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CHRISTIANS IN SPORT IS A MOVEMENT OF COMPETITORS, COACHES AND OFFICIALS.

WE EXIST TO REACH THE WORLD OF SPORT FOR JESUS.

Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of the Back Pages.

In this issue we zoom in on the tension between Sunday sport and church. At Christians in Sport, we deeply value the Biblical call to meet together as Christians in church; but it's also central to our vision to reach sportspeople with the gospel - an increasing number of whom compete on Sunday mornings.

Speaking to elite athletes, parents of young sportspeople and church leaders on their approach to this topic, we pray that the Sunday sport articles in this edition help you think through the clash that many sportspeople and churches face on a Sunday.

In this magazine, you'll also find insights into outreach events during the World Cups this summer, a report on the growth of student sport ministry in Europe, and stories from across the work.

We pray that you find this Back Pages an encouraging read.

Thank you for your partnership in this work of reaching the world of sport for Christ.

FERN BRERETON

Marketing and Communications Manager



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CHAMPION QUIZZERS OF THE YEAR

In the build up to The Open, the handful of Christian members at Royal Portrush Golf Club jumped at the opportunity to host an event and share the gospel. Richard reflected on the subsequent Sports Quiz: "The Open returning to Portrush created a unique opportunity. Inviting members and club staff to a quiz was an opportunity to thank them for all they do and build relationships. It was most encouraging to see the room full beyond capacity, with those not yet Christians hearing a clear message to consider the claims of Christ." Praise God for His saving gospel and pray for more chances to share it with sportspeople in County Antrim.



FIRST ON THE GREEN

Kenny Crawford, who works on the professional golf tour, had a wonderful taste of Christian fellowship in the very intense, performance-driven environment of elite golf. The day ahead of a European event, he sat on the balcony overlooking the 18th green studying Hebrews with golfers and caddies. Five days later, one of those players sank a birdie putt on that same 18th green to win the tournament. Who were the first onto the course to greet him with champagne? The other guys who had been at the Bible study, delighting with him in his God-given gifts and success.

REPTON YPAS GATHERING

On 11th August, six young performance athletes (YPAs) and 10 parents met at Repton school for a gathering, with the purpose of meeting other families who are on a journey in elite sport, sharing experiences and praying for each other. The YPAs spent some time looking at identity from the book of Isaiah and how to remember their identity as a Christian before anything else. Meanwhile, the parents shared the joys and challenges of supporting their children with busy schedules and often limited time with other Christians before praying for each other. It was a great time of fellowship, connecting and encouragement.



CAPTAIN CHRIS AND THE BRITISH ARMY SPORTS QUIZ

After leading at Sports Plus Perth this summer, Chris, an officer in the British Army, was keen to put on a Sports Quiz at his garrison. The British Army takes sport very seriously and many soldiers compete for the Army, local clubs and some even professionally – what an opportunity to hold out the gospel into this harvest field of sport! After speaking at the event, Dave Hampton, Scotland staff worker, challenged them to look at one of the accounts of Jesus' life for themselves and nine soldiers took a gospel away. Chris now plans to run a Life Explored course for any soldiers seeking to investigate Christianity further.



WORLD STUDENT GAMES

Early July saw the start of the World Student Games in Italy. At Christians in Sport we have often prayed that God would send Christians into this environment to shine brightly for Christ and this summer this prayer was answered....twice! Mark a runner from Birmingham and Morag a doctor from Hawick (pictured left) travelled out for Team GB to compete and support the athletes respectively. Mark raced in the 3,000m steeplechase and Morag was the British tennis and archery teams' doctor. Before the Games, they were able to connect and during competition they met to pray and encourage one another to live and speak for Jesus.

ENCOURAGEMENTS IN TENNIS

Historically there have been a number of professional tennis players and coaches Christians in Sport staff have supported, but these contacts have dwindled in recent years. Prayers for God to open a door in the world of professional tennis again have wonderfully begun to be answered as we have made contacts on the ATP and WTA circuits. A great example of this was Graham Daniels meeting with three coaches on the WTA tour during the French Open. All three are committed to helping their world class tennis players integrate faith in Christ with their sporting talent. What an encouragement to be working to support these contacts in reaching the world of professional tennis for Christ.

FOR MORE STORIES AND PRAYER REQUESTS SEE OUR PRAYER DIARY ENCLOSED.



LEADING FROM THE FRONT

THE KEY WORK OF OUR LEADERS AT SPORTS PLUS

Sports Plus is set to celebrate its 25th anniversary next year. Starting from humble beginnings in 1995, seven camps are now run each summer across six locations throughout the British Isles.

These camps are the perfect place for young people to improve in their sport whilst exploring more about the Christian faith, and what it means to be a Christian sports player.

By God's grace, Sports Plus camps have been a great encouragement to thousands of young sportspeople over the years. We are thankful for the servant-heartedness of the many Team Leaders, Coaches and Support Staff who make these positive, gospel-centred camp experiences possible for young people.

Unsure what a Team Leader does on Sports Plus?

Team Leaders have responsibility for a group of young people for the week, including looking after them through all the activities in a day, except for their sport. Leaders are also the first contact for encouraging the young people as they think through what they're hearing from the Bible over the week. Leading Bible studies in Team Meetings, aiding the young people in morning Quiet Times, chatting on the walks between activities about what they've heard, and shouting the camp memory verse at the top of their lungs - Team Leaders' support of the young people as they explore the Christian faith is varied and committed.

"BY GOD'S GRACE, SPORTS PLUS CAMPS HAVE BEEN A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOUSANDS OF YOUNG SPORTSPEOPLE OVER THE YEARS."



Speaking to parents and guardians of those attending Sports Plus, there were many kind reflections on the value of the Team Leaders at the camps this year. One Repton parent said, "I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all of the team and especially the Team Leaders and Coaches. We are so enormously grateful to God and all of the people involved for giving the boys such an incredible week. We are so thankful for the young people having such a wholesome, healthy, God-centred week and for the wonderful role modelling and example set by all of the leaders, living for the Lord and also making it enormous fun for the young people."

Another from Perth said that "the young people had a wonderful time and we are just so grateful to all the Team Leaders who gave up their time to be a part of so many journeys which happened that week. Thanks to you all!" Praise God for His provision of so many servant-hearted Team Leaders who encourage the young people to pursue their sport and grow in their understanding of the Christian faith.



From the perspective of the Team Leaders themselves, Sports Plus is a formative experience in their personal faith and in going on to live out that faith in their sporting context for the rest of the year. Speaking to leaders from Monkton, one Team Leader 1 noted how Sports Plus had impacted her as a young person and then allowed her to develop skills in Bible handling through the two year Trainee scheme prior to becoming a Team Leader. She reflected, "the teaching that you get as a Trainee is just class. Having that much time to look into God's Word is such a privilege and it equips you so well for your role as a leader." These skills, as well as the serving attitude developed through more coal-face, practical Trainee responsibilities, have been instrumental in training this Team Leader 1 to serve the young people now in her care.

"HAVING THAT MUCH TIME TO LOOK INTO GOD'S WORD IS SUCH A PRIVILEGE AND IT EQUIPS YOU SO WELL FOR YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER."

COULD YOU SERVE?

There is always a need for more servant-hearted, sports-mad, Jesus-loving Team Leaders on Sports Plus. With the increase in recent years in the number of camps and of young people attending, and the hope under God's grace for future growth, there is more need than ever for adults to fill this Team Leader role as well as Coaching and Support Staff positions. Could you perhaps consider giving your time in the summer to serve? Financial support, child care provision, and support for coaching badge qualifications are all available to help if these are barriers. Opportunities to be trained as part of the aforementioned Trainee scheme are also available for those aged 18 + who are transitioning from being a young person to a future leader.

If you're interested in these roles or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact the Sports Plus team at sportsplus@christiansinsport.org.uk or sportsplus@christiansinsport.ie.

We praise God for His generous provision of leaders who are keen to serve the young people on Sports Plus each summer, and look forward to many more years of encouragement, training, and service together with leaders old and new.

Sports Plus is also a great springboard for Team Leaders as they enter a new season in their own sports back home. For another Team Leader 1 at Repton, Sports Plus helped him see the bigger picture of what it looks like to live for Jesus in the world of sport. "It's hugely encouraging for us Team Leaders to see that there are other Christians up and down the country trying to reach their teammates in their clubs too." Time to share stories of how things have gone this year, planning for events in the coming year, and discussing the challenges and joys of sharing your faith are all great encouragements to Team Leaders who are looking to make Christ known in their respective worlds of sport.



SPORTS PLUS + 2020



Sports Plus is over for another year after a great summer, but it's already time to look ahead to 2020! Make a note of the dates for young people below and make a note of when bookings open on Monday 3rd February 2020.



DUBLIN: SUN 28TH JUNE - FRI 3RD JULY

PERTH: SUN 5TH - FRI 10TH JULY

BRECON: SUN 26TH - FRI 31ST JULY

BELFAST 1: SUN 2ND - FRI 7TH AUG

MONKTON: SUN 2ND - FRI 7TH AUG

BELFAST 2: SUN 9TH - FRI 14TH AUG

REPTON: SUN 9TH - FRI 14TH AUG





REST AND PLAY

THE SUNDAY SPORT DEBATE

FOR PLAYERS, PARENTS AND PASTORS, THE ISSUE OF WHETHER YOU SHOULD PLAY SPORT ON A SUNDAY IS A DIFFICULT ONE.

According to a recent study on declining attendance of US congregations published in the Review of Religious Research, the most common reason cited for the decline was children's sport on Sunday¹. The research did not establish if this was in fact the definitive reason, but the very fact that this headline has such traction implies that it is a fear many share. The Church of England also recently released a survey saying 36%

¹ McMullin, S. (2012). 'The Secularization of Sunday: Real or Perceived Competition for Churches'. *Review of Religious Research*, [online] Vol 55 (Issue 1). Available at: link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13644-012-0089-7 [Accessed 19 Aug 2019]

of Anglican congregations have no one under the age of 16². Again, the link may not be purely related to sport on a Sunday but it can definitely be seen as a factor.

In the UK, it was in the early 1980s that Sunday afternoon became the key time to televise football games so as not to affect Saturday match day attendance. Other sports soon followed suit and by the early 1990s, not just elite level games were scheduled for Sunday but children and youth games too. Suddenly it's not only an issue for an elite Christian athlete who can't make church, but your average youth worker at a church sees their Sunday club attendance drop. Parents are also required to drive their children to games and so many have started alternating church attendance - taking it in turns to take their son or daughter to Sunday sport impacting adult church attendance too.

In response to this issue, there have been some who are keen for church to remain the fixed marker in a weekend and not relegate it to be dictated by sport timings. Others have recognised what they see to be an avoidable clash and seek models that allow sport and church to co-exist, continuing to be fed spiritually in church whilst also reaching out into the mission field of sport.

How can we see a way forward in this complex web of competing claims? Here are three principles it may help to keep in mind whilst considering the tensions of Sunday sport.

² The Church of England, (2019). *Church of England commits to next generation evangelism*. [online] Available at: www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-commits-next-generation-evangelism [Accessed 19 Aug 2019]





CREATED TO REST

Right from the start in Genesis 2 we see God blessing one day of the week and making it a day of rest for all humanity. God's blessing on this day is linked to the fact that God Himself rests on it and so sets a pattern for humanity to follow in resting.

We all need rest don't we? Think about it in sport – you have recovery days after a race or a match, and millions of pounds of investment are pumped into research on the latest trends to maximise recovery of body and mind. Rest is good and rest is necessary.

Genesis 2 is not all the Bible has to say about rest however.

In Matthew 11 v 29, Jesus tells us that true rest is now found in Him, and Hebrews 4 reminds us of the spiritual rest available now which Christ's death and resurrection have provided. There is a wonderful promise here that we will only truly and fully rest with Christ.

So rest is not just stopping work, as it was in Genesis 2, it is also a time to focus on God and to reorientate ourselves back to Him.

BORN TO WORSHIP

In Romans 12 v 1 Paul tells us about what worship is:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship."

We've written lots about these verses at Christians in Sport but the key principle here is that because of God's mercy given to us through Jesus' death and resurrection, our response now is one of worship with all that we are, all of the time.

There is a church in London with a big sign above its door as you walk out which reads "Now go and worship." Paul reminds us that our 'worship' is not just confined to a church meeting or church activity but that in all we do, including our sport, as we use our gifts in relationship with others for the glory of God; that is an action of worship in and of itself. We are born to worship 24/7.

"IN ALL WE DO, INCLUDING OUR SPORT, AS WE USE OUR GIFTS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD; THAT IS AN ACTION OF WORSHIP IN AND OF ITSELF."

MADE TO MEET

If you took these two principles on their own, you could end up playing sport every Sunday and chilling out on the sofa on a Monday.

That would ignore the fact that the Christian life is never to be lived in isolation. God, in His very being as Father, Son and Spirit, is relational and we have been made in His image. We need each other as we live this life.

In Hebrews 10 v 24 and 25 the writer exhorts us to not give up meeting with one another:

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

When this was written, the Romans had made Christianity illegal and so the temptation was to just give up meeting in the face of persecution. Yet, even as the Hebrew believers might risk their lives doing so, the message is loud and clear: "Don't give up meeting together – without meeting together it is very hard to run your race of faith."

"CHURCH IS WONDERFUL AND IS SO IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHRISTIANS."

Think of a marathon – the cheers of the supporters and the encouragement of fellow runners all help spur you on to the finish line.

Church is wonderful and is so important for all Christians. We get encouraged in godly living and we get help to keep going as believers as we meet together and sit under the teaching of God's word. We were made to meet.

WORKING OUT THE CLASH

In light of these principles, how can we practically overcome this tension of sport and church commitments?

We sat down with Gaynor Penrose, the parent of a young performance athlete, former elite rower Debbie Bruwer, ex-footballer Linvoy Primus, and Ian Lancaster, leader at Town Church Bicester, to break down how they have approached this conflict.

THE PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

The clash of Sunday church meetings and athletics competitions has definitely been a dilemma for us, and of course the better the kids get at their sport the more of a dilemma it becomes.

I would say meeting with Christians is incredibly important. I feel like that when I go to church and I worship with my church family and hear God's Word. It's like having a meal – you miss that if you don't get it and you're worried that your kids are going to miss out on that as well. So we felt that was really important to commit to church. But it was also important for me to realise that sport was a gift from God, and that sporting talent was something to be celebrated. We saw that to not ever compete on a Sunday would mean that the kids couldn't use sport to worship. So we had a pragmatic view on the tension, combined with a commitment to making it work with still meeting together.

As our son improved and started going to national competitions, inevitably there were quite a lot of Sundays getting missed. The way we tried to work that out is being really honest with him saying, "This is not ideal for us because Sunday's a time where we meet with our church family. We miss seeing them, we miss hearing God's word, we miss worshipping together. But what we're going to do is we're going to get together at home and we're going to have a little Bible time ourselves." So we've tried to say that this is important.

Our son has been really good about it actually. I think the main thing is to be really open and honest with your child about how you're feeling. I think that goes for virtually anything with young people. But especially about the sport and the Sunday sport issue and for him we were open about it. Overall, I think taking the pragmatic approach has worked.

GAYNOR

Cardiff parent of middle distance young performance athlete

THE TRAVELLING ELITE ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

You travel a lot as a rower, and in an Olympic year you can be away for up to a third of the year. So when I was on training camp or competing, it was really important for me to know that my church were praying for me. I had a prayer partner who would message me, see how I was doing and pray for me. Sharing life together with another Christian was so valuable.

One thing that church leaders can do for travelling athletes is to ask how they can help. They may have lots of ideas, but we don't want to be treated differently. We may just want Bible studies sent to us or to be able to meet up with church staff in a coffee shop every so often. Ask what the church can be praying for athletes while they're away. Athletes want to feel part of the church and be supported, even if they're not in the church building.

DEBBIE BRUWER

Former GB rower and Olympic silver medallist



THE ELITE CLUB ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

I became a Christian in my late twenties as an elite footballer and when you move clubs there can be some difficulty around going to church. I've heard footballers say that they started going to church in a new town and became the centre of worship so they end up withdrawing. The reality is that the profile of most sportspeople now is quite high, so they will be recognised and there's a difficulty in that. But I would say don't shy away from church. When you're on your own, without those prayers and that community, it can be really difficult.

It can be a bit tricky to get to services when you're busy with matches. I used to meet up with the club chaplain and pray with him. It was also good to have things in the week to look forward to. We had a housegroup where we'd meet up and pray, which was great. It was just really good to have something in the week so you didn't feel that if you missed Sunday you were going to struggle for the rest of the week.

LINVOY PRIMUS

Ex-professional footballer with Portsmouth and Reading



TO SEE ALL OUR RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC, INCLUDING FULL INTERVIEWS WITH DEBBIE AND LINVOY, HEAD TO CHRISTIANSINSPO.RG.UK/SUNDAY

THE CHURCH LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

At Town Church Bicester we've had the unique flexibility, as a recently-planted FIEC church, to decide from scratch how church life is organised. One of these decisions was around when our service would be. So we wrestled with it and settled on 4 o'clock as there are a number of reasons why Sunday afternoon works. One of the key reasons was providing a solution for the clash of sport and church that many pastors now need to be aware of.

When I share my experience of choosing our service time with other church leaders their reaction is mixed. I'm aware that not all church leaders will be in a position to set up programmes and services which fit around the mission field of Sunday sport. A lot of people have said, "We just can't do what you've done. I'd love to but we can't for lots

of different reasons." It's definitely true that shifting a service or starting up a new one might not be realistic with the resources or systems that individual churches are working with.

Others have grappled with the sense that moving service times to fit around sport sends out the wrong message to congregations. Some have come with a word of caution that sport can be an idol, like many other good things in life. That your ability to worship God through playing sport is one thing, but, if that's to the detriment of meeting with other Christians and growing in Christ as a community of believers, then sport can be an idol. The word of warning is "be careful that it isn't the ruler of everything". And they're not wrong in that, but why can't we find solutions which

encourage sportspeople along to church gatherings and also to engage in the world of sport?

I know this is provocative, but I would say we can be slow in churches to think about the individual's personal impact and responsibility to bring the Good News of Jesus to bear in the context that they find themselves in. And you if you've been gifted with sporting talent and are glorifying God by using that in a club or team, then you'll find yourself in a community of sportspeople who need to hear the gospel.

A crucial part of growth as individual disciples is making disciples of others. To bring that to the fore, I'm asking why wouldn't we change everything as churches to do that and get among lost people? Those out there in the world of sport, mates in our teams and parents on the touchline next to us. And in our case, 'everything' means thinking about the time of the service. That's up for grabs when we're thinking about what the church is here to do.

So how can members of the church or those in church leadership support sportspeople in living missionally among other athletes and also in meeting with other Christians? There are no easy answers and no one 'out of a box' solution that every church worker can implement, but here are some suggestions to help think this difficult area through.

"SUNDAY SPORT AND MEETING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A CHOICE BETWEEN THE TWO."

Firstly, prayer on this tension is a must for all parties. We're all in need of godly wisdom in this area, and it's so important that church leaders and those within the church family coming alongside sportspeople are praying for wisdom here. It's a real conscience issue and the outworking of this will look different for different people as they weigh up the Biblical principles in play around meeting together in church and reaching the lost world of sport and worshiping through sporting gifts on the pitch.

Secondly, it's always helpful to communicate in both directions. Whether you're a parent trying to figure out what this looks like for your sporty child or an elder trying to support your congregation in their sports mission field and by feeding them as Christians, let's talk about it! Let's help each other understand what we're thinking and how we can support each other as church family, growing as disciples of Jesus and in making disciples in places like the world of sport.

Finally, let's not fall into the 'either or' mindset. Sunday sport and meeting with other Christians doesn't have to be a choice between the two. If it is, it can send unhelpful signals about the importance of church and of being in the lost world of sport. If there's a workable solution, go for it, but also be realistic about its implications both practically and spiritually. Think about what mid-week group options you can give to help sportspeople continue meeting Christians and coming under the sound of the gospel together. And if you're in a position as a church leader to shape services to include sportspeople with Sunday commitments, do prayerfully consider that.

IAN LANCASTER

UK Team Leader at Christians in Sport and Church leader at Town Church Bicester





QUESTION 2
Japan recorded a famous victory at the 2015 Rugby World Cup against which traditional rugby stronghold?

THE SPORTS QUIZ

RUGBY WORLD CUP FEVER

It has been a great summer of sport, with four World Cup competitions and numerous events to reach local sportspeople with the gospel hosted during these tournaments.

With the nine hour difference to Japan, planning for events during the Rugby World Cup has required imagination to get teammates along for an early start. Unsurprisingly, a big cooked breakfast has proved a popular incentive to attend for hungry sportspeople!

One group who saw a great uptake at their breakfast event were Trinity Church Cheltenham, who hosted a match screening and quiz morning.

Organiser Nick Stott, breaks down the event:

"With the 9am kick-off we had an early start, serving a full English breakfast at 7.30am to 80 men. This was followed by three rounds of the Sports Quiz and a conversation with Dan Ritchie, chaplain at Gloucester Rugby, who brought some

**"THE BEST EVENT EVER!
MY MATE WENT HOME
HAPPY... THAT'S A
MIRACLE IN ITSELF!"**

iPhone-filmed score predictions from Billy Twelvetrees, Ed Slater and Ollie Thorley - they were all wrong! At half-time and at the final whistle we then had five minute videos from a top level coach and a former pro-player giving their testimonies."

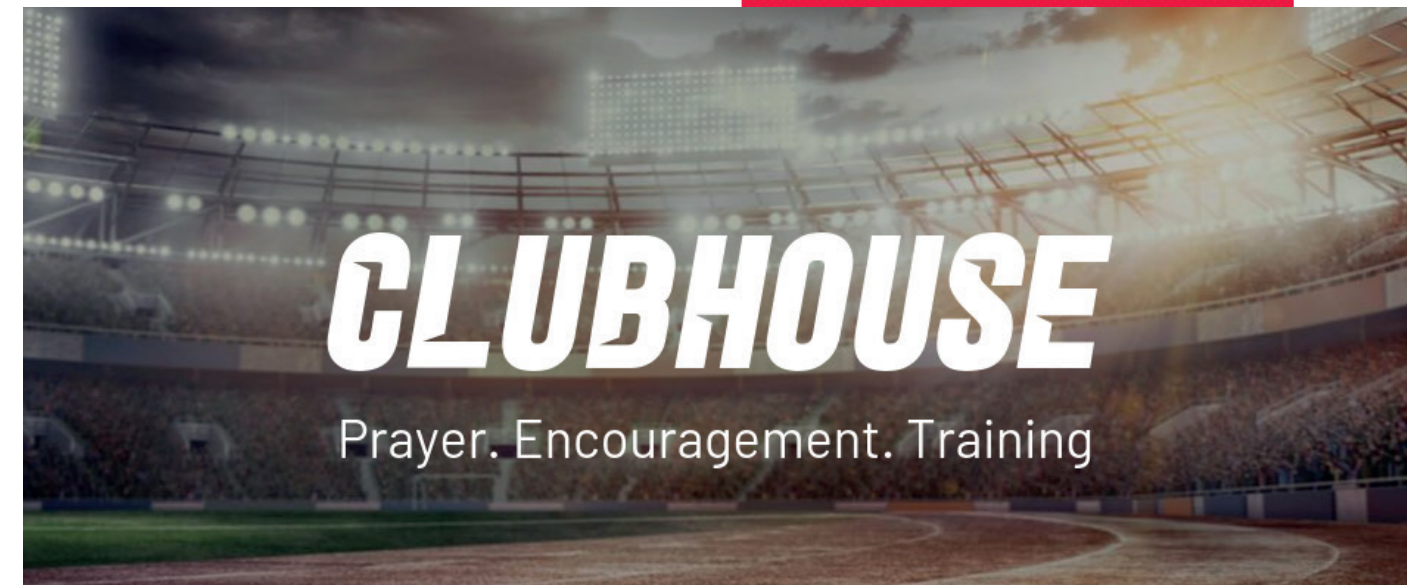
Those hosting the event had some fantastic feedback from the sportspeople in attendance, with one calling it "the best event ever! My mate went home happy... that's a miracle in itself!" Another said how the morning was "really good and much enjoyed by my two non-Christian friends."

These kinds of events, where sportspeople are brought together and given the opportunity to hear the gospel, are a great tool to use as we seek to reach the world of sport for Jesus. Praise God for how He is using outreach events like this one in Cheltenham to share the Good News with those who don't yet know Jesus.



NAME THE CURRENT CAPTAIN OF THE ENGLAND RUGBY TEAM.

IF YOU'RE KEEN TO HOST YOUR OWN EVENT, AT ANY TIME OF YEAR, WHY NOT DOWNLOAD OUR SPORTS MISSION PACK? THIS RESOURCES PACK CONTAINS A VARIETY OF SCHOOL, CHURCH, AND QUIZ MATERIALS, EVANGELISTIC FILMS, AND TOURNAMENT IDEAS TO REACH YOUR TEAMMATES WITH THE GOOD NEWS. HEAD TO [SPORTSMISSIONPACK.CO.UK](https://sportsmissionpack.co.uk) TO DOWNLOAD YOURS NOW.



TO FIND YOUR LOCAL CLUBHOUSE AND TO BOOK YOUR PLACE, HEAD TO [CHRISTIANSINSPORT.ORG.UK/CLUBHOUSE](https://christiansinsport.org.uk/clubhouse).

GROWING THE WORK IN EUROPE

THE UNIVERSITY WORK OF CHRISTIANS IN SPORT HAS BEEN RUNNING FOR ALMOST AS LONG AS CHRISTIANS IN SPORT ITSELF. THERE WERE STUDENT SPORTSPEOPLE INVITED TO THE VERY FIRST GATHERING IN JUNE 1976.

There are many reasons why our university work is both an exciting and a vital part of the ministry. We have the privilege of working with Christian athletes at a particularly formative stage in their lives, as they go deeper in their faith and go further in their sport. We work alongside them as they develop as young leaders, and vitally we're there to support and equip them as they share Jesus with their teammates. A substantial number of those who now support the work of Christians in Sport with their time, gifts and money were involved in a university group.

However, despite the many joys of being involved in the university world here in the UK, globally the work is very different.

Significant university work is very rare, especially in Europe. There are so many wonderful, creative and robust sports ministries in existence but so few of them work with university students directly. This is really significant because it means that many of them are missing the opportunity to share the gospel at a stage in people's lives when they are typically most open to listening. It also means that they are neglecting a crucial time for leadership investment and development.

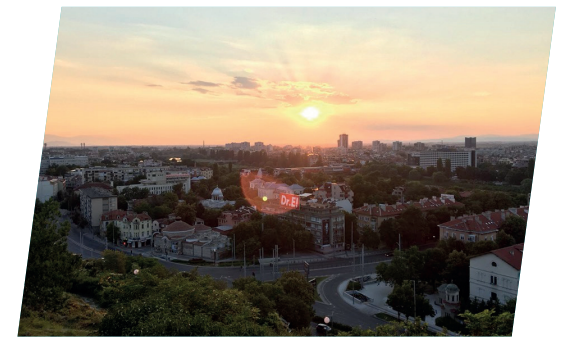
With all this in mind, Christians in Sport are now working closely with the European Christian Sports Union as we seek to establish a European-wide university sports ministry. It is a big task but an immensely exciting one.

Starting this Autumn we are hoping to facilitate the formation of university groups across the continent with a similar format to those in the UK but inevitably with their own distinctive regional feel and flavour. The vision is to see some form of sustainable student group witness established in the top 100 sporting universities in Europe. This includes the likes of Bordeaux (ranked as the best university in Europe for Sport) and Strasbourg in France, Coimbra (top of the European Universities Sport Association championship for the past two years) in Portugal, Seville and Valencia in Spain, Vienna in Austria, Zagreb in Croatia, Jönköping in Sweden and Bologna and Verona in Italy to name just ten.

We cannot do this on our own! First and foremost we will be prayerfully relying on the Spirit to guide us to the people and places of His plan. We have already been led to some gifted student leaders through the Multiply summer school run by the ECSU. We will also be working with friends and partners from across Europe. Most notably we plan to work very closely with IFES Europe (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students).

IFES Europe connects 41 national student movements across the continent of which the British member movement is UCCF. We have already started to connect with key leaders in some of these countries and are making plans to meet, train and work with local groups in some of the key university cities. The movements in Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Serbia and the Faroe Islands have all already been really welcoming.

As part of this partnership with IFES, we have been invited to attend Revive (previously known as the IFES European Evangelism Conference). This is taking place 27 December to 1 January in Germany. Thousands of Christian undergraduate students are going to attend and we will be teaching seminars on how to reach the world of sport as well as running the sport and fitness for the event. We hope to find many Christian student sports players excited by the vision of the work.



As we embark on this venture please join us in praying for the students we trust we will meet. Pray for all the challenges of travel, training and language barriers that will inevitably present themselves. And please pray we see gospel fruit in the universities of Europe!

OWEN BROWN

International and Student Team





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