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Sabalenka & Anisimova Redefine Tennis Power

The Future of Broadcasting: Who Really Owns the Fans?

Pickleball: From Backyard to Global Craze

Running Wild: Why Australians Are Lacing Up More Than Ever

Safeguarding in Sport: Building a Culture of Protection

The Enhanced Games: Sports Dangerous Experiment

AT RISK... SPORTS SHORTS... WORLD SPORT NEWS...

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The Power Play: Private Equity's Grip on Global Sport

When New Zealand Rugby sold a 15 per cent stake of its commercial arm to Silver Lake Partners this year, it marked a watershed moment not just for the All Blacks, but for world sport itself. Rugby, once a game defined by community, history, and a handshake's worth of trust, had formally joined the new order: sport as an asset class.

From rugby and tennis to Formula 1 and football, private equity has become the invisible referee shaping outcomes far beyond the field. Once an emergency investor, it is now a permanent player injecting capital, demanding returns, and redrawing the boundaries between sporting heritage and corporate efficiency. The results are mixed, the questions existential.

In 2020, as COVID-19 halted competition, private equity funds moved swiftly into sport's power vacuum. They bought minority stakes in leagues and governing bodies desperate for liquidity — a quiet revolution disguised as rescue. Today, firms like CVC Capital Partners, Silver Lake, Arctos, and RedBird Capital collectively hold slices of rugby, cricket, football, tennis, and media rights entities worth tens of billions.

CVC alone has ownership in the Six Nations, La Liga, and Women's Tennis Association. Silver Lake's deals with the All Blacks, City Football Group, and UFC parent Endeavor give it a portfolio that rivals traditional broadcasters. For a sector once defined by local loyalty, the influx of Wall Street capital has changed not only who funds sport, but who calls its plays.

The promise is seductive: stability, modernisation, and commercial expertise. Private equity brings marketing precision, digital transformation, and access to global sponsorship networks. Leagues gain breathing room to rebuild; fans enjoy improved production and engagement.
But every investment comes with an exit strategy and therein lies the tension. Private equity's horizon is short, its appetite large, and its loyalty limited to yield.

Critics argue that sport's fundamental value is its unpredictability, heritage, and sense of belonging that is incompatible with financial engineering. A club or league may thrive on spreadsheets, but what happens when the return on investment demands disruption of tradition?

When CVC entered rugby, it sought to streamline calendars and increase the number of marquee matches. The intent was growth; the effect, some say, was erosion. Domestic competitions lost autonomy. Players faced heavier workloads. "It feels like we're being asset-managed," said one European club executive. "The sport is still ours in name, but not in direction."

Fans, too, are learning that modernisation can be a double-edged sword. As ticket prices rise and exclusive streaming deals multiply, accessibility shrinks. What was once a shared public good is slowly becoming a premium product. Private equity insists it is monetising passion; purists fear it is commercialising identity.

The question of governance lingers in the background: who safeguards the game when the investors' goals diverge from the sport's mission? Unlike publicly listed companies, many sporting bodies have no shareholders to answer to, only boards accustomed to autonomy.

That opacity invites risk. A 2025 study by the Centre for Sports Governance found that 60 per cent of major private-equity-backed sports entities lacked independent oversight committees. "Investors can reshape governance with little scrutiny," said the report's author, Dr. Niamh Sheehan. "We've seen risk management outsourced to optimism."

Private equity is not inherently villainous; it can stabilise, innovate, and globalise. The danger lies in imbalance. When the financial tail wags the cultural dog, sport loses something intangible: its moral equity.

Not all are capitulating quietly. In Germany, fan-led protests successfully pressured the Bundesliga to shelve a proposed €1 billion investment deal in 2024. "Football is not for sale," read the banners. Similar resistance is brewing in cricket, where national boards worry about losing sovereignty to investors eyeing franchise leagues. Meanwhile, some federations are seeking a middle path.

The International Tennis Federation is exploring hybrid ownership models that limit private investors to minority, non-voting shares, ensuring sporting integrity while unlocking funding. The NBA now caps institutional ownership at 30 per cent per franchise, preserving team-level autonomy. These are not rejections of capital they are recalibrations of control.

The next frontier may not be financial at all but communal. As technology enables fan-owned shares and blockchain-based governance, the pendulum could swing back toward distributed ownership. Spanish clubs like Real Sociedad and Athletic Bilbao, still member-run, have become case studies in balancing heritage with modernity.
Ultimately, the private-equity era forces sport to confront a question it has long postponed: what is its soul worth, and who should decide?

Capital brings opportunity, but also compromise. For every million-dollar deal inked in a boardroom, there remains a child in a local park dreaming of wearing the same colours, not because of a balance sheet, but because of belonging.
Sport, in the end, was built on that promise. It must ensure it isn't sold with everything else.





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PICKLEBALL: FROM BA
GLOBAL PHE

It began as a quirky backyard pastime on Bainbridge Island, Washington, in the mid-1960s. A handful of friends improvised a game on a badminton court using table tennis paddles, a perforated plastic ball, and a set of ad-hoc rules. Nearly 60 years later, that pastime, pickleball, has become the world's fastest-growing sport. **From retirement villages in Florida to gyms in Sydney, pickleball courts are filling up, and its trajectory shows no signs of slowing down.**

In the United States, pickleball participation surged by 223% between 2020 and 2023, with more than 36.5 million players estimated to have tried the sport at least once in 2023. Courts are now being built in repurposed shopping malls, community centres, and even converted car parks. Professional tours like Major League Pickleball have attracted celebrity investors ranging from LeBron James to Tom Brady, while ESPN and CBS have begun broadcasting tournaments to national audiences. A sport once dismissed as "tennis for retirees" is now commanding television slots and corporate sponsorships.

The appeal of pickleball lies in its simplicity. The court is smaller than tennis, the paddles are lightweight, and the rules can be learned in minutes. Unlike tennis or squash, rallies last longer, rewarding placement and strategy over sheer power. For older players, it is gentle on joints and knees. For younger participants, it offers fast rallies and competitive depth. **It's one of the few sports where grandparents and grandkids can actually go head-to-head and both have a shot at winning.** Australia has not been immune to the craze. Pickleball Australia reported membership growth of 35% year-on-year in 2024, with over 20,000 registered players nationwide.

Clubs have emerged in every state, and the sport has gained recognition from Sport Australia. Indoor stadiums and tennis clubs are increasingly adding pickleball lines to their courts to cater for demand. At grassroots level, schools and community centres have embraced the game as a way to encourage physical activity in students who might be intimidated by more traditional sports.

Globally, the sport is following a similar path to earlier racquet booms like squash in the 1970s or padel tennis in the 2000s. But unlike squash, which peaked and receded, pickleball seems to have established deeper cultural traction thanks to its low barriers to entry and its embrace by both community and elite frameworks. The launch of international tournaments, including world championships and continental leagues, has given pickleball a professional structure in record time. In Europe, clubs in Spain, the UK, and Scandinavia have seen surging interest, while Asian markets like India and Japan are investing in facilities and coaching. Of course, rapid growth brings challenges. Governance is fragmented, with competing organisations vying to represent the sport at international level.

Questions remain over how pickleball should be standardised globally, with variations in rules, court sizes, and tournament formats. In the US, conflicts have already arisen between established tennis clubs and new pickleball players over noise complaints and access to facilities. The sound of the hard plastic ball against paddles, an incessant "pop-pop-pop" has even led to lawsuits. Who knew the friendliest sport in town could be so noisy? here is also debate about pickleball's future as a professional sport.

ACKYARD HOBBY TO
ENOMENON

While sponsorships and celebrity backing are strong, critics argue that the professional product remains niche and untested. Can pickleball fill stadiums the way tennis or basketball does? Will broadcasters commit long-term, or is this a pandemic-fuelled fad? Supporters counter that the sport's grassroots popularity is its best safeguard. With millions already playing, pickleball has built a base that can sustain professional ambitions even if media hype cools.

For Australia, the sport presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Its accessibility makes it a natural fit for schools, veterans' programs, and community recreation. But as demand grows, investment in infrastructure and coaching will be critical. Already, the Australian Pickleball Championships are attracting competitors from across the Asia-Pacific, and there are discussions about pathways to professional tours. With Brisbane 2032 on the horizon, some enthusiasts are even lobbying for pickleball to be considered for Olympic recognition in future cycles, though such a step remains speculative.

Pickleball also intersects with broader themes in sport. In an era where inclusivity, lifelong activity, and community engagement are priorities, the game ticks every box. It provides a space where grandparents and grandchildren can compete on equal terms, where people recovering from injury can ease back into movement, and where new migrants or casual players can join without the intimidation of a steep learning curve. **It's social, it's easy to learn, and it might just be the only sport where the warm-up doubles as the game itself.** The business community has noticed. Equipment sales are booming, with paddle manufacturers reporting double-digit growth annually.

Companies are innovating with carbon-fibre paddles, custom-designed balls, and specialised shoes. Facilities are monetising court hire, coaching clinics, and leagues. Some analysts forecast the pickleball equipment market alone could surpass US$400 million globally by 2030. The Invictus Games' decision to include pickleball as a competition sport at the 2027 Birmingham Games further highlights its global recognition. This not only validates the sport's accessibility for adaptive athletes but also provides it with an international showcase alongside more established disciplines. The inclusion at Invictus signals that pickleball is not just a fad but a meaningful addition to the global sporting ecosystem.

Still, the future of pickleball depends on balance. Over-commercialisation risks alienating grassroots players who value the sport's relaxed, social roots. Conversely, failing to establish coherent governance could stunt its professional potential. Pickleball now stands at a crossroads: can it retain its easy-going spirit while embracing the structures of serious sport?

What is clear is that pickleball has moved beyond novelty. It is shaping communities, driving business, and challenging traditional notions of what sport can be. From suburban car parks to professional arenas, the unmistakable "pop" of pickleball is becoming the soundtrack of a global movement. Whether it ultimately becomes an Olympic sport or simply the world's favourite recreational game, pickleball has already won the most important battle: **it has made millions of people fall in love with play again.**

SAFEGUARD

BUILDING A CULT

Sport has always been a place for young people to grow, to learn teamwork, discipline, and resilience. But in today's environment, **clubs and organisations are increasingly aware of their responsibility to ensure those spaces are not just inspiring, but safe.** Safeguarding has become one of the most pressing governance issues in sport, and it is reshaping how organisations manage risk, protect young athletes, and earn the trust of families.

The first step is recognising that safeguarding is not an optional add-on. For clubs, it is part of their duty of care. Just as organisations invest in insurance to protect against physical injuries, they must now also demonstrate that they have systems in place to protect against misconduct and abuse. Increasingly, insurers are requiring evidence of these measures before offering or renewing liability coverage.

Clubs are responding by putting in place clear codes of conduct for coaches, volunteers, and players. These documents set expectations for behaviour and provide a framework for accountability. Background checks and working-with-children clearances are now standard in many organisations, but the best clubs go further, offering mandatory education sessions that ensure all adults understand boundaries, responsibilities, and reporting pathways.

Education is critical. Safeguarding experts stress that policies only work when everyone in a club knows how to apply them. Training coaches to recognise warning signs, empowering athletes to speak up, and ensuring parents know how to raise concerns are all part of creating a safe environment.

Importantly, this training must be practical and ongoing, not just a box-ticking exercise. Insurance providers are paying attention. Many liability policies now include clauses requiring clubs to demonstrate proactive safeguarding practices. If a club cannot show that it has policies, education programs, and reporting mechanisms in place, its coverage may be limited or invalidated. This is driving organisations to view safeguarding not only as a moral obligation but also as a financial and reputational necessity.

Technology is also changing how safeguarding is managed. Some clubs have adopted anonymous reporting platforms, giving athletes and parents the ability to raise concerns confidentially. Others are using digital ID systems to streamline background checks for volunteers and officials. These tools are helping clubs demonstrate transparency and accountability while reducing administrative burdens.

At the heart of this shift is a cultural change. Safeguarding is not about suspicion; it is about reassurance. **Parents want to know their children are safe, athletes want to know their wellbeing matters, and clubs want to protect the integrity of their programs.** By embedding safeguarding into daily operations, organisations send a clear message: trust is as important as trophies.
There are positive examples already. Several national sporting bodies in Australia, the UK, and North America have rolled out comprehensive safeguarding frameworks in partnership with insurers and government agencies.

DING IN SPORT:
URE OF PROTECTION

These include mandatory training modules, hotlines for reporting, and annual compliance audits. The result has been greater confidence among families and fewer liability exposures for clubs.

Of course, challenges remain. Smaller community clubs often operate with limited resources, and safeguarding can feel like one more burden on stretched volunteers. This is where federations, insurers, and governments can play a crucial role by providing toolkits, subsidised training, and simplified compliance systems. As one safeguarding officer put it: **“Protection works best when everyone has the tools to do it, not just the big clubs.”**

The next frontier is integration. Safeguarding should sit alongside health and safety, risk management, and governance in every club’s strategic plan.

Just as player injury prevention became non-negotiable over the past 20 years, safeguarding will become a standard pillar of good governance. Insurance companies will continue to drive compliance by aligning coverage with best practice, and parents will continue to demand visible assurances before enrolling their children.

Sport at its best is about joy, challenge, and belonging. To preserve that, safeguarding is essential. It protects athletes, strengthens communities, and reinforces the trust that allows sport to thrive.

For clubs, the message is simple: **safeguarding is not just about preventing harm, it is about creating environments where every athlete feels safe to dream, compete, and grow.**



Sexuality

Breaking Barriers in

In August 2025, former West Coast Eagles defender Mitch Brown became the first male Australian Football League (AFL) player—past or present—to publicly identify as bisexual. His announcement was a landmark moment, not only for himself but for the league, which has long struggled with perceptions of hyper-masculinity and exclusion. Brown, who played 94 games for West Coast between 2007 and 2016, explained that he stayed silent during his career because of the environment around him. He recalled hearing comments in the locker room such as "I'd rather be in a cage full of lions than shower next to a gay man", remarks that reinforced the idea it was safer to stay closeted.

The overwhelmingly positive reaction to Brown's decision shows how attitudes have shifted, but it also highlights the work still required to make sport fully inclusive.

For too long, sexuality in men's sport has been a hidden conversation, discussed in whispers or left unsaid. Brown's honesty pushed it firmly into the open.

Women's sport has often been at the forefront of LGBTQ+ visibility. In AFLW, cricket, and football, openly gay and bisexual athletes have competed without derailing their careers.

By contrast, men's codes—both in Australia and globally—have been slow to follow. In football, Jake Daniels became the first active UK professional male player in over 30 years to come out, in 2022. In the NFL, Carl Nassib made headlines in 2021, while in basketball, Jason Collins came out near the end of his NBA career. These athletes showed courage, but they remain exceptions, not the norm.

Brown's announcement carried extra weight because it came in a year when the AFL was facing scrutiny over homophobic incidents, including Izak Rankine's suspension for using a slur earlier in the season. Against that backdrop, Brown's honesty provided a counterpoint to the challenges the league faces. In a sport where culture often lags behind policy, this moment forced the AFL to look in the mirror.

The AFL, like many governing bodies, has inclusion policies on paper. But Brown's testimony reveals the gap between what is written and how athletes actually feel. During his playing years, he did not believe the environment was safe enough to be open about who he was. Policies mean little unless players trust them, and trust is only built when culture changes.

IN SPORT: THE AFL AND BEYOND

For sports administrators, this is a governance issue as much as a cultural one. Anti-discrimination standards, reporting pathways, and education programs are not optional extras; they are part of the duty of care owed to athletes. Concealing one's identity carries a cost. Research by La Trobe University's Sport and Human Rights unit shows that closeted athletes face higher levels of anxiety and depression. Brown himself spoke of the "weight" of secrecy, and how coming out lifted a burden.

Mental health and inclusivity are inseparable—safe environments don't just protect identity, they improve performance.

Globally, Brown's decision places him among a small but growing group of male athletes in team sports willing to be open. Jake Daniels remains almost alone in UK football. Carl Nassib is still the only active NFL player to have come out. Jason Collins remains the most prominent example in basketball. And in Olympic sports, athletes like Tom Daley and Ian Thorpe (who came out after retiring) have widened visibility. Team sport remains the toughest frontier, and that is what makes Brown's announcement so significant.

But culture change doesn't rest on athletes alone. Fans, sponsors, and the media all play vital roles. Stadiums can either reinforce discrimination or challenge it.

Sponsors increasingly align themselves with inclusion campaigns, though they risk accusations of "rainbow-washing" if the support feels tokenistic. Media coverage of Brown's story was largely respectful, focusing on courage rather than controversy. When sexuality is framed as normal, the path becomes easier for the next athlete.

The question now is whether sport will seize this moment. To ensure Brown's story is not just an isolated headline, organisations must invest in proactive welfare programs, expand education across all levels of sport, and embed inclusion into governance and contracts. Role models must be promoted in men's as well as women's codes, and fans and sponsors must continue to hold clubs accountable. As Brown himself said, Australian sport still has work to do to create "genuinely safe spaces" for young players.

Sport prides itself on fairness and belonging. Yet for too long, many LGBTQ+ athletes have been made to feel like outsiders. Brown's decision in August 2025 to come out as bisexual is a reminder that change is possible, but also that responsibility lies with the institutions as much as with individuals. If governing bodies, clubs, fans and sponsors commit to turning words into action, this milestone may be remembered not only as a first, but as the moment sport finally began to live up to its promise of inclusion.

Sabalenka & Anisimova: Redefine Tennis Power

The 2025 U.S. Open final will be remembered not just for Aryna Sabalenka's successful title defence, but for the raw power and precision on display from both her and Amanda Anisimova. In a hard-fought 6-3, 7-6(7-3) victory, Sabalenka claimed her fourth major and became the first woman since Serena Williams in 2014 to defend the New York crown. Beyond the result, it was the statistics that stole headlines. The two women hit the ball faster than many of their male counterparts, an emphatic reminder of how far women's tennis has come since the days of Billie Jean King's famous "Battle of the Sexes."
Sabalenka's forehand has been one of the sport's most destructive weapons for years, but at Flushing Meadows her numbers were astonishing.

Tracking data confirmed that her **average topspin forehand speed reached 129 km/h, eclipsing benchmarks set by Carlos Alcaraz (127 km/h), Jannik Sinner (126 km/h), and even Novak Djokovic (122 km/h)** in their respective matches. Her coach Anton Dubrov admitted even he was surprised, while Sabalenka herself confessed: "I can't believe it's that fast".

Anisimova, meanwhile, matched Sabalenka's firepower with her signature backhand. In the final, she unleashed a series of winners that pushed her average backhand speed to record levels. At 119 km/h, her backhand outpaced not only her Women's Tennis Association (WTA) peers but also the fastest men's averages recorded at the U.S. Open. For a player who has fought back from personal struggles and injuries, it was a moment of vindication, proof that her technique and timing can turn defence into a weapon as lethal as any serve.

The symbolism is striking. In 1973, Billie Jean King's straight-sets win over Bobby Riggs was framed as proof that women could compete with men. It was a battle fought as much in the press as on the court. Fifty years on, Sabalenka and Anisimova don't need exhibitions to prove parity, the data does it for them.

Their shots are literally faster, heavier, and more penetrating than many of the men ranked inside the Association of Tennis Professionals' (ATP) top 10. The "battle of the sexes" has shifted from theatre to technology, from rhetoric to radar guns.



The final itself was a showcase of modern women's tennis at its highest level. Sabalenka's power off both wings allowed her to dictate rallies, but Anisimova's resilience and shot-making stretched the match into a second-set tiebreak.

Both women produced highlight reels of winners that silenced any lingering notion that men's tennis is inherently more physical.

In terms of ball-striking, the WTA is now setting standards the ATP must respect. That makes the prospect of Sabalenka's upcoming exhibition with Nick Kyrgios in Hong Kong all the more fascinating. Marketed with playful rule tweaks, one serve only, adjusted service boxes, it echoes the original King–Riggs match, but in truth, Sabalenka hardly needs the gimmicks.

She is already proving her strokes can match or better the men. What the event will really demonstrate is not whether a woman can keep up, but how the framing of these contests has evolved.

If King's 1973 victory was about proving women belonged, the 2025 U.S. Open final was about proving women now dominate on their own terms.

Sabalenka and Anisimova aren't carrying a social movement on their shoulders, they're simply playing tennis at a level where speed, spin, and power speak louder than politics. That, perhaps, is the truest measure of progress.

The Enhanced Games: Sport

The Olympic Games have long stood as the pinnacle of sporting excellence, celebrating athleticism, integrity, and fair play. In 2026, a new challenger is set to enter the arena: the so-called Enhanced Games, an event that openly encourages performance-enhancing drug use and promises enormous financial rewards for record-breaking performances.

To supporters, it is an unfiltered celebration of human potential. To critics, it is a reckless gamble that could undermine the very foundations of global sport.

The Enhanced Games, scheduled for May 2026 in Las Vegas, has positioned itself as the "anti-Olympics." Instead of banning performance-enhancing drugs, it permits them, with organisers arguing that science and freedom of choice should determine human limits. Events are expected across athletics, swimming, gymnastics, combat sports, and strength competitions. Prize money in the millions is on offer for athletes who can push past official world records, effectively creating an alternative hall of fame for enhanced achievement.

The backlash has been fierce. World Aquatics, the international swimming federation, declared in June 2025 that any athlete who competes in the Enhanced Games will be banned from its competitions, including the Olympics and World Championships. Other federations are considering similar action, warning that participation could end careers. The World Anti-Doping Agency has condemned the concept outright, calling it "a glorification of cheating" that endangers athlete health and the credibility of sport. Despite the criticism, the Enhanced Games is attracting attention and reportedly, interest from athletes frustrated by anti-doping regulations.

Some see it as an opportunity for transparency: rather than hiding drug use in the shadows, the Games proposes to bring it into the open under medical supervision. Organisers argue that by embracing enhancements, they can make competition safer than the current "cat-and-mouse" system, where doping persists underground despite decades of testing.

This claim rests heavily on the Games' promised approach to pre-competition health checks. Athletes will reportedly undergo heart, brain, and body imaging; blood and urine biomarker testing; musculoskeletal and movement screening; mental health and cognitive evaluations; and even genomic sequencing to assess their readiness to compete. Those who fail to meet baseline safety standards for example, abnormal cardiac readings would not be allowed to take part. Proponents argue this is more thorough than the Olympics, where athletes undergo anti-doping tests but no routine pre-competition health screening to confirm they are physically fit. In that sense, supporters claim, the Enhanced Games could paradoxically be safer than the mainstream model.

However, experts remain sceptical. Sports scientists caution that performance-enhancing drugs often have effects that build up over time, far beyond the snapshot of a pre-race heart test. Many substances are experimental or poorly studied in healthy populations, with unpredictable consequences. Critics warn that without long-term oversight and robust ethical frameworks; these protocols may resemble an unregulated drug trial dressed up as sport.

's Dangerous Experiment

The financial incentives also raise concerns. For many athletes outside mainstream professional sports, Olympic success does not guarantee financial security. Enhanced Games organisers promise direct cash prizes, endorsement deals, and a slice of broadcast revenue. This contrasts sharply with the Olympic model, where athletes often see little direct reward despite the billions generated by the event. **For competitors who struggle to make a living, the lure of life-changing money may outweigh the risks.**

The risks cannot be dismissed. Medical experts warn that unrestricted use of anabolic steroids, human growth hormone, EPO, and experimental enhancers could have devastating health consequences: organ damage, heart problems, fertility issues, and long-term psychological effects. The pressure to not only enhance but to out-enhance rivals could create a dangerous arms race. In this model, the playing field may be level, but it is levelled by pushing everyone closer to the edge of physical collapse.

There are also legal and ethical dilemmas. Many of the substances involved remain illegal outside controlled research environments. Insurance companies may refuse to cover athletes who participate in the Games, fearing liability for injuries or deaths linked to enhancement. Sponsors face reputational risks if they associate with an event branded by some as a "science experiment on humans." For governing bodies like the IOC and FIFA, the Enhanced Games threatens to split the sporting landscape: do they attempt to isolate it, or risk athletes defecting to chase rewards?

This debate touches deeper cultural questions about sport itself. **Is sport meant to celebrate natural ability combined with training, or is it about pushing human limits by any means available?**

The line has always been blurred. Technology has long enhanced performance, from carbon-fibre prosthetics and aerodynamic suits to advanced nutrition and altitude training. The difference, critics argue, is that doping crosses into manipulation of the body's biology, with consequences we cannot fully predict. If all enhancement is allowed, what separates athletes from lab experiments?

Australian sport is watching closely. Officials from Swimming Australia and Athletics Australia have already echoed global warnings, insisting that any athlete tempted by the Enhanced Games will be banned from representing the nation. Some commentators note that a handful of Australian athletes in strength and fringe sports, where Olympic pathways are limited, may be tempted to compete for the money. For a country that prides itself on fair play, this could ignite heated public debate.

Beyond athlete welfare, the Enhanced Games also raises questions about the business of sport. With big investors reportedly circling the concept, including private equity firms, the project could succeed in generating huge pay-per-view interest. Controversy sells, and the chance to see "superhuman" performances: a 9-second 100m sprint, a 2-hour marathon obliterated by chemistry, may prove irresistible to some fans.

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Others will boycott, calling it a betrayal of sporting values. **The outcome may depend not on athletes or organisers, but on us, the fans, whose attention decides what thrives.**

History offers cautionary tales. East Germany's state-sponsored doping program in the 1970s and 80s produced gold medals but left many athletes with lifelong health problems. Lance Armstrong's career collapsed in disgrace despite years of dominance on the bike. Even today, doping scandals continue to erode trust in athletics, cycling, and weightlifting. Supporters of the Enhanced Games argue that by being honest about enhancement, they can avoid hypocrisy. Critics counter that normalising doping risks making sport a spectacle of survival, not skill.

The organisers remain defiant. They frame the Games as part of a broader cultural shift where technology and biology intersect, from gene editing to human augmentation.

They argue that resisting enhancements in sport is futile when society is embracing them elsewhere, from medical treatments to cosmetic procedures. "The Enhanced Games is the future," they declare. **The question remains: is it a future we want to see?**

As 2026 approaches, pressure will mount on athletes to declare allegiances. Governing bodies will tighten sanctions, sponsors will weigh reputational risks, and broadcasters will consider whether controversy equals ratings. Whether the Enhanced Games proves a flash-in-the-pan stunt or the beginning of a new sporting era, it has already forced the world to confront uncomfortable truths about competition, fairness, and human ambition.

Sport has always been about more than records. It is about meaning, belonging, and values. The Enhanced Games challenges us to ask: do we want faster times and higher jumps at any cost, or do we still believe that sport is about more than just results?



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The Future of Broadcasting:

For decades, the heartbeat of global sport was broadcast television. Leagues thrived on billion-dollar deals with networks, athletes became household names through free-to-air coverage, and fans gathered around televisions at set times to share the moment. That model is eroding fast.
Streaming platforms, social media, and even athletes themselves are competing with broadcasters for the one thing that really matters: the fans.

The shift is most visible in football. Amazon Prime and Apple TV are now bidding for top-flight rights once dominated by Sky or ESPN, while YouTube has become the go-to home for highlights and analysis. In the United States, the NFL's Sunday Ticket package moved exclusively to YouTube TV in 2023, reshaping how millions of fans consume America's most valuable league. In Australia, Nine's Stan Sport is battling Foxtel's Kayo and global giants for rugby and football rights, a battle that increasingly decides not just where fans watch, but whether they watch at all.

At the same time, younger fans are turning away from full-length matches in droves. A 2023 Nielsen survey found that **over 40% of Gen Z sports fans prefer to watch highlights rather than live games,** while TikTok reported billions of views on sport-related clips during the FIFA Women's World Cup alone. This presents an existential problem: if the next generation doesn't sit through full broadcasts, the value of broadcast rights, the lifeblood of many leagues, may be in permanent decline.

The audience hasn't disappeared, but their attention span has. Broadcasters are responding by slicing content into ever more consumable chunks. ESPN now produces vertical, TikTok-style edits for social media; DAZN has leaned heavily into short highlight reels; even the IOC has partnered with TikTok to reach younger audiences ahead of Paris and LA. Every minute spent on social platforms is a minute not controlled by the networks that pay billions for rights. The irony is sharp: broadcasters are funding the leagues, but platforms are reaping the attention.



Who Really Owns the Fans?

Adding to the disruption is the rise of athlete-driven media. LeBron James' Uninterrupted platform, Tom Brady's Religion of Sports, and Naomi Osaka's production ventures are part of a broader trend where athletes no longer rely on broadcasters to tell their stories. Formula One drivers run YouTube channels with millions of subscribers, often producing more intimate and authentic content than official broadcasters. When athletes own their highlights, behind-the-scenes access, and personal narratives, fans may form stronger bonds with the individual than with the league. The question for broadcasters is stark: how do you compete with the star of the show?

None of this means broadcast is dead. Live sport remains one of the last reliable drivers of mass audiences. The 2024 Super Bowl attracted 123 million viewers in the US, the most-watched broadcast in American history. Major events like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup still command huge appointment audiences, generating billions in rights revenue. Beneath the mega-events lies a fracture. For mid-tier sports and leagues, the promise of a billion-dollar TV deal is less certain than ever.

If audiences won't watch long-form broadcasts, rights values could shrink, forcing leagues to rethink their entire financial model.

The impact extends to sponsorship too. Brands once paid premium rates for television exposure, confident that fans would see their logos for hours. Now, sponsors must think about seconds, not hours, how their message fits into a 15-second TikTok highlight or an Instagram reel. That shift demands a whole new strategy, one that merges broadcast, digital, and social in ways that blur traditional categories.

For fans, the future is both liberating and fragmented. Watching sport no longer means being tethered to a television schedule. You can catch the live match on Amazon, the highlights on YouTube, the behind-the-scenes on Instagram, and the athlete's own reflections on their podcast.

The fan experience has never been richer, but it has never been more scattered.

The open question is where loyalty will flow. Will fans remain primarily loyal to leagues and broadcasters, or will the gravitational pull shift toward athletes themselves? Sports executives increasingly fear a future where fans follow LeBron, Serena, or Messi wherever they go, rather than sticking with the NBA, WTA, or FIFA. That dynamic could invert the traditional power structure of sport, placing athletes, not leagues, at the centre of media value.

There are no easy answers, but the contours of the future are clear. Broadcasting is no longer a monopoly; it is a competition across formats, platforms, and personalities. Rights deals will still shape leagues, but they will be only one piece of a much more complex puzzle. For broadcasters, the challenge is not just to deliver games, but to own the conversation around them. For leagues, the task is to keep control of their product when fans increasingly consume it elsewhere. For athletes, the opportunity is unprecedented: to become their own broadcasters, their own brands, and, in many ways, their own leagues.

Sport has always been about who owns the moment. In the past, that was the broadcaster. Today, it might be the athlete, the platform, or the fan themselves with a phone in hand. **The question isn't whether broadcasting will survive; it's who, in the fractured attention economy of the 2020s, will truly own the fans.**

Running Wild: Why Australians Are Lacing Up More Than Ever

There's a quiet revolution happening on Australia's streets, trails, and waterfronts and it's anything but subtle. **Running is booming.** What was once a solitary pursuit has become a social movement, a community ritual, and a badge of identity. From the explosion of run clubs to record-breaking participation at the 2025 Nike Melbourne Marathon, Australians are lacing up in numbers never seen before.

In October 2025, Melbourne cemented its place as the nation's running capital. The city's marathon festival attracted more than 50,000 participants, the largest in its history, filling the streets from St Kilda to the MCG with a sea of sneakers and energy. Organisers credited the surge to expanded capacity, improved logistics, and what they called "a shared hunger for movement after years of disruption." It wasn't just a race it was a festival of endurance, community, and joy.

And yet, this isn't just about Melbourne. It's a snapshot of something bigger, a cultural shift that's reshaping how Australians move, connect, and even define wellness. **Run clubs are now the new social hubs.**

From Sydney to Perth, Brisbane to Hobart, groups of all sizes are meeting at dawn, chasing pace times and purpose in equal measure. Some are ultra-focused, others are social and coffee-driven, but all share the same heartbeat: belonging. Scroll through social media and you can't miss it. Running has become the new lifestyle language.

Once dominated by gym selfies and spin classes, feeds are now filled with Strava screenshots, medal photos, and sunrise sprints. Influencers who used to post Pilates routines are now logging kilometres. As one runner joked, "Every second person I follow seems to have become a marathoner." What began as a pandemic habit for health and headspace has evolved into a nationwide movement of momentum. The social media effect has been profound.

Strava's 2024 global report found a 59% increase in run club participation, describing running as "the new way to go out." Its fitness turned community, competition turned connection. In Australia, clubs like Bondi Run Club and Midday Milers have exploded in membership, their posts doubling as motivation and meet-up invites. As Man of Many put it, "Run clubs have become the new nightclubs — they're where people go to belong."

While Melbourne broke records, Sydney made history. **In 2025, the Sydney Marathon officially joined the ranks of the World Marathon Majors,** placing it alongside New York, London, Berlin, Tokyo, Chicago, and Boston. For the first time ever, an Australian city stands shoulder to shoulder with the world's running giants. It's more than prestige it's proof that running has captured the national imagination. Event organisers expect the move to attract tens of thousands of international entrants and tourists, solidifying Sydney's place on the global running map.

Behind the medals and milestones, though, lies something simpler. **Running has become the antidote to a fast, anxious world.** You don't need a membership, a team, or equipment. Just shoes, space, and time. It's accessible, grounding, and deeply human. For many, the act of running especially with others is as much about mental clarity as physical fitness. In an era where connection often happens through screens, running clubs offer something refreshingly real.

According to Athletics Australia, of the 4.1 million Australians who take part in athletics, **nearly 3.7 million identify as runners**. That's nearly one in seven Australians and growing. The running boom is no longer about elite performance; it's about participation.

People aren't chasing podiums; they're chasing progress, belonging, and balance. The shift feels cultural. Running isn't framed as a grind anymore, it's an identity. It's the early morning ritual before work, the weekend social event, the community heartbeat that gets stronger with every step. Whether it's the roar of the Melbourne Marathon crowd or the quiet camaraderie of a Thursday night run club, Australians are running for something far greater than fitness.

This isn't just a trend, it's a movement. A celebration of endurance, community, and momentum. With Sydney joining the global stage and local run clubs multiplying by the week, one thing's certain: Australia isn't just running faster, it's running together.



Monitoring the Invisible: Solve Sport's Con

For all sport's spectacle, some of its most dangerous moments unfold unseen. A mistimed tackle, a subtle fall with no visible injury, no stoppage, no replay. Yet inside the athlete's skull, damage can begin. **The concussion crisis has become one of sport's defining health challenges, and until recently, it was largely invisible.**

Australian technology company HITIQ believes it can make it visible. Its new system, PROTEQT, combines smart mouthguard sensors with a digital app to monitor head impacts in real time. Each hit or jolt is measured, logged, and transmitted to coaches, trainers, and parents. HITIQ calls it **"a proactive approach to head health,"** and it could redefine how collisions are managed across every level of sport.

The company argues that most concussions, especially in community sport, go undetected. Players downplay symptoms, coaches miss signs, parents notice too late. PROTEQT's idea is simple: **if the invisible can be measured, it can be managed.** The mouthguard records force, direction, and frequency, automatically flagging concerning events. What was once guesswork can now be evidence.



In a field long reliant on self-reporting and visual checks, a data-driven safety net offers rare objectivity. When a sensor records repeated high-force impacts, coaches and medics can make informed calls based on data, not instinct. For grassroots clubs without medical teams, PROTEQT's dashboard provides an accessible, portable monitoring tool. Parents receive alerts; trainers can track exposure across a season.

It could democratise concussion awareness, shifting protection from a professional privilege to a community norm.

Yet technology can only assist, not solve. Accuracy remains a hurdle, sensor readings can vary by fit or movement, and data without clinical context can be misread. A hard tackle might register low, a soft collision high. And as with all health tech, liability and privacy questions follow. If an alert is ignored, who's responsible? If data is mishandled, who owns it?

Despite those challenges, the direction feels inevitable. Impact sensors are appearing in helmets, headbands, and gumshields across major sports. Rugby Australia, Cricket Australia, and several AFL clubs are trialling them, while insurance providers see potential for risk-based policies. For administrators, the ability to prove diligence, that head impacts are tracked and managed, may soon define a new duty of care.

Can HITIQ's PROTEQT cussion Crisis?

HITIQ's early trials show promise. Junior rugby league sides like the Tweed Heads Seagulls already use PROTEQT to log collisions throughout a season. Coaches report improved awareness; parents say the data brings reassurance. Whether this translates into fewer concussions will take time, but one thing is already clear: **concussion is no longer invisible.**

The bigger question is how this changes sport's psychology. When every hit is quantified, will the courage that defines contact sport give way to caution? Or will data simply make bravery safer?

Technology designed to protect can also expose athletes might feel defined by their numbers, coaches scrutinised for ignoring them. Yet few doubt that sport owes its players better protection than tradition alone can offer.

Ultimately, systems like PROTEQT will be judged not by algorithms but by trust — between athletes, medics, and the institutions that govern them. The greatest outcome may not be preventing every concussion, but creating a culture where no impact, however small, is ignored.

If that happens, technology will have done what sport always promises: **see what others miss, act before it's too late, and leave the game safer for those who follow.**



At Risk...

Court upholds liability in UK rugby injury case

A British amateur rugby player who suffered catastrophic spinal injuries has won his negligence claim after a seven-year legal battle. In Clark v Elbanna [2025] EWCA Civ 776, the Court of Appeal upheld a lower-court decision that fellow player Tom Clark's reckless tackle fell outside normal play. Judges reaffirmed that, even in contact sports, participants owe a duty of care not to act with disregard for opponents' safety.

The ruling is already being cited in grassroots-sport guidance on tackling technique and referee education. Legal analysts note it's one of the first appellate-level clarifications of the negligence threshold in English sport since Caldwell v Maggs (2021). The decision is expected to influence risk management across community rugby and beyond.

Ty Zantuck case settled over alleged medical negligence

Former AFL defender Ty Zantuck reached a confidential out-of-court settlement in early 2025 with Richmond FC and two former club doctors.

He had alleged long-term back and neurological damage from epidural treatments administered during his playing career. The Victorian Supreme Court had earlier allowed his action to proceed despite time limits, calling the circumstances "extraordinary." While terms remain sealed, the case ends one of Australia's longest-running football medical disputes and is likely to prompt stronger documentation and informed-consent protocols across elite teams.

Liverpool parade crash driver convicted of dangerous driving

British courts have concluded proceedings over the May 2025 Liverpool victory-parade incident, when a car ploughed into celebrating fans near the city centre, injuring more than 70. The driver, 56-year-old Paul Diggs, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving and was sentenced to four years in prison.

Investigators found he had attempted to overtake the open-top bus convoy at speed. The judge called it "a catastrophic lapse of judgment," noting that only crowd barriers prevented mass fatalities. The case has reignited debate about public-event perimeter control and vehicle-access bans during sporting celebrations.

When an Email Becomes a Contract

In April 2025, the Court of Appeal of England and Wales handed down a decision that quietly rattled the billion-dollar world of sports broadcasting. The case — FIFA v. New World Media — didn't hinge on contract clauses or corporate handshakes, but on something far simpler: a string of emails.

Negotiations for the FIFA Club World Cup's television rights had unfolded at high speed. Representatives traded messages over email and WhatsApp, agreeing on pricing, territories, and exclusivity. Then FIFA awarded the rights to another network. The first bidder sued, arguing that those digital exchanges already formed a binding deal — and the court agreed.

The judges ruled that the objective conduct and wording of both parties showed clear intent to contract, even without a formal signature. In their words, "the medium of communication is immaterial where mutual assent and complete terms exist." The decision sent a chill through rights departments worldwide. In effect, it means a casual "we're good to go" can now lock an organisation into a multi-million-dollar agreement.

For lawyers, the case marks a decisive evolution in contract law: the inbox is now the boardroom. Gone are the days when unsigned drafts or late-night chats were considered "non-binding." The Court of Appeal made clear that intent, not formality, determines enforceability.

The implications are vast. Broadcast and sponsorship deals are routinely struck across continents, often under deadline pressure before tournaments. A misplaced word in a message thread can now spark litigation. Federations and agencies are being urged to label all preliminary correspondence "subject to contract," limit who can send approvals, and keep sensitive negotiations within authorised platforms.

For the sports world, it's a sobering reminder that technology has collapsed the gap between conversation and commitment. Deals that once required days of drafting and signatures can now be born — and disputed — in seconds.
In the high-speed economy of global sport, the modern signature is a send button.



Whistle Blown: The Legal Fight to Protect Athletes Who Speak Out



When American swimmer Madisyn Cox filed a whistleblower complaint against her national federation in early 2025, few expected it would ignite a global conversation about how sport treats its truth-tellers. Her case, alleging that testing irregularities were ignored within USA Swimming, has become a test of where athlete protection ends and institutional loyalty begins. Cox, a world-championship medallist, claimed she faced professional retaliation after questioning doping protocols. The complaint prompted a Senate inquiry and new federal guidance extending whistleblower protections to athletes under the U.S. SafeSport Act. “If athletes can’t speak up, clean sport can’t survive,” she said.

Across the world, similar stories have unfolded. In Britain, a cycling staffer alleged she was blacklisted after flagging welfare issues; in Germany, football referees accused their association of burying harassment reports; in South Korea, an Olympic speed skater who exposed abuse within her team won a precedent-setting defamation reversal. Each story points to the same paradox: governing bodies encourage integrity campaigns yet often punish those who use them.

Many whistleblowers lose selection, sponsorship, or funding long before any ruling is made. Legal reform has begun to catch up. The World Anti-Doping Code 2025 now safeguards confidential informants, the EU Whistleblower Directive protects disclosures about misconduct or corruption, and Australia’s National Integrity Framework promises anonymity for tip-offs. Yet enforcement remains uneven. Few sports provide truly independent reporting channels; most rely on internal committees investigating themselves. British sports lawyer Olivia Hames says that without independent oversight, “the fox is still guarding the henhouse.”

The problem is not only legal but cultural. In high-performance environments, silence is often equated with loyalty. Athletes rely on federations for funding and visas—speaking out can end a career. Some national unions now offer confidential legal cover so athletes can seek advice before making complaints. Sponsors, wary of reputational fallout, are also pushing change by requiring partners to maintain credible whistleblower policies.

Precedents are emerging that could redefine protection. In Canada, an arbitration panel ordered Gymnastics Canada to reinstate two coaches suspended after cooperating with investigators, ruling that retaliation itself was misconduct. In Switzerland, the Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld a footballer's right to reveal mental-health struggles without breaching confidentiality. France has gone further, adding whistleblowing in sport to its labour-law protections, giving claimants the right to compensation if punished for speaking out. These rulings show that legal accountability is beginning to replace quiet compliance.

Still, reform on paper rarely guarantees safety in practice. "Protection clauses don't pay your rent when you're dropped from the squad," says former gymnast and campaigner Anna Miller. True security, she argues, means ensuring athletes' livelihoods and reputations survive the fallout.

The next evolution may be collective whistleblowing, teams or unions acting together to expose systemic failings, spreading the risk that individuals once carried alone. International bodies are responding. The IOC's new "Speak Up for Sport" portal, launched in late 2025, routes complaints directly to external counsel instead of through federations. Early data suggest athletes trust the process more when independence is guaranteed. But the real shift will come when speaking up is seen not as rebellion, but as part of professional duty.

For now, the price of honesty remains high. Yet each successful case edges sport closer to a culture where silence is no longer the safest option. As one Australian Olympic official recently admitted, "We spend millions telling athletes to be resilient. Perhaps it's time we invest just as much in protecting them when they are brave."



Sport Shorts

World Rugby confirms global Nations Cup and unified calendar

World Rugby has approved a sweeping reform of the international calendar, introducing a biennial Nations Cup beginning in 2026 and aligning fixtures between hemispheres for the first time. The 12-team top division will include the Six Nations sides, the Rugby Championship quartet, plus Japan and Fiji, with a Challenger Cup offering promotion for emerging nations.

The changes follow years of negotiation between unions over scheduling conflicts and player-welfare concerns. World Rugby chair Bill Beaumont said the deal “creates certainty, commercial balance and a fair pathway for all.” Pacific Island federations welcomed the reform as a long-overdue recognition of their competitiveness and market potential. Critics, however, fear the packed schedule could further strain domestic leagues already stretched by overlapping competitions.

World Athletics protects rankings during maternity leave

Athletes who take maternity leave will now retain their world ranking for up to 18 months under new World Athletics regulations effective January 2026.

President Seb Coe said the rule ensures women “can step away to start families without forfeiting years of professional progress.”
The reform follows campaigns from Olympic medallist Allyson Felix and advocacy groups pushing for stronger female-athlete protections. Rankings will freeze from the athlete’s final competition date, resuming when they return to competition within the allowed window.

India 2036 Olympics bid backed by government

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has received full cabinet approval to proceed with its formal bid to host the 2036 Summer Olympics, with Ahmedabad named as the proposed host city. The announcement followed months of feasibility studies and IOC discussions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the bid “represents the aspirations of a young, confident nation.”

The IOC has yet to confirm the shortlist, but India’s case is strengthened by new infrastructure from the 2023 Cricket World Cup and the ongoing Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Complex expansion. Critics, however, have raised concerns about cost and environmental sustainability, citing lessons from Tokyo and Rio.



Women's sport eyes record broadcast year in 2026

The global boom in women's sport shows no sign of slowing, with analysts forecasting that broadcast revenues will surpass US$2 billion for the first time in 2026. Growth is being driven by football, cricket, and basketball, where expanded leagues and improved time slots are drawing record audiences across Europe, Australia, and North America. According to a Deloitte report released in October, women's competitions now account for almost 15 per cent of total sports viewership, up from just 4 per cent five years ago.

Industry insiders cite better scheduling parity and high-profile stars such as Mary Fowler, Coco Gauff, and Alyssa Healy as catalysts for a generational shift in sponsorship and engagement. Broadcasters including Sky, ESPN, and Amazon are expanding dedicated coverage windows through 2027. "The momentum has become structural, not seasonal," says analyst Tim Bridge. "Women's sport isn't just a movement anymore, it's a market."

IOC introduces stricter climate standards for host bids

The International Olympic Committee has unveiled new environmental criteria requiring all future Olympic bids to demonstrate carbon neutrality and water-use sustainability from construction through competition. The rule change, effective 2026, was prompted by environmental criticism of previous Games in Beijing, Sochi, and Rio.

Bidding cities must now submit verified carbon-impact models and guarantee that 90 per cent of venues will use renewable power. IOC President Thomas Bach said the move "aligns Olympic hosting with Paris Agreement goals." Early observers believe the regulation could reshape the host map, favouring nations with established green infrastructure — such as the Nordic countries and parts of Western Europe — while increasing the cost and complexity for developing-nation bids.

Djokovic to retire after 2026 season

Twenty-four-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic has confirmed he plans to end his career after the 2026 tennis season. Speaking during a charity event in Belgrade, the 38-year-old said he still aims to compete at the 2026 Australian Open and the 2026 Olympics before "closing this chapter."

Djokovic holds records for most weeks as world No 1 and most major finals reached. His announcement marks the beginning of tennis's long-expected transition era, with Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner now seen as the sport's new standard-bearers.

Titmus calls time on glittering career



Australian swimming star Ariarne “Arnie” Titmus has announced her retirement from competitive swimming, closing one of the most brilliant chapters in the nation’s sporting history. The 25-year-old confirmed she will step away from elite racing after the 2025 World Championships in Singapore, saying she wants “to live a life beyond the pool” and focus on study, travel, and creative pursuits.

Titmus’ rise defined a decade of Australian dominance in the water. A two-time Olympic champion, four-time world champion, and multiple world-record holder, she became the face of the Tokyo 2020 Games, where her duels with American legend Katie Ledecky captivated global audiences.

Coaches and commentators credit Titmus with elevating standards in women’s middle-distance swimming, combining fierce competitiveness with remarkable composure under pressure. Her decision has sparked an outpouring of tributes from teammates and rivals alike. Ledecky called her “a competitor who brought out the best in me,” while Swimming Australia hailed her as “a generational athlete who inspired a new wave of girls to dream bigger.” Plans are under way for a farewell exhibition event in Brisbane early next year — a final lap for a swimmer whose name will remain etched in Australian sport’s modern mythology.

From runway to locker room: athletes steal Paris Fashion Week

Sport and style have never been closer — and this year’s Paris Fashion Week proved it. A host of international athletes traded competition gear for couture, turning the runway into an extension of their brand power. Among the most talked-about appearances was Australian footballer Mary Fowler, who walked for Louis Vuitton in a minimalist monochrome ensemble that drew applause from fashion insiders and fans alike. Fowler’s appearance capped an extraordinary 18 months in which the Matildas forward evolved from national football prodigy to global style ambassador.

Fresh from Australia’s home World Cup boom, she has fronted campaigns for Nike and Cartier, and her confident presence in Paris underscored how female athletes are redefining fashion’s relationship with sport. “There’s strength in showing both sides of who you are,” Fowler told reporters after the show.

She wasn’t alone. U.S. sprinter Sha’Carri Richardson, tennis player Emma Raducanu, and NBA star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander also graced catwalks for major labels, reflecting a new era where athletic excellence and cultural influence intertwine. Vogue Paris called it “the golden age of athlete elegance.” For these athletes, the spotlight no longer ends at the finish line — it continues under the flashbulbs, where performance meets personality, and sport becomes the new face of style.



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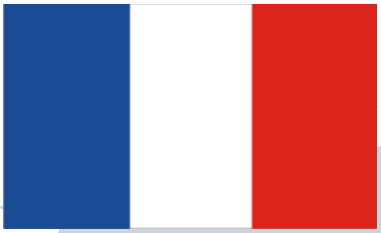
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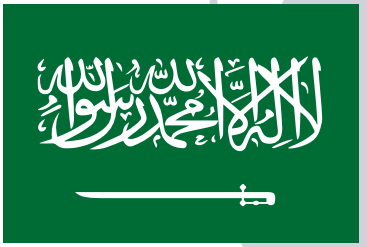
Paris 2024 Legacy Projects Hit Financial Turbulence



A year after the Paris Olympics, cost overruns and disputed redevelopment plans have sparked public concern. France's Court of Audit reported that legacy site budgets exceeded forecasts by €450 million, primarily due to security and transport upgrades.

While the Games themselves were widely praised for their environmental innovation, critics say the long-term legacy is faltering. The Olympic Village in Saint-Denis remains only 60 per cent occupied, and several temporary venues have yet to be repurposed. Organisers insist the programme "will deliver full economic benefit by 2030."

Saudi Arabia confirmed as host of 2034 FIFA World Cup



FIFA has officially awarded the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia, completing the nation's rapid ascent in global sport. The announcement followed a single-bid process after Australia withdrew at the deadline, leaving the Saudi proposal unopposed.

The tournament will be the first held entirely in the Gulf region since Qatar 2022 and is set to feature 48 teams across 12 cities. Human-rights groups renewed criticism over labour and equality standards, but FIFA President Gianni Infantino said the decision "reflects football's truly global reach." Organisers have pledged carbon-neutral venues and gender-inclusive volunteer programmes.

South Africa to re-join Super Rugby under new global format



After a five-year absence, South African franchises are set to re-enter Super Rugby from 2026 under the new global calendar approved by World Rugby. The Bulls, Lions, Sharks, and Stormers will play in a trans-hemispheric format involving clubs from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the Pacific.

The realignment aims to simplify the fractured club landscape while restoring traditional rivalries that had shifted to Europe's URC competition. SANZAAR confirmed that matches will rotate between time zones with new broadcast-sharing deals in place. Coaches and players have welcomed the move, citing reduced travel and clearer pathways to Test selection.

US Congress passes college athlete revenue law



The U.S. Senate has approved the College Athletics Reform Act, formalising revenue-sharing models between universities and student-athletes in NCAA Division I programmes. The legislation follows the House v NCAA settlement earlier this year, which ended the amateurism model in American collegiate sport.

The new law ensures athletes receive at least 22 per cent of media and sponsorship revenues and mandates independent financial audits for all athletics departments. Supporters hailed it as “the most significant labour reform in U.S. sport since free agency,” while smaller colleges warned the costs could force programme cuts.

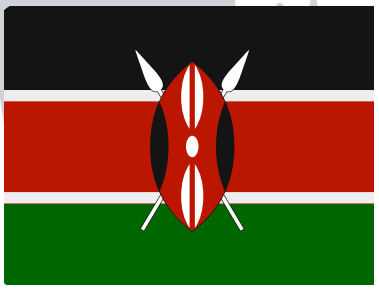
China sentences ex-football chief to life for corruption



Former Chinese Football Association president Chen Xuyuan has been sentenced to life imprisonment for bribery in one of the country’s largest-ever sporting corruption trials. State media reported that Chen accepted more than 80 million yuan (US$11 million) in bribes during his tenure.

The verdict caps a sweeping anti-graft campaign that also targeted top referees, national team staff, and regional administrators. Several former officials received sentences ranging from eight to fourteen years. The government said the crackdown “marks the beginning of a clean era” for Chinese football, though analysts warn the sport’s credibility may take years to rebuild.

Kenya’s marathon dominance continues



Kenya’s Brigid Kosgei and Benson Kipruto claimed victories at the 2025 New York City Marathon, reaffirming the nation’s distance-running supremacy. Kosgei clocked 2:22:11 to win her third title, while Kipruto’s 2:08:30 finish gave him his first.

The double triumph extends Kenya’s remarkable streak — its athletes have now won 13 of the last 15 NYC Marathons. Athletics Kenya said the results highlight the continued depth of domestic training programs despite global competition and tighter anti-doping scrutiny.

Global anti-doping body targets supplement industry loopholes

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has announced plans for a worldwide certification programme for nutritional supplements after a spike in accidental contamination cases among professional athletes. The initiative will require manufacturers seeking endorsement to submit products for independent lab testing and ingredient disclosure.

WADA President Witold Bańka said the programme "bridges the gap between athlete responsibility and industry accountability," addressing what he called "a growing grey zone of risk." The scheme follows a series of doping disputes where trace contaminants in legal supplements caused suspensions later overturned. Once introduced in 2026, approved products will carry a "WADA Trusted" mark designed to standardise safety across global sport.

Streaming platforms drive record global sports-rights boom

A new report from PwC's Global Sports Outlook 2025 shows that digital streaming services now account for more than 45 per cent of worldwide sports broadcast revenue, surpassing traditional television for the first time. The shift has triggered record competition for rights among tech giants, with Amazon, Apple, and Netflix collectively investing more than US$20 billion this year alone.

Analysts say the trend is reshaping fan access, sponsorship models, and scheduling, as younger audiences favour mobile-first viewing and subscription flexibility. Industry experts warn that fragmentation could price out casual fans and erode free-to-air visibility for grassroots sport. However, federations see opportunity: "Streaming has democratised exposure for smaller sports," said a spokesperson for World Athletics, "but it's also created a new frontier of risk, where every click has commercial consequence."

Athlete unions unite on AI and data rights

Major player associations from football, tennis, athletics, and esports have formed the Global Athletes' Data Rights Council, aiming to regulate how performance and biometric data are used in sport. The group will create international standards on consent, data ownership, and AI-driven analysis.

The move follows rising concern over unregulated tech like GPS trackers and predictive injury software that can influence selection and contracts. Backed by FIFPRO and the World Players Association, the council says its goal is to ensure innovation "never comes at the expense of privacy or fairness."

40

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