get reversed.

As we entered into 2021 there was still an unprecedented level of uncertainty within all sectors and not just the sporting world; however there is growing confidence that some of the world’s most highly anticipated events will be taking place in a mere matter of months.



### The rise in private equity ownership in Football – Taking a hit?

It’s no secret that football clubs have become known in recent years for being trophies for billionaires who have made their money through alternative ventures.

However Private Equity firms have been historically attracted to sporting clubs due to the predictable cash-flows that come from match day sales, merchandising and broadcasting revenue. Now more so than ever before there are sophisticated scouting networks strategically searching for the latest talent, and with the transfer market so incredibly lucrative there is some serious money to be had.



### Sustainable design for new stadiums is crucial



In the past decade, environmentally-friendly operations and practices have gone from a marginal concern to a major consideration in sports venue management. Organisations such as the Green Sports Alliance (GSA) have been set up to offer guidance and support for the sector, and there is now an understanding that ‘sustainable stadium’ equals ‘economically efficient’.

The trend towards sustainable building practices is encouraging construction



companies and architects to look for more innovative ways to use recycled materials in sports projects.

At the London Olympic Stadium, recycled materials included an unused gas pipe from a North Sea oil project, while approximately 40% of the concrete used was made of recycled aggregate.

Meanwhile, at the Amsterdam Arena, seating made out of plant material was installed as part of plans to make the venue carbon neutral. The raw material for the 2,000 seats – renewable ethylene derived from sugar cane – was supplied by Brazilian petrochemical company Braskem.

### Momentum and opportunities for women in sport must continue

Looking back a decade who would have believed that 11.7 million people would tune in to the BBC to watch a Women’s World Cup match when England took on the United States in the semi-final of this year’s tournament in France? Or that almost 80,000 would pack Wembley for a friendly against Germany in November? But the signs were there at the beginning of the decade and the fan base and viewer ship has grown since.

Back in 2011, England had reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup, with their matches shown live on the BBC Red Button. However, fans were not happy the matches were not on a terrestrial channel and women’s sport charities and MPs put pressure on the BBC to change its mind, which it did – eventually – and the match was broadcast live on BBC Two.

It goes to show that if sports and governing bodies invest in women, the results are there for all to see. But visibility in the media is key, while levels of sponsorship, pay and prize money need to increase as well. And there needs to be more female coaches, officials and representation on boards.



**After the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the 2020 sporting calendar, there are hopes 2021 will be a year that is jam packed full of big sporting fixtures!**

Following the disappointment of having to cancel huge sporting fixtures last year, for both athletes, supporting staff, executives and spectators, the recent announcements have been a welcome light at the end of what has been a rather long tunnel.

Watching players leave the dugout, score 40-yard screamers, cross the finish line and for many achieve lifelong dreams is certainly something that will have a profound impact on a huge portion of the population.

**Here are some of the biggest events on this year’s calendar that we hope to see:**







BRITISH ATHLETICS

# BETTER... STRONGER... FASTER!

## The role data plays in performance at British Athletics

In 2019, British Athletics commenced a ground-breaking partnership with industry experts PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to improve how the Olympic and Paralympic World Class Programmes work with performance data and analytics.

This unique combination of the globally regarded professional services organisation and elite Olympic and Paralympic sport saw PwC join forces with athletics to work on the British Athletics World Class Programmes (UK Sport's National Lottery-funded initiative) as the Official Data Intelligence Partner.

The aim of the partnership was to improve the support and value delivered to coaches and athletes through the provision of enhanced information and insights. Through data acquisition and modelling to reporting, visualisation and advanced analytics, the purpose was to help generate insights not previously possible from the full range of data sources available to the programmes.

UP delves deeper into this innovative initiative to understand how the data-rich sport of athletics is able to draw upon the expertise of PwC in order to support athletes and coaches in their preparations for the Tokyo 2021 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond.

### We spoke to three leading figures involved in the partnership to discuss their experience and results



**Alex Cooke**  
Data Intelligence Partner  
PwC UK  
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**Tommy Yule**  
Head of Performance Support  
British Athletics  
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**Scott Simpson**  
NPI Senior Coach  
Pole Vault  
British Athletics  
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# BETTER... STRONGER... FASTER! (continued)

## The role data plays on performance at British Athletics



### Q Can you tell us a little bit more around your role at PwC and your involvement with British Athletics?

A I'm a partner in our technology and data analytics practice. I help lead a team of 350 practitioners that cover everything from data privacy and governance to business intelligence and advanced analytics. We operate across all market sectors and have a wide range of capabilities from strategy through to technology implementation and managed services. I am also the leader of our data intelligence partnership with the British Athletics World Class Programme which sits under UKA.



### Q What specific expertise and skills is PwC helping British Athletics with?

A When we first started working with Tommy Yule, Director of Performance Support and Neil Black, former Performance Director in 2017, the initial request was to review the way they were looking after and using data. They felt there were a lot of opportunities and some risks in the way data was being managed at the time, so we started with a short burst of strategy work. We pulled together an inventory of all their different data sources, together with an assessment of how well the data was being collected, stored, managed, and utilised.

A key finding was the lack of data integration across the different parts of the world class programme. Much of the data was also semi-structured or unstructured, which meant it was difficult to combine and too much time was being spent preparing data rather than gleaning insights from it. These barriers made it so much harder from a support and coaching perspective to use data effectively. We communicated with the practitioners and coaches and asked what they would be able to do if we could close the gap and bring all

**Alex Cooke**  
Data Intelligence Partner  
PwC UK



the data in line around a single view of the athlete. That light bulb moment demonstrated the value at stake in performance terms and Tommy set about a transformational strategy to improve the way they collected, managed & leveraged data to help improve performance.

As we structured the partnership we conducted research across a number of professional and Olympic sports. It was clear that in every single sport there are different levels of maturity in data analytics, but not one single sport has a fully integrated performance analytics architecture and operating model.

Everything that followed in our engagement with British Athletics has been geared towards a future whereby we can leverage data details across the broadest set of dimensions in understanding the effectiveness of the range of training, therapy and lifestyle interventions that can be made.

This represents a major evolution for British Athletics and the way it brings visibility to what makes the biggest performance difference.

### Q How has the relationship developed since you started working together?

A It's a genuine partnership. We have a very healthy respect for the skills, disciplines and experience that both sides of that partnership bring. We are utterly dependent on Tommy and the team to guide us on how best to deliver value to them. On the other hand they are totally dependent on us to provide the technology, data and transformation expertise to be able to do that. There's a degree of symbiosis

As partners we can see the legacy that we've created. It's instantiated, there's a technology platform that's full of data that's integrated, that is now reaching backwards into some of the pathway programmes, as well as looking forward to Tokyo and Paris with the current world class programme athletes. When I talked to Joanna Coates (CEO, British Athletics) about how she wants to be able to support grassroots athletics,

**Our engagement with British Athletics has been geared towards a future whereby we can leverage data details across the broadest set of dimensions in understanding the effectiveness of the range of training, therapy and lifestyle interventions that can be made.**

there and it's great when it happens in my line of work. We've been lucky that Tommy has been ever present through a lot of change within the organisation so they are now really strong data practitioners in their own right and can guide us better. We also know a lot more now about athletics than we ever did before although I've yet to make that count in my own running!

and the stars of the future, her goal is to have championship participants in every event by 2032. That's now a very real opportunity because the platform capabilities and reporting and analytics that we've created can apply at any level. It's just a matter of focus and of organising around the sport to be able to do that.

### Q What are your hopes for the partnership leading into Tokyo this year, and the Paris Olympics in 2024?

A As Neil Black used to say, "what have you done today to help us win more medals in more events?" He set me that challenge. I look forward to the partnership helping our athletes to win more medals in more events and if that's in Tokyo, fantastic, we've got some really bright medal chances.

If we've been able to support that by a fraction of a percent, that will have been worthwhile for those athletes, for the programme, and for the country, who are in much need of a bit of joy right now.

However, the real opportunity now for

British Athletics is to build from where they are. The great thing about data is, rather like a good wine, if you look after it, it becomes better over time. Insights are easier to glean. In some data sources we have millions of data points, but for some we've just started the journey to collect what's necessary to build the complete picture. That's the same in all sports. The needle will continue to shift in understanding the impacts of specific training regimes, therapies and lifestyle interventions as we continue the journey so the prospects for Paris and beyond are truly exciting.

### Q Are PwC looking to work with more sporting organisations in a similar way?

A I was keen to make sure we established ourselves in the industry and had stopped to understand the specifics of sports and performance data before we went much further. We've done that now and have a leading edge platform with an experienced team, so yes, we are keen to move onwards. We've had very interesting conversations in the world of football that we are pursuing. The benefit of professional sport is that the commercial aspects allow you to make progress more quickly. My passion lies in supporting the range of Olympic sports though, where budgets are tighter, but the values align well with PwC's core purpose. There are enormous opportunities for the sports themselves and we can definitely help. PwC exists to build trust in society and help solve important problems and whilst sporting excellence perhaps isn't an important problem in the grand scheme of things, it adds a lot of joy to people's lives. Being successful as a nation, as national teams, but also at a club level is really important to a lot of our population, so yes, we will push on and help with that.



Adam Gemili of the British Athletics team with coach Christian Malcolm during the British Athletics Team World Championships Preparation Camp July 2017

(Photo by Matt Lewis - British Athletics/British Athletics via Getty Images)

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# BETTER... STRONGER... FASTER! (continued)

The role data plays on performance at British Athletics



**Tommy Yule**  
Head of  
Performance Support  
British Athletics



**Q As a former international athlete yourself, what does your role as Director of Performance Support at British Athletics involve?**

**A** The main part of my role is overseeing the support that the world class programme offers to athletes. This is generally made of sports science and medicine support and within that we've got about 11 different disciplines.

There are disciplines such as physiology, psychology, strength, conditioning, nutrition, and data analytics, then within medicine, there's Doctors therapies of physiotherapy, osteopath and soft tissue. We have around 25 staff members or contractors that are working regularly within those disciplines and my role is about managing and leading that. We've got approximately 115 athletes on the world class programme, and as they are all based in different locations it's not a centralised programme. We have athletes that are located in different parts of the UK, Europe and the US, and it's my responsibility to lead the support to make sure that we're applying ourselves in a way that's aligned with the performance needs of those athletes and the British Athletics World Class Programme performance strategy.

**Q Working with PwC, are you developing a new approach in the way you manage your athletes early level?**

**A** I don't think we're developing a new approach to manage athletes, what we're doing is developing new capability that allows us to manage more effectively, and to interact and engage with them more effectively than what we would otherwise be able to do. Before PwC, most of the data was stored on staffs' hard drives, or was sitting with individuals so there was no easy quick and way to access and leverage the value from that. If a coach had a performance question, or if there were decisions that needed to be made, it was very inefficient. More often than not, you wouldn't be accessing the information, because you might

have not have known it existed. Our approach to how we work with athletes is not going to change – it is athlete centred, and it's driven by them and their coach.

From a programme perspective, we have head coaches on both the Olympic and Paralympic sides and it's about our engagement with them and how we create value with them, athletes and their personal coaches in areas that are important to athletes. Our performance, and our ability to do that should be enhanced through the efforts with PwC as we lay a better foundation to manage data.

**Q What are the benefits as an organisation to be a little bit more data driven?**

**A** Within performance there is a lot of decision making and having data can support decisions that are made. Data is facts that you can utilise but it is imperative to remember that it's not the answer and that it is still people making the decisions. We're now in a position where data can be weaved into that decision making process and it enables us to get insight about performance and each athlete more quickly and efficiently. This allows the coach,

support staff and management to see all the information on a day to day basis and as a result they're using that much more organically in their engagement with each other.

The ability to provide information quicker, and to have data that's integrated across different disciplines means that we're more efficient, and hopefully more effective with how we're working with athletes and coaches.



**Q Do you think that approach will see their athletes being more successful and winning more medals?**

**A** I think it will contribute to that but it's not the only thing. I think it's like everything that we're doing, if we can do everything slightly better, then ultimately, that's the goal. As an example, some of our data and dashboards that we've developed are about race tactics in middle distance events and although the coaches will already have a lot of insight, this may make them more aware of something they've not seen before or prioritised or

they may see it in a way that just helps them think differently about it. It also allows them to easily access and view race data.

As a result the next time they debrief, give feedback, or think about their athlete, their training design may be slightly different to what it would be otherwise and hopefully that difference is something that's more effective and more in line with what it's going to take for their athlete to progress.

**Q Do you feel other sports could benefit from working with an organisation like PwC?**

**A** I think there is a readiness in sport for it but because of the diversity in athletics and sport, you've got some people that are ready, and others who aren't. If you're collecting lots of data then yes, I certainly think you can benefit from this, because it's going to enhance your decision making process through being better able to leverage more value from it. The work that PwC have done with us would be invaluable across many sports, and I think the methodology that we're applying is something that is applicable for any sport. One of the things we spend a lot of time doing is in

the background ensuring the data and data sets are good before jumping into analytics. Often the data is not good enough, and if the data isn't aligned, or is incomplete, there's a risk that the output is misleading.

We've been doing a lot of work in the background to clean, align, structure and integrate data sets and through this we have laid the foundations to continually to develop our data solutions. That's been the approach and that's where PwC have been invaluable because it is something we would have never had the capability or capacity to do on our own.



Tommy on his way to winning the bronze in the snatch discipline at the Men's up to 94kgs weightlifting at the MCCC Centre during the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England in 2002. (Photo by Stu Forster/Getty Images)



UK Athletics (UKA) is the governing body for the sport of athletics in the United Kingdom. They work in partnership with Athletics Northern Ireland, England Athletics, Scottish Athletics and Welsh Athletics to deliver the long term strategy for the sport:

**Athletics Unified**  
Powering Potential  
Enhancing Experiences  
Delivering Success  
2020-2032

Find out more

British Athletics is UKA's commercial brand launched in 2013, representing the performance arm including the Great Britain and Northern Ireland athletics team and their world leading events such as the Müller Anniversary Games.



See [Britishathletics.org.uk](http://Britishathletics.org.uk)



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# BETTER... STRONGER... FASTER! (continued)

The role data plays on performance at British Athletics



**Q Can you talk us through your current role at British Athletics?**

**A** I've been working for British Athletics since the summer of 2018 as the National Performance Institute Senior Coach for pole vault. I primarily work with athletes on the World Class Programme (WCP) trying to deliver global medals at the Olympic Games and World Championships.

Alongside that I work to support the development pathway for talent through the UK, ensuring that the structure is in place to feed the WCP. I also help to manage other field event athletes on the WCP. 80% of my time is spent coaching, trying to help athletes achieve their potential and ultimately win global medals.

**Q As a coach, how much did you work with data before you started working with PwC?**

**A** I worked with data a fair amount but that was due to my own preferences as I am quite 'data heavy' in my coaching approach. If you were to look at my personality profiling you would see that I have a very information-driven / objective approach to things and that is also reflected in my academic background.

Over a long period of time I've collected a lot of data whilst I've been working in

the field with athletes and therefore had a lot of data I was sitting on. This came with limitations however, as the data I collected was stored in many different places and formats, with some being digital and others manual. This data needed an investment of time to be pulled together in order for it to make sense so that meaningful conclusions could be taken from it, and that was what was missing.

**Q How have the team at PwC integrated with you and the athletes you coach?**

**A** It's been a very interesting journey but they've been amazing. The leader of the team, Alex, has built brilliant relationships with both Holly and myself. They have taken a lot of the work that Holly and I have done over the past 10 years and have digitised the data, putting it all into one place and then begun to dissect it and draw some interesting conclusions from it.

They've been amazing to work with, and I've really enjoyed the journey. Although they have had interaction with the rest of Holly's team, I've been the main interface to bridge that gap between the conclusions that are drawn and then how we can actually implement and apply those with Holly in practice.



Holly Bradshaw is congratulated by Scott Simpson after winning the Women's pole vault at Arena Birmingham in February 2019. (Photo by Bryn Lennon/Getty Images)



**Q How have PwC used the data you have collected to help with Holly's programme?**

**A** There's two ways in which we have utilised what PwC have done for us. Firstly, PwC helped us develop an app which Holly can use daily. Prior to this I was asking Holly to fill out a questionnaire and I was collating the data from that into a spreadsheet, but now she can input that directly into the app and from that we can collect more data. I can view this in real time, and the graphical display from the app makes it much easier to read the data. From this I can make informed decisions on a day to day basis. We create programmes for weeks and months ahead, but dependent on a number of factors these need tweaking daily, and the app really allows us to refine the programme in that way.

Secondly, PwC have collated all the historic data and put this all in one place making it much more accessible. This has enabled us

to ask questions and receive informed responses that can show correlations in terms of what Holly may need. For instance, I can look up what injuries Holly has had previously, and then see if there are any correlations in the build up to each incident, whether it is a combination of exercises, or a certain type of training method. That has allowed me to avoid further pitfalls, and I have been able to change the programme so that Holly has essentially remained injury free for an extensive period of time. We can also look at correlations and trends from times Holly has performed at high levels and look into the training and exercises that were done around that time. This reinforces the coaching process that leads to high performance, but it has been more challenging to draw conclusions with this data, and is still a work in progress.



Pictured: Holly Bradshaw of the Great Britain & Northern Ireland Athletics team (Photo by Matt Lewis - British Athletics/British Athletics via Getty Images)

**Q What has been the athlete's feedback and has this resulted in a competitive advantage in competition?**

**A** Holly has spoken positively about the app as it is far easier for her to use and the graphical representation of the data is much more appealing. The fact we can now draw relationships between injuries and the training that we have done, and therefore tweak the training to keep her healthier and less likely to get injured has given us real benefits.

In terms of a competitive arena it is much harder to quantify. I think the ability to acknowledge what we can do better in regards to training on a daily basis,

and the fact we can now avoid injuries in preparation and competition phases definitely allows Holly to operate at a higher state of health and performance level all year round, and hopefully that will manifest itself in the competitive arena. However, I wouldn't say there is a direct correlation between the data that PwC are producing and her competition performance; it's more subtle than that. It allows us to train and prepare better and hopefully that will then produce a better competition performance.

**Q Would all coaches benefit working with an organisation like PwC?**

**A** Largely I would say yes, but I think it's very much a coach by coach preference. I acknowledge that my love for data does make me somewhat biased. I choose to take the data and use it as another piece of information in my toolbox to help make decisions about what we should or shouldn't do. I know for a lot of coaches that is just not their preference and they like to focus more on what they see in the field and have a slightly different approach to these things. They might utilise observation and questioning more, and although I do use that method also, it's just that I now utilise the data alongside that.

I think as long as the data is simplified and the process is presented in a simple and useful way, then it can be hugely valuable not only to the coaches but to the wider team, whether that is the athlete, the governing body or the management team – both within athletics and across other sports as well.



Scott Simpson in action in Cardiff on 4th February 2006. (Photo by Mark Shearman)





# The growing importance of PURPOSE WITHIN SPORT



**Lloyd McMillan**  
Head of Marketing  
E10



**Tim Davy**  
Head of Sponsorship  
E10



Last year, and the start of this, has been \*insert one of many not safe for print words here\* and so the goal for many was to banish this time to the annals of history; but this should not be the case.

From a sporting perspective, it provided us with an unparalleled chance to recalibrate and reassess everything we do. As a fan it was about how we consumed it, as a governing body it was how we delivered it (safely) and, in our case as an agency, it was how we survived it. 2020 saw unique challenges, but it also brought about plenty of new changes as well as accelerating those already underway.

Last year saw humanity unite like never before and afforded us the opportunity to put everything into perspective. One thing that has become abundantly clear over the last 10 or so months is that people appreciate, and are spending more time immersed in, the natural world than ever before (circa 66% according to a recent survey by The University of Cumbria); that has left a lasting legacy whereby purpose now has to be at the forefront of almost everything we do within sport.

At E10 we work with different rights holders and brands to help ensure our clients make definitive plays that create

opportunities and uncover revenue streams. It goes without saying that such opportunities have changed dramatically in the last 10 months and, in keeping, so have we.

Prior to COVID we predominantly focused on where our roots lay – sport, and siloed sponsorship within sport. We have now expanded

**Recently we have seen Tottenham Hotspur win the Premier League. Unfortunately for Spurs fans out there, this isn't determined by points won via goals and clean sheets, but rather by water efficiency and clean energy.**

our client offering and developed a consumer marketing division (which we hope will soon again put bums on seats at events) that sits alongside our sponsorship team. We also have an increased focus on working with purpose-driven organisations; those who want to, and understand the importance of, making a positive change within their company and

critically beyond. That said, if we can marry our passion for sustainability alongside a client with a bat or ball at their core, then even better.

So much research exists on the importance of being purpose-driven, much centred around Millennials and Gen Z (although it is worth noting that lumping together everyone born over

the course of 15 years is most certainly not a good example of audience segmentation and shouldn't be used as such). This research reveals in particular these generational groups' increased desire to acquire a service or product from an organisation with purpose at its core, sometimes even at the expense (excuse the pun) of profit. It now appears this long-standing

knowledge from within the world of marketing has transcended to all facets of the many sporting powers.

Recently we have seen Tottenham Hotspur win the Premier League. Unfortunately for Spurs fans out there, this isn't determined by points won via goals and clean sheets, but rather by water efficiency and clean energy. The English Premier League Sustainability Table 2020 measured every club on items such as clean energy all the way through to their waste management. Sorry to say for Sheffield United fans, this league table doesn't make for much prettier reading than the sporting one.

Tottenham shouted the news of this triumph from their solar-panelled (as I imagine it) roof tops, showing the increased importance of sustainability within sport. It is now imperative to be sustainable and purpose-driven, not a choice. The recently released "Emergency on Planet Sport" Podcast focuses on the impact climate change is having on sport and asks us, the fans, how we can help.

You need look no further than motorsport, generally considered as the standard-bearer for all the wrong

reasons when it comes to protecting the environment, for inspiration. F1 has vowed to be Net Zero Carbon by 2030, and the recently launched Extreme E is further shining a light on those areas most adversely affected by change.

The latest Edelman Trust Barometer for 2021 is another example of the ongoing and increased importance of the matter. Sections such as "Business expected to fill void left by Government" and "CEOs must lead on societal issues" tell us that people are looking to their leaders, something club executives and governing bodies certainly are, to challenge and tackle the issues staring us in the face.

As we all know, sport has the power to influence, challenge, change, inspire and unify, perhaps more so than anything else on this planet. The pages in this (virtual) magazine are not enough to contain the ever-increasing conversation about sustainability in sport, let alone 800-odd words. One thing is for certain though, when sporting normality returns, the increased conversation and importance around purpose is going to be more significant than ever.

## Sustainability Sport Entertainment

Bringing more than 20 years of combined experience, Tim Davy and Lloyd McMillan provide a blend of sponsorship and marketing expertise developed working with global brands and rights holders predominantly across Europe and the Middle East.

Through the emotive platforms of sustainability, sport and entertainment, we work with our clients to understand their goal before helping them score it. Coupling in-house expertise and a carefully curated network of specialists, we deliver plays that win games.







**Sunil Patel**  
CEO & Co-Founder of Whisper

**WH>SPER**

Sunil Patel is Co-Founder and CEO of Whisper, one of the fastest growing production companies in Europe. Co-owned by TV broadcaster Jake Humphrey and former F1 driver and current F1 commentator David Coulthard, Whisper produces a raft of top-level sport including Formula One, International Cricket, NFL, International Rugby and Women's Super League, plus documentaries such as *The Talk* and *Inside Monaco*.

It employs more than 80 staff across its offices in London, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Maidenhead and Auckland.

**Q As the CEO of Whisper, can you talk us through your career to date?**

**A** As an intern at IMG in 1999, I was lucky enough to work on an early attempt to create content for the internet for a project called Now TV. It was incredibly well backed, but was way ahead of its time. From there I moved to ITV, Sky and then The BBC, where I worked on events such as The Olympics,

and David had just come out of full time F1 racing to start his career in broadcasting. The three of us worked well together and grew closer as a team. When the BBC announced it was moving to Manchester, I saw an opportunity to stay in London and make content for the Formula One teams, some of which had approached me due to what

there was another option. Channel 4 took a minority stake in the business via its Growth Fund and that enabled us to chase our ambitions.

We worked alongside C4 for around three to four years and in that time produced NFL and Formula One, amongst others. They were brilliant, but as we grew so did our ambition and we focused on moving from domestic broadcasting to global. We attracted the interest of Sony Pictures Television and, with their help, we have been able to move to the next level.

We're no longer just focused on sport. We now produce documentaries and other forms of entertainment. We're also beginning to look at scripted ideas. We've grown the business over a period of time and the two best constants for me have been Jake and David.

**As we grew so did our ambition and we focused on moving from domestic broadcasting to global. We partnered with Sony Pictures Television and, with their help, we have been able to move to the next level.**

The Premier League, The World Cup and The European Championships. The BBC then won the Formula One contract, which I ended up leading from a creative perspective.

It was there that I met Whisper Co-Founders Jake Humphrey and David Coulthard. Jake was the presenter

I'd done for the BBC. So, Jake, David and I set up Whisper to capitalise on the opportunities presenting themselves.

Our target was always broadcast. At that time, IMG and Sunset & Vine had locked out the market and we knew that for us to break through we would need to partner with someone to show

Continues overleaf →





**Q A Sunil Patel** | CEO & Co-Founder of Whisper (continued)



Steve Jones, Billy Monger and David Coulthard present Channel 4's F1 Highlights Show at the Bahrain Grand Prix

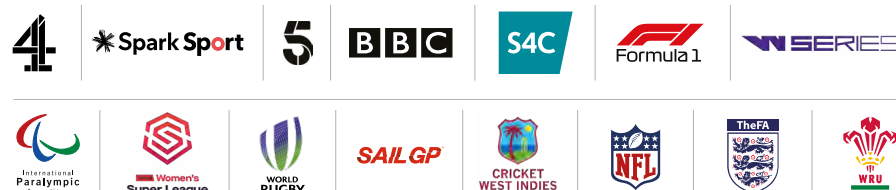
**Q Tell us about Whisper and its rapid expansion in sport production – what's behind it?**

**A** Having a great team and great people within the team will always generate the best results. We've been very good at growing the team and hand-picking people, with a focus on delivery, quality and ambition in everything we do. Two factors set us apart in the industry. The first is that we run ourselves a bit like a sports team, in that we concentrate on detail, constant improvement and are always solution focused. We don't spend time looking at how well we've done something, but instead at where and how we could have improved.

The second element is that we see sport as entertainment. We love sport and we're serious about sport when we need to be, but sport is fun so we always look at how we can celebrate that, how we can grow the product and how we can make it appeal to as wide an audience as possible, while also delivering to those with a very keen interest. Entertainment is Everything is our mantra, both in what we deliver and how we deliver. It runs throughout all our coverage, the talent we use, our editorial and the stories we tell.

**Q Working across the global sports industry, who are Whisper currently working with?**

**A** We're currently working with a really good roster of clients across the globe. Broadcasters include Channel 4, Spark Sport in New Zealand, the BBC, Channel Five and S4C in Wales. Then we also have Formula One, W Series, The Paralympics, WSL, World Rugby, SailGP, Cricket West Indies, NFL, the FA, Welsh Rugby Union.



**A formidable CV**



With a wealth of global sports broadcasting experience under his belt, Sunil boasts an impressive CV that includes some of the foremost broadcasting companies in the world.

Below are some highlights of his career to date:

**WH>SPER**  
CEO & Co-Founder

**BBC** Producer

**STATS PERFORM** Producer

**sky** Producer

**SONY PICTURES** Producer

**itv** Assistant Producer

**IMG** Researcher

**INITIAL** Researcher



**Q 2020 was a unique year for everyone, what's been the impact on the business?**

**A** For us it's been redefining our workflow. We're really strong on culture and it was figuring out how we kept ourselves feeling together, when we were apart. We had to redefine how we worked to ensure constant communication and feedback to maintain the drive and passion. In terms of the impact of 2020 on the business, thankfully two elements helped us through.

demands on cost efficiency and we saw new kinds of workflow coming in, but as we were already industry leaders in that area, it wasn't a huge transition for us.

The second was that our cultural diversity, a core value of the business, came to the fore. We responded to the spotlight being shone on this area by tackling difficult subjects in our sports productions, such as inclusion

**Over the last year a spotlight has certainly been shown on that area and, as a result of being well placed on diversity and inclusion, it was important for us to reflect society through the content we created and the audience we were producing for.**

One was that during the pandemic, broadcast turned to remote production. We were already ahead of the game in that area by about two years, due to what we'd been doing for SailGP and Formula One. Now, everyone had to produce remotely. There were greater

and diversity. We also co-funded and co-produced The Talk for Channel 4, which highlighted an everyday part of black British culture, mostly unknown outside of that community. 2020 pushed us to better reflect society through the content we created.



Dan Walker, Jason Bell and Osi Umenyiora on the set of The NFL Show, produced by Whisper for BBC One

**About:**

**WH>SPER**

An ambitious, vibrant production company that fuses entertainment with strong editorial, Whisper is changing the landscape of sports, live and unscripted entertainment.

**Entertainment is Everything**  
Whisper understands how to harness the power of entertainment. Entertainment is at the heart of everything Whisper does, both in what it delivers and how it delivers.

**Live the Audience**  
It takes more than a simple understanding to get under people's skin. Whisper's aim is to live the audience, to look through their eyes and learn what makes them laugh, cry, think, feel, scream and love, so it can create new kinds of entertainment that resonates on a global scale.

**Make it Happen**  
Whisper is driven by the relentless mission to think bigger, create better and innovate more. They move faster than anyone else on their quest to entertain, break new ground, deliver and change the landscape.

**Best Places to Work**  
Whisper is a four times Broadcast Best Place to Work (2017-2020). It believes in attracting the best and works hard to offer one of the most diverse working environments in the industry.

Continues overleaf →



**Q A** Sunil Patel | CEO & Co-Founder of Whisper (continued)



**Q Are there exciting opportunities for Whisper in 2021 and beyond?**

**A** We are working with Sony to take Whisper global, targeting Australia and New Zealand. We have just welcomed James Gemmell who's going to be the executive lead for Australia and New Zealand, and we've also brought in Sean Fitzpatrick who is chairman of Laureus World Sports Academy and is going to help us grow in the Middle East, as we have some really exciting plans for that area. We also have a team in Cardiff who are looking to work with and develop great sports production talent in Wales.

Beyond that we're developing a scripted and unscripted division, headed by Helen Warner. Helen and her team have been working hard over the past 12 months to develop lots of ideas and there are some exciting opportunities in that space to grow the business beyond just sport, which is really important.

**Q What culture have you created for the team at Whisper?**

**A** It's twofold, it's about high performance, whilst also being inclusive, caring and understanding to the team. We focus on delivery and ensuring whatever we're doing is the best it can be whilst making sure we're not doing that by pushing people to the edge. As a result, we focus on the wellbeing of the staff; we have Yoga, Personal Training, Life Coaching, Flexi Time and work from home schemes. These sit alongside the high performing culture of results.

People want to be part of a winning team and if you're performing on the pitch, or on the screen, people like that. You can be highly driven and also be highly successful in terms of culture. It's been reflected in the fact we are a Broadcast Best Places to Work company.



Whisper produces cricket with Spark Sport in New Zealand



**Q With so much competition in the industry, how do you stay ahead of the game?**

**A** I think that comes back to my earlier point about not being obsessed with what we're doing well, but what we're not doing well. Look to continually challenge yourself on your weaknesses, hire the best people, look who is out there and see how they will reflect what you're doing in your business. It's about finding talent and bringing them into the business in a way that you're not risking the business financially. Everything needs to be calculated, but you have to be bold and take brave decisions at every opportunity. For us, our belief is that if we're not developing, then we're going backwards.

**Q What are your non-negotiables for the way Whisper operates?**

**A** Always deliver, be a team player and be obsessive about the detail.

**Q What do you look for in prospective new hires?**

**A** Drive and ambition are the two things we look for – and also that they're a decent person. When you have a team of 80-90 plus and just one or two people in the team aren't team players, they stand out. We've worked hard to create a cohesive, strong team, especially as we have grown, so for someone to come in and upset that, it isn't acceptable. That's a big thing for me, making sure new people who are joining us are decent.

**Q What are your top tips for someone trying to get ahead in the world of sport business?**

**A** I guess you can look at it many ways, but I think mostly it's understanding what you want to achieve.

What are you prepared to compromise on the journey to do that? If you want to get ahead, you've got to really want it and be prepared to compromise on some things along the way. You need to be able to compartmentalise elements of your life and, if that's going to mean missing the odd birthday and wedding on the way, then you've got to do that.

If that's not what you want, just realise it and focus on being the best you can. I do believe that if you love what you do then, generally speaking, you'll get to where you want to in life. Along the way, make sure you build great relationships and keep those relationships strong.

**Everything needs to be calculated, but you have to be bold and take brave decisions at every opportunity.**



Whisper won an award for its remote production of SailGP, a global sailing series



Cameras are prepared ahead of a Women's Super League production





# Can developing MENTAL TOUGHNESS improve the performance of your team?

**Paul Trainor**  
Managing Director of Positive Synergy Ltd  
and Director at Salford Red Devils Rugby League Club



Where is the next 5% of improvement in your team's performance going to come from? Leaders in all sectors are constantly looking for the right combination to unlock the potential of their teams.

Organisations invest significant time and resources into identifying their culture and ways to ensure it permeates throughout the whole organisation to drive high performance. Sometimes this work remains a design piece, being a wall display with a series of words that do not reflect the daily work of the organisation or the behaviours of its' people.

Mental Toughness is a personality trait describing how an individual responds to stress, pressure and challenge. Research shows that mental toughness is a learned skill, and as such, can be developed and improved through explicit teaching and deliberate practice.

**In our work, we refer to the 4C's model, developed by Professor Peter Clough, who identified 4 key components of mental toughness:-**

<b>Control</b>	This is split into two aspects – life control and emotional control. These describe an individual's belief that they can influence the direction of their own life, whilst also being able to regulate their responses to emotional situations.
<b>Commitment</b>	The ability to stick at tasks and work towards the achievement of a long term goal.
<b>Challenge</b>	Our view of challenge. Do we see it as an opportunity to learn and grow or as a negative, threatening situation?
<b>Confidence</b>	Is also split into categories – confidence in our own abilities and interpersonal confidence when communicating and interacting with others.



Sir Clive Woodward, the World Cup Winning Rugby Union coach, was renowned for transferring the leadership approaches he developed in his business career to his international coaching career. He refers to "Creating results through people", "Great teams are made of great individuals", "You must try and make every individual in the team the absolute best they can be." But how can we support our people to be 'the absolute best they can be'? In elite sport, leaders will plan holistically to develop well rounded players who can achieve results on the field, with coaches focusing on the technical, tactical, physical, psychological and social aspects of player development.

In my experience working with individuals and organisations in sport, business and education, there is often a focus on upskilling people linked to the performance of their role. However, there is often not enough attention paid to the psychological and social aspects which underpin high performance. This can be akin to teaching someone to kick a ball 12 yards from a spot on an empty field, before putting them in a penalty shoot-out at Wembley in front of a

crowd, where the individual's response to stress and pressure would be critical to success. Positive Synergy's work on mental toughness within sport, business and education is highlighting the power of investing time in upskilling the person behind the employee.

There are numerous evidenced benefits of developing mental toughness within your team. Research shows that up to 25% of variation in an individual's performance can be associated to mental toughness, as a result of their greater commitment to goals. Mentally tough people react better to stress, are more positive and have a greater degree of optimism, which in turn will enhance their wellbeing. There are also significant benefits to team culture from having mentally tough people with their increased ambition, seeking

out opportunities for learning, whilst responding better to challenge and change.

In the current worldwide circumstances, a team from Huddersfield University, led by Dr. Dara Mojtahedi looked at the relationship between mental toughness and self-reported levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The study shows that although everyone can be generally anxious, stressed and depressed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, people with greater levels of mental toughness are better equipped to be able to deal with this.

Could developing mental toughness with the members of your team be a key part of your strategy to find the next stages of improvement?

Paul Trainor is Managing Director of Positive Synergy Ltd, a consultancy working with individuals and organisations in sport, business and education to enhance their thinking to improve performance. Paul is also a Director at Salford Red Devils Rugby League Club, who reached their first Super League Grand Final in 2019 and the Challenge Cup Final in 2020. Paul can be contacted at [paul@positive-synergy.co.uk](mailto:paul@positive-synergy.co.uk), via [LinkedIn](#) or on [Twitter @pos\\_synergy](#)





**Victoria Gosling OBE**  
CEO of GB Snowsport

Victoria is the CEO for GB Snowsport, Custodian for the Rugby Centurions, a Strategic Advisor to the UK Invictus Games Delegation and is a Board member of the British Olympic Association. She has had an outstanding career to date with many achievements, including being the CEO for the Invictus Games 2016 in Orlando and the Military Project Lead for the first Invictus Games (London 2014), inspiring 14 nations and over 400 athletes to compete. She has completed 21 years' service within the Royal Air Force culminating with the prestigious rank of Group Captain. Her achievements have been recognised nationally through the Awards of MBE (2004) and OBE (2014).

**Q Can you give us an overview of your career to date?**

**A** I spent 21 years in the military, where I was deployed worldwide in numerous roles. Following my work with adaptive military sports, I received a call to help set up the first-ever Invictus Games operating as the military executive lead working alongside HRH and the Chairman of the Games, Sir Keith Mills GBE DL. Following a successful London 2014 Games, I became the Chief Executive for the Invictus Games 2016, Orlando, which was incredibly rewarding and I knew at this point that my next role would be in sport.

On my return from America, I became Chief Executive for GB Snowsport, formerly British Ski and Snowboard (BSS). It was an exciting challenge because Britain is not perceived to be a snowsports nation. I thought it would be great to take on that challenge and change the perception that Britain wasn't a very credible force on the snow. We rebranded into GB Snowsport and then created a framework that enabled high-performance. By putting athletes first in everything we do, we focussed on what their life in sport and post sport looks like – how can we keep

them engaged to ensure we're keeping them ready for success and what does it take to win. We wanted to give our athletes a clear vision of becoming a top five nation by 2030. We created a culture that was inclusive and diverse by bringing the Paralympic and Olympic athletes under our umbrella.

I also helped to set up the Rugby Centurions which celebrates the players who have 100 international test caps or

**We focussed on what their life in sport and post sport looks like – how can we keep them engaged to ensure we're keeping them ready for success and what does it take to win.**

more for their Country. The organisation aims to help young people unlock their leadership potential through the Future Leaders Programme. I am extremely passionate about looking forward, to make sure that our future leaders have the tools to achieve their full potential.





**Q A** **Victoria Gosling OBE** | CEO of GB Snowsport (continued)

**Q How did you find the transition from a senior role in the military – to an exec role in the sports industry?**

**A** I think the sport and military lifestyle are very similar in the sense that when you have that uniform on, you're living inside a little bubble, where you have a clear pathway and structure. The skills that I'd learnt were very mission oriented – I had to be able to adapt to tough circumstances and going into the sporting world there was a lot of parallels so it wasn't too new for me.

The Invictus Games were a great starting point because it was very much about creating the brand and showcasing the power of sport. I learnt so many lessons through doing that at the same time

as being able to transfer the skills I had learnt in the military. I then went onto a board which was a completely different ball game – I found myself pulling on all of my career experiences trying to be innovative – which clearly paid off. I think all the experiences I learnt in the military were massively transferable, such as operating under pressure, being able to think on your feet, and being able to lead. It was all about how to talk and engage with people, and having belief in what I was trying to say and achieve. I needed people to support what we were doing in order to deliver high results.

**Q You were an integral part in the evolution of the Invictus Games, how do you look back on that time in your career?**



**A** It was fascinating as I'd just been diverted from getting onto operations in the military to help set up what became the Invictus Games. We weren't really sure what they were going to look like – we had to do everything from scratch. From identifying which nations were going to take part to which sports were going to be involved in the programme.

nine different sports across nine nations. I was used to operating overseas and had the right skill sets to negotiate and to convince people to become involved – working with key military counterparts and all the different nations was key. We had to ensure they had belief in what the benefits were going to be and why they should take part and bring a team of people to this unknown event.

**We weren't really sure what they were going to look like – we had to do everything from scratch. From identifying which nations were going to take part to which sports were going to be involved in the programme.**

We had to understand how we were going to work with the venue, the Olympic Park and if we actually had permission to do this at all. I was tasked with understanding how we were going to get military assets to support the opening ceremony as well as getting them to encourage other nations to participate. It was a real eye opener, and we had no idea of the scale that it was going to become so quickly.

It was also a great experience on the media front for me and I got to engage with the national governing bodies of

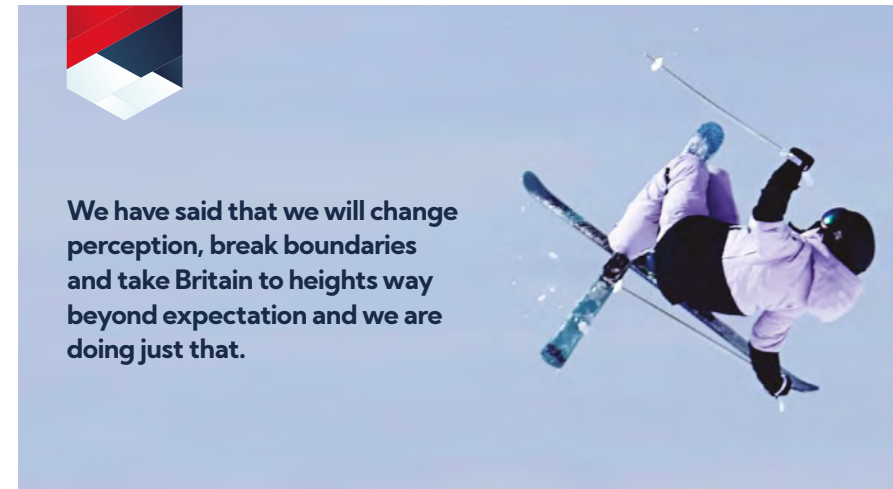
Sponsorship also played a major role of mine also – I remember going into one meeting with Jaguar Land Rover using Dave Hanson, a double amputee sprinter as an example. I would say; "He's a bit like a Jaguar with his speed". These open dialogues with the sponsors allowed them to imagine the action of this unknown entity to them and they become totally on board. It was important for me to be able to show the purpose of the games and the real life stories of these individuals, so that the sponsors could take that and use it for their campaigns.

**Q We are 12 months from the Beijing Winter Olympics, how are you approaching the next 12 months on and off the snow?**

**A** We've faced the challenges that COVID has presented as everybody has, but our athletes have focussed on ensuring their strength and conditioning is at a world class level. They've been locked down and haven't been able to get onto the mountains as much as they would normally, so we looked at ways to ensure they were fitter than ever before and mentally ready for these games. Looking back, it's sad to see how many events have been cancelled. The challenge is trying to make sure that they get enough time on the snow? Even though some races and competitions have been cancelled, we are still managing to get fantastic results when they do go ahead, from Charlotte Bankes just being crowned the 2021 Snowboard Cross World Champion and our some of our Para athletes winning silvers at World Cup events. We have said that we will change perception, break boundaries and take Britain to heights way beyond expectation, and we are doing just that.



We've also been really focusing in on our coaches and learning best practice. That's one thing that we've done really well – being efficient in the way we operate. We've had the Paralympic Snowboard Team training alongside the Olympic Moguls team for example, and the coaches can learn some great practice and some really good lessons between them. Giving them the inner edge in this really challenging environment has been crucial and we've been pleased with the results. The athletes have delivered on every turn.



**Q What are the key challenges GB Snowsport are dealing with as a result of the pandemic?**

**A** We've got a dispersed programme where we effectively have 12 different skills, and if you look at the Olympics and Paralympics side of it then you have all the different disciplines too, meaning travel is key.

Our priority is to protect the health and safety of our athletes, and we have a responsibility for the wider public who they come into contact with whilst they can travel. There is a huge amount of effort that goes into making sure that our elite athletes can continue to train and compete during this global pandemic.

The amount of COVID tests that you have to do to get through the

quarantines and new rules and regulations have made things tough.

There's also been extra challenges such as athletes losing loved ones whilst they are out in the mountains, and that's really hard emotionally for anybody, especially when they're working so hard to try and qualify for the Olympics.

There is also the cost element, as things such as testing and new travel barriers have created a huge amount of costs we had not forecasted for. Finally of course, it's about trying to get these athletes qualified for the Olympics, when several key events have been cancelled, which isn't ideal preparation but we are still positive and looking forward to Beijing.

**Q What is your vision for GB Snowsport in 2021 and beyond?**

**A** Our main vision is to continue putting more athletes across more podiums across more snow sport disciplines than has ever been delivered before. We will continue to create that strength and depth of quality and competence in our sport – really growing this sport, so that we head towards that vision of becoming a leading nation. I would also love to increase the participation through inspiring at the top, having a diverse, inclusive pipeline for us is going to be really important.

If we get more investment, the reality is we will be able to continue delivering. We've delivered so much already that if we had effectively the same sort of funding stream that the summer sports are getting, I think we would deliver so much more. We've got the capability, we've got the determination, and we certainly have the talent out there, we just need to be able to give them the opportunity to be part of the challenge.

**Q What attributes make a great leader?**

**A** I think it is a combination of things. First and foremost, you need to be able to inspire, and if you can do that effectively you will create that loyalty and success. If you are loyal to your teammates, and you empower them to do their job, you know they will always get back to you.

I obviously saw that through the military, that creation of camaraderie and that teamwork helps them feel empowered to do their job because they have autonomy to do it. Believing in them counts and you can only really believe in people, if you have managerial competence as well. You need to have belief in yourself so that you can believe in them, that way you can let them fall and pick them back up again, without everything collapsing around you. I think it's a combination of inspiring loyalty and being empathetic, because people have everyday lives and by enabling them to find that work life balance, you're being empathetic to their personal circumstances. Knowing their skills and knowing how you can play to their skills is key, and fundamentally integrity, to just do the right thing. Even if sometimes you might make the wrong decision, so long as you took that decision for the right reason, then nobody can criticise you.

It's a combination of factors, people want you to be approachable, normal, and in a sporting environment where they can just relate to you. I think that's such a key skill, so that people can actually tell you what's going on. This enables you to understand how to then operate and bring the best out of them as a team. As an individual you are insignificant, it's the team that's going to help you succeed. You have to be able to understand that team and bring the best team on. Having confidence in your own capability will enable you to bring other people up to the level.



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