

THE DAILY



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YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY AT SPORTACCORD IN BIRMINGHAM

SportAccord President Uğur Erdener is pictured at Birmingham's International Convention Centre



SPORT'S LAST STOP BEFORE PARIS 2024

SportAccord President Uğur Erdener praised Birmingham as a “top-class and extremely vibrant” destination for the returning World Sport & Business Summit as hundreds of the sports movement’s most influential decision-makers arrived in the West Midlands from across the globe over the weekend.

The highly anticipated return of the global sports and business gathering will bring

together more than 1,500 delegates from more than 100 countries for a week of networking, high-level meetings, and a busy exhibition and conference programme at the International Convention Centre.

With the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the horizon, Erdener noted that this week’s gathering offers an ideal signpost ahead of sport’s biggest event in less than four months’ time.

“This is a unique gathering of our family and the only place where all the International Federations (IFs) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) meet,” Erdener told **The Daily**.

“It is a pleasure to have Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet and Chief Executive Officer Etienne Thobois here as we look forward to this summer. This will be the last time all the

CONTINUED ON P2

SUMMIT UNDER WAY

The SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit’s conference programme and exhibition open today, with a series of high-level meetings also taking place at the International Convention Centre.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) will hold a series of joint meetings today with the Winter Olympic Federations (WOF), the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) and the Association of IOC Recognised International Sport Federations (ARISF) Council. WOF will also host its General Assembly, where an update to the organisation’s statutes and preparations for the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be on the agenda.

After the SportAccord conference programme opens at 11:00, HealthAccord will begin at 14:00 – and today’s edition of **The Daily** features interviews with several speakers. We also preview what promises to be a spectacular SportAccord Opening Ceremony, which starts at 17:00.

INSIDE ROUND-UP
Get ready for a mesmerising Opening Ceremony!
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World Sailing's Gillian Sanders on female body image pressures
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HEALTHACCORD'S DUAL THEMES

CONFERENCE PREVIEW

This afternoon's HealthAccord conference is set to provide essential perspectives on the dual themes of athlete mental health and accelerating the growth of women's sports.

Conference Chair Professor Margo Mountjoy, IOC Medical Commission Games Group and WADA Deputy Foundation Board Member, told The Daily that today's sessions will provide attendees with "the latest knowledge on keeping athletes healthy so they can realise their sporting potential".

HealthAccord will feature experts such as Dr Stuart Miller, Senior Executive Director, Integrity & Legal, International Tennis Federation; Evert Verhagen, Medical Research Adviser at UEFA and a Professor at UMC University; and Annamarie Phelps of the British Olympic Association, European Rowing and European Olympic Committees.

Professor Kirsty Elliott-Sale, Professor of Female Endocrinology and Exercise at Manchester Metropolitan University, and British Olympic Association Chief Medical Officer Dr

Niall Elliott will also be among the speakers. "HealthAccord will be a key conference to attend, giving delegates the opportunity to learn about key and trending aspects in athlete health which are important to the success of their sport," Mountjoy said.

"Delegates can expect to hear from athletes and medical experts and will learn about state-of-the-art discoveries on athlete health and performance from scientific literature.

"There will be two themes. The first, on mental health, will focus on strategies so that athletes can thrive in sport. There is so much attention in the media on athletes who have struggled with their mental health, and we will discuss methods to improve mental health literacy and resilience.

"The second theme will look at enhancing the sporting performance of female athletes. As the participation of women at the Olympic Games reaches parity with men at Paris 2024, there is much to be learned about improving the sporting performance of female athletes through enhancing their health."

• HealthAccord: Today, 14:00-17:00



Margo Mountjoy

'FANTASTIC PROGRAMME'

CONTINUED FROM P1

Summer Olympic IFs will be together before the start of the Games, and the IOC has a big delegation here to meet them and the wider Olympic Movement."

Erdener hailed SportAccord 2024's "wonderful hosts and incredible facilities" and cited the success of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the forthcoming 2026 European Athletics Championships, as well as the International Working Group (IWG) World Conference on Women & Sport 2026, as clear evidence of the region's event-hosting capabilities and



enthusiasm for major events and sports and business conferences.

"SportAccord 2024 will offer a powerful mix of rights holders, host cities and regions, service providers, media, organising committees

and key players from the sports industry," Erdener said. "They are all coming together face-to-face to make decisions that will shape the future of sport.

"I am also particularly excited about the theme of this year's conference programme, 'The Power of Sport', which underscores the transformative potential that sport has everywhere – on individuals, communities and societies at large. As we explore this theme together, let us be inspired especially by the potential of sport to break down barriers, foster inclusivity, and drive positive change around the world."

CELEBRATING CULTURAL ASSETS

Birmingham’s Symphony Hall will today host a mesmerising SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 Opening Ceremony that will showcase two of the West Midlands’ most celebrated cultural assets.

Motionhouse, a world-class dance-circus company, will perform an adaptation of NOBODY, which follows seven characters on a journey of discovery.

There will also be a five-minute medley of songs from the Black Voices Choir, one of Europe’s finest female a cappella quintets. Based at Grosvenor Road Studios, Birmingham’s oldest recording studio, the group has toured the world, performing for royalty and presidents.

The Opening Ceremony will be compered by Katharine Merry, one of the region’s most successful athletes and the former fastest woman in the world at 400 metres.

Neil Rami, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Growth Company, which has organised the show, told **The Daily**: “The Opening Ceremony will give delegates an

OPENING CEREMONY



opportunity to learn about Birmingham and the West Midlands’ cultural and sporting offer and its event-hosting expertise.”

“The Opening Ceremony will include speeches, performances and an opportunity to network in one of Europe’s finest concert venues, Birmingham’s Symphony Hall. We hope it provides a great showcase for the West Midlands, and an impressive start to a valuable week of sharing best practice and exchanging ideas. We want to make this week

a memorable and meaningful experience for all of our delegates, and for them to enjoy being a visitor in our great region.”

The region’s cultural attributes have been highlighted to an ever-increasing audience in recent times.

The six-month Birmingham 2022 Festival that accompanied the Commonwealth Games attracted over 2.4 million people to more than 200 events. The following year, Birmingham Festival 23 – marking the one-year anniversary of the Games – saw 800 artists, creatives and performers from 185 organisations participate over 10 days of live music and creative performance.

“Culture in the West Midlands has been, and continues to be, one of the region’s great success stories,” Rami added. “It contributes not only to the quality of life for residents, but the region’s reputation as a great place to live, invest in and study.”

Symphony Hall is accessible from the International Convention Centre and the Opening Ceremony takes place today from 17:00-19:00.

SPORT EVENT DENMARK

Uniting People

Uniting People



BIRMINGHAM MAKING ITS MARK IN SPORT

HOST REGION

This year's SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit will deliver a significant boost to the reputation of the host region in the highly competitive sports landscape, according to Matthew Hammond, Chair of the West Midlands Growth Company.

Hammond explained that welcoming sport's No.1 global gathering will build on the legacy of staging the Commonwealth Games less than two years ago.

It is estimated that approximately 38% of Games-related visitors – including ticket-holders and attendees to other Games-related events – came from outside the West Midlands.

An estimated £96.2m was spent in the West Midlands by Games-related visitors.

"For the whole of the city and the region, I think SportAccord is another step on our journey of enhancing our reputation across the global sports industry," Hammond told **The Daily**.

"We are delighted to welcome the whole of SportAccord and all of those different organisations throughout the event. It will be absolutely critical in terms of forging



Matthew Hammond

ongoing relationships with international sporting bodies.

"Ultimately, what are we trying to do? We want to continue the work that we have started of proving our delivery capacity for staging high-impact sport events."

SportAccord 2024 and the most recent edition of the Commonwealth Games share more than just the same host city though.

Between 160 and 200 volunteers from the Commonwealth Collective, which also provided volunteers to Birmingham 2022, are set to support SportAccord 2024 by offering a warm welcome to delegates this week.

A total of 41,380 individuals applied to be volunteers at the Birmingham 2022 Games. Following the selection process, a total of 14,075 volunteers received training and

11,751 volunteers were ultimately recruited.

"To have some of the volunteers from Birmingham 2022 is absolutely fantastic," Hammond said.

"The unsung heroes were the volunteers. One of the great features of the Games was that United by 2022, which was the official charity of the Games, has continued its work since.

"One of the key features that they have really worked hard at is keeping that army of volunteers together.

"The mindset of those individuals is to continue to assist and, actually, they are a key pillar of Birmingham, the region and its other cities being able to host major sporting events. Without the volunteers you simply cannot do it."

This week's SportAccord 2024 programme is packed with conference sessions covering various aspects of sport.

For Hammond, there are particular sessions that stand out, including one during the Plenary Conference on 'International Diplomacy in Action – Harnessing The Soft Power of Sport' (Thursday, 11:25-12:10).

"I think it will prove to be really quite an inspiring session among the many taking place," he said.

EXPLORE LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit attendees have the opportunity to enjoy numerous cultural events and activities this week, giving them the chance to meet other delegates in a relaxed setting and explore the sights and sounds of the region.

An F1 Arcade social gaming experience at 2 Chamberlain Square – a two-minute walk from the International Convention Centre – will take place from 12:00-14:00 today, offering the excitement and glamour of the motorsport series. Tomorrow, a guided tour of Villa Park, the historic home stadium of English Premier League football club



Aston Villa, will be held at 14:00-16:30.

Then on Wednesday, there are two cultural activities on offer. A free Jewellery Quarter Sports Heritage Walking Tour will take place from 10:00-12:00. Attendees will be able to hear about the Jewellery Quarter firms that are building on 250 years of trophy and

medal-making experience, whilst also learning about local sporting legends of yesteryear. The Jewellery Quarter is where the original FA Cup – the oldest football competition in the world – was manufactured in 1871.

From 13:00-22:00, golf at The Belfry (pictured) will give delegates the opportunity to experience nine holes on the Brabazon Championship course. The Ryder Cup has been hosted at The Belfry more than anywhere else in the world.

On Friday, a walking tour of Birmingham will take place from 08:00-09:00, taking participants along the city's

numerous canals, as well as to the historic Town Hall, Centenary Square, the Hall of Memory and Birmingham Library.

SportAccord attendees will also be able to discover Coventry from 10:00-16:00 on Friday, including the city's stunning St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry Cathedral and Coventry Transport Museum, which houses the largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles.

Please note that timings are subject to change. Check out the event website or app for details about booking your place on an activity and participation costs.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Birmingham's experience as a major event host and the "compact" nature of SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 will give delegates outstanding networking opportunities in the West Midlands this week, according to SportAccord Managing Director Martin Gibbs.

Gibbs highlighted the host region's determination to build on its track record of staging major events, including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, as the International Convention Centre (ICC) prepared to welcome more than 1,500 delegates for this week's gathering.

"The collaborative approach of Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Growth Company has provided the

INTERVIEW



foundations for an amazing edition of SportAccord," Gibbs told **The Daily**.

"Their event-hosting experience is excellent, and the compact nature of SportAccord 2024 in the heart of the city means that all of the key meetings and events will be within easy walking distance.

"The hospitality and professionalism of our hosts – and the region's sport-focused culture – mean this is an ideal

destination for SportAccord, and the long-term vision of the region to be a key player in sport is a powerful driver for success."

Gibbs added that delegates should explore various social events that will provide relaxed networking opportunities this week, while advising them to download the official event app, access the digital event guide and read **The Daily** to stay informed and get the most out of their stay in Birmingham.

"SportAccord is an event where you can have a year's worth of meetings in one week, alongside a fantastic conference programme and exhibition," he said. "Whether you are reconnecting with old friends, establishing new contacts or looking for the latest insights from the various conference streams, we have a range of

essential resources available to ensure you make the most of your time here."

Gibbs has overseen a transitional phase for SportAccord, having assumed the reins in late 2022.

"The team and I are really excited to welcome delegates to the ICC this week for the first exhibition of SportAccord since Gold Coast in 2019," Gibbs added.

"Birmingham and the West Midlands are rightly proud of their sporting heritage and I know the superb staff and volunteers here will make it an exceptional week."

Martin Gibbs



WHISKY TASTING

Tuesday 9 April, from 4.30pm

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The International Floorball Federation (IFF) will embark on several major projects over the coming year as the governing body steps up efforts to expand the sport.

IFF Secretary General John Liljelund told **The Daily** that the governing body's Future of Floorball process will underpin numerous developments designed to drive visibility and awareness.

"We have focused on rebuilding operations and gaining back the vast number of players lost during the pandemic," Liljelund said. "Most of the Member Federations have been able to win back at least some of the players lost, but the work continues."

"The Future of Floorball process has included public surveys, a lot of meetings with Member Federations and other stakeholders, and was the main topic during our Associations meeting during the Women's World Floorball Championships (WFC) in Singapore in December."

Discussions are focusing on a new international competition calendar, including a change of format for the WFC.

"The WFC is our main show window for the sport, and we want to make it even more attractive and interesting," Liljelund added. "In 2022 in Zurich we had a total of 155,000 spectators and we want to grow this number and the visibility of the event. The introduction of the European Championships in 2026 will require us to change our competition calendar."

"The 'IFF Strategy 2021-2032 – Strengthening the Foundations' will also be a key focus over the next 12 months, and we will be trying to enhance IFF operations and services for our members."



OPENING SUMMER 2025

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DID YOU KNOW?

Birmingham's formidable track record as a major event host in sport stretches back long before the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 – or indeed the 2022 Commonwealth Games. In fact, Birmingham has hosted more World and European Championships than any other UK city.

Tug of War International Federation (TWIF) President Daniel McCarthy is optimistic that younger participants will continue to drive the sport's long-term growth. The TWIF held highly successful editions of the 2023 World Outdoor Championships in Sursee, Switzerland, and then the 2024 World Indoor Championships in February in Helsingborg, Sweden.

"Our sport continues to grow to a very high standard," McCarthy told **The Daily**. "It's really encouraging to see so many young people taking part, as they are our future, and it is always nice to see new countries competing."

This year, the TWIF plans to support development courses in countries such as Mexico and Azerbaijan, while there will be a demonstration of the sport in Paris on 7-8 August, during the Olympic Games. In September, the World Outdoor Championships will take place in Mannheim, Germany, serving as a qualifying event for The World Games 2025 in Chengdu, China.





UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup in Champagny-en-Vanoise (France)
Image: UIAA/Nils Paillard/alpy.io

UIAA'S MUIR HAILS PROGRESS

The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) is achieving significant progress across all three of its priority pillars of safety, sustainability and sport, according to the governing body's President, Peter Muir.

The UIAA Safety Commission's work continues to be "excellent", Muir said, while any money generated from sales of UIAA-certified gear – which has been tested to stringent standards – is reinvested into mountaineering.

"It is a constant cycle of developing standards to improve climber safety and ultimately reduce accidents," Muir told **The Daily**. "Our focus is on helping to promote the importance of the UIAA Safety Label in ensuring climbers are able to purchase the safest equipment possible."

Additionally, through the UIAA's Climate Change Taskforce, which was established in 2022, the IF is ramping up efforts in the sustainability space. "One of the key things that I think we need to do is continue to develop our Carbon Footprint Reports

and align them with our budget," Muir said, with the UIAA working towards new Environmental and Social Sustainability Guidelines, which were first released in 2002.

"There have been significant developments over the last 20 years in our understanding of the impact of climate change, in the science and evidence of its impact on mountain regions, and in the commitment and responsibility of organisations, such as the UIAA, not only to monitor its own footprint and adapt to the results of such reports, but also to provide leadership."

Meanwhile, the UIAA Ice Climbing World Championships in Edmonton, Canada, closed an enthralling season that featured more than 150 athletes from nearly 25 countries.

"Through its Ice Climbing Governance Group, the UIAA continues to work on evolving and developing the sport particularly at a grassroots level and creating more pathway programmes for young climbers," Muir added. "Next season we hope to return to a full competition programme with an increase of World Cups."

'REMARKABLE' SCHEDULE BOOSTS WORLD AQUATICS

IF FOCUS

World Aquatics President Husain Al-Musallam has praised the "passion and professionalism" of the International Federation's team amidst an unprecedented schedule of major events.

By August, the governing body will have delivered three World Aquatics Championships, a World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25M) and more than 40 World Cup stops across six sports – all within just two years.

Describing the delivery of such a stream of events as "remarkable", Al-Musallam told **The Daily**: "This accomplishment would not have been possible without the passion and professionalism of the World Aquatics team."

"After a memorable World Aquatics Championships in Doha with record-breaking performances, our attention turns to the world's greatest sporting event and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

"This will be a global celebration of sport, with packed-out venues and the

world's best aquatics athletes on show. We cannot wait and we are grateful for the excellent collaboration with the Paris 2024 Organising Committee.

"We look forward to seeing new champions crowned in the recently opened Aquatics Centre, a venue that will also address the needs of Seine-Saint-Denis and the French swimming community long after the Games. I know that my colleagues share my excitement of witnessing the historic inclusion of men in artistic swimming and share our sport's evolution towards greater inclusivity with the world in Paris."

Beyond the Olympics, World Aquatics has an "incredible pipeline" of major events, with the World Aquatics Championships heading to Singapore in 2025, Budapest in 2027 and Beijing in 2029.

"We continue to adapt and introduce new competitions and event concepts to ensure we

remain at the forefront of providing the best possible sport entertainment for athletes and fans alike," Al-Musallam added. "One of our many exciting developments was hosting the first official international Beach Water Polo tournament in Egypt's Red Sea at the Soma Bay Marina last May. We are committed to constant innovation."

Meanwhile, developing the next generation of talent remains at the forefront of the World Aquatics agenda.

"We were delighted to celebrate the 10th year of our pioneering World Aquatics Scholarship Programme in 2023," Al-Musallam said. "Providing more opportunities to the next generation of young athletes is critical for the future of our sports. We look forward to seeing future talent emerge from the new World Aquatics Training Centres established in Antibes, France, and Bond University at Robina in Gold Coast, Australia."



Husain Al-Musallam

EQUESTRIAN SPORT'S VERSAILLES SHOWCASE

Q&A: INGMAR DE VOS, PRESIDENT, FEI

The sole candidate for the Presidency of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) this week reflects on a year of progress for the FEI, the global governing body of equestrian sports.



What have been the most important developments at the FEI over the previous year?

IDV: “The past 12 months have been intense, demanding and thought-provoking for the FEI. We knew that 2023 was going to be challenging given the general uncertainty in the world with the ongoing wars in Ukraine and then the Middle East later on in the year, the changes to global markets, as well as rising costs and inflation in a post-Covid era. But as an organisation and a community, we have been able to weather the storm and come out on the other side much stronger than we were at the beginning of the year.

“There were discussions around strategic planning and positioning for the FEI, including governance-related protocols and the much-anticipated delivery of the final report – A Good Life for Horses – by the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission, established by the FEI in 2022 in order to provide independent advice and ethical, evidence-based recommendations that would enhance our policies and efforts to safeguard the welfare of

Equestrian sport at Versailles

Image: PSV/Jean Morel



horses in equestrian sport. This is our first priority, and through the report we have gained invaluable insights into how we can further strengthen the systems in place and better identify everyone's active role in that process.”

“We have left no stone unturned when it comes to innovative fan engagement”

What were the highlights of the FEI competition schedule?

IDV: “On a sporting front, equestrian could not have asked for a more exciting year! We reached a new record of 4,779 events on the FEI Calendar, which reassuringly confirms that we are well and truly back on track with the rising trends from the pre-Covid phase.

“We had a trio of fabulous World Cup Finals in Omaha in the USA for Jumping, Dressage and Vaulting, and Bordeaux in France for Driving. Lastly, although I could go on, we saw many firsts at the Asian and Pan American Games – two major

events I had the pleasure of attending – with new nations competing and reaching the podium, but also new milestones in terms of the level of competition, and the diversity of the officials taking part.”

What are the priorities for the FEI now and over the next 12 months?

IDV: “As many from the FEI HQ will tell you, we are definitely on the road to Paris! We could not have dreamed of a more spectacular venue, and we are working hand-in-hand with the Paris 2024 Organising Committee to celebrate the beauty and historic significance of Versailles.

“Another highlight on the 2024 sporting calendar is the Longines League of Nations™, which is an exciting refresh of our sport's oldest and most prestigious team series. With a new format which sees the world's top 10 teams compete in four qualifiers across three continents leading to a final in October in Barcelona, Spain, we have left no stone unturned when it comes to sport presentation and innovative fan engagement.

“Meanwhile, the focus for

the equestrian community as a whole is the implementation and framework for the delivery of the recommendations outlined in the report – A Good Life for Horses.”

What are the most important opportunities and challenges for the FEI?

IDV: “Maintaining our sport's social licence to operate and ensuring equestrian sports always represent the very best in horse care, whilst proactively uniting the extensive equestrian community to embrace and advocate for our number one stakeholder – the horse – is our biggest opportunity and challenge for the years to come. As a global sporting community, we are extremely passionate about horses, and we have comprehensive systems and mechanisms in place to protect the welfare of horses, but there is more that can be done and more that must be done.

“Having created the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission, and building on the insights from their extensive research and recommendations, as well as the invaluable input provided through our welfare partner World Horse Welfare, with whom we have collaborated for over 40 years, we are actively taking this opportunity to work together as a community to be even more accountable and more proactive in embracing meaningful reform.

“We are at an important juncture in our sport, and we need to champion the very best of equestrian, with data-driven and science-backed research, policies, and legislation so that we can ensure and promote the very highest standards of equine welfare and horsemanship.”



Image: Stephen Fisher

‘BIG IDEAS’ TO UNDERPIN WORLD CURLING’S FUTURE

IF FOCUS

World Curling is establishing “a fantastic foundation for the future” by pressing ahead with six “Big Ideas” for the International Federation, according to President Beau Welling.

It is just over a year since World Curling gathered the sport’s key stakeholders in Toronto to discuss and set out a blueprint for the coming years.

Accordingly, the Big Ideas were identified: a brand refresh, an athlete and event licensing system, commercial development, developing facilities, stakeholder engagement, and finally increasing and improving the IF’s data management.

“We decided the brand refresh had to be the initial project as all our projects depend on having a new, modern brand with a focus on attracting a younger and more diverse audience. That project was completed in January this year,” Welling told **The Daily**.

“We also made progress on several of the other ideas by appointing an Athlete Support Officer and a Commercial Partnerships Manager into our staff. Those two hires are helping to build the foundation of World Curling becoming a more entrepreneurial International Federation.”

In February, the launch of World Curling’s own over-the-top streaming service, The Curling Channel, provided further impetus, giving fans a dedicated space to consume the latest action whilst giving Member Associations and others in the curling community a platform for exposure. Additionally, over the next 12 months, the IF will continue to develop the iceless Floor Curling format to make the sport more accessible to younger demographics.

“The development of more commercial partnerships is one of the key opportunities we have. It’s fundamental to making our International Federation more self-reliant and entrepreneurial,” Welling said.

“However, our biggest challenge is the growth and development of dedicated curling facilities. We are engaging with a variety of potential partners to make facilities more cost-affordable and sustainable.”

More broadly, the IF will develop its Big Ideas in the lead-up to the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

“We want to bring more people into our sport and community,” Welling added. “I firmly believe the world would be a much better and friendlier place if it had more curlers in it.”

EDMONTON ON THE UP

Edmonton has enjoyed “remarkable successes” and learned “invaluable lessons” over the past year in its efforts to expand and diversify its event portfolio, according to Janelle Janis, Executive Director of Events & Business Development at Explore Edmonton.

The Canadian city has hosted an array of events over the past 12 months, including the FIVB Beach Volleyball Pro Tour, the FIBA 3x3 World Tour and Women’s Series, ice hockey’s NHL Heritage Classic and the FIS Big Air Snowboard World Cup.

As a Silver Partner of the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024, Explore Edmonton is in Birmingham this week to spread the word about Edmonton’s growing reputation as an experienced, adaptable and passionate host of major events.

“As we strive to position Edmonton as a premier destination for sports tourism, securing high-profile events that appeal to a wide range of audiences remains a top priority,” Janis told **The Daily**. “Leveraging our city’s world-class facilities, passionate fan base and vibrant community spirit presents significant opportunities for attracting major sporting events that not only showcase Edmonton on the global stage but also stimulate economic growth and foster community engagement.”

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World Class Sports Destinations

MENTAL FITNESS FOCUS

A greater focus on mental health across the global sports movement would be beneficial for athletes and the sector as a whole, according to Dr William Wynter Bee.

The Sport and Exercise Medicine Registrar for golf’s European Tour Group will present a case study on mental fitness before participating in a roundtable on the same topic during today’s HealthAccord conference programme.

When asked by **The Daily** whether sport should put mental and physical health support on an equal footing, Dr Wynter Bee said: “100%. The mind affects the body, and the body affects the mind. We know that.

“So, I think that one day you might just call it ‘health’, but currently I think you need that focus so that the mental health side of things does not get lost.”

Campaigns to encourage people to open up and talk to others about mental health issues have become more prevalent

CONFERENCE PREVIEW



Dr William Wynter Bee will share his experiences with European Tour Group at HealthAccord

in recent years, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in the UK found that suicide awareness campaigns are effective in increasing calls to helplines.

However, Dr Wynter Bee believes it is harder for elite athletes to take such an approach due to perceptions that they should feel lucky to play sport for a living.

This, among other challenges and potential solutions, will be discussed during the HealthAccord panel session today, while Dr Wynter Bee will also provide an exclusive insight into the efforts being undertaken within professional golf to help its biggest names.

“One of the things that happens in these sports is that it is hard for athletes to complain, because on the outside they are living a great life,” he said.

“They are out in these beautiful places week in, week out, but actually they may be struggling with their game or not earning enough money. They may not have their support network with them or be in regular contact with them.

“I think those are all factors that can play into their mental health struggle and put them more at risk.”

- **HealthAccord – ‘Mental Fitness (Case Study)’**: Today, 14:10-14:30
- **HealthAccord – ‘Mental Fitness (Roundtable)’**: Today, 14:30-15:15

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THE BIG INTERVIEW: GILLIAN SANDERS



Negative body image is still stifling the growth of women's sports, according to Gillian Sanders...

HEALTHY PROGRESS?

As a three-time Olympian and lawyer who has navigated the transition from competition to governance, World Sailing Integrity Manager Gillian Sanders is highly qualified to offer a 360-degree perspective on the challenges facing women in sport.

Later today, Sanders, who competed in triathlon for South Africa at the London, Rio and Tokyo Games, will explore various issues relating to 'Keeping Female Athletes Healthy' during HealthAccord – and she is clear about the major obstacles to progress in 2024.

"The major health-related issue for women in sport right now is negative body image and the resultant health-related knock-on effects," Sanders told **The Daily**. "Having worked on the UK Sport-funded Sport Integrity pilot project, I can say that the majority of the reports submitted by athletes comprised fat shaming and psychological abuse of female athletes by their coaches.

"We know this very often leads to eating disorders or disordered eating and the knock-on effects such as RED-S (Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport) which can lead to bone injuries and worse, such as osteoporosis, not to mention the very damaging impact on mental health. There are still pressures on female athletes to look a certain way.

"It is important that IFs, National Federations and National Olympic Committees have robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including a confidential reporting mechanism so that athletes who may be subject to abuse have the confidence to report abuses."

Sanders stresses the importance of education so that unacceptable behaviour is truly understood, while IFs should also signpost athletes to further support, particularly if they are under-resourced

themselves. Furthermore, whilst some IFs have updated maternity policies to include enhanced pregnancy and postpartum support, others are "lagging behind".

Sanders adds: "It would be great to see maternity policies include more emphasis on the safe return to training and competing, as well as safe spaces for female athletes with babies and those breastfeeding."

On this point, Sanders explains that it is "hugely important" to provide health management support and guidance, not only to elite female athletes, but also to grassroots participants.

"We need a robust message to young female athletes that 'strong is beautiful'"

"Body image plays a massive role in this and research has shown that a large percentage of girls fall out of sport due to negative body image-related reasons," Sanders says. "We need a robust message to young female athletes that 'strong is beautiful'. There are some incredible athlete role models out there to look up to instead of the often harmful beauty content shared by social media influencers.

"I believe it's important to instil in young girls that sport is cool and fun. This was certainly my experience. This positive message resonated with me throughout school, leading to a love and enjoyment of sport."

Sanders is part of World Sailing's legal team, leading on safeguarding and anti-doping issues. Although she acknowledges that safeguarding has "progressed

massively... there is still a lot of work to be done" across the broader sports industry.

Sanders elaborates: "It is seemingly easy for perpetrators to hop countries due to jurisdictional challenges and continue their abuse elsewhere. There is also no global code such as there is in anti-doping. It is up to the country or the sport to have a safeguarding policy and many countries and sports still don't have anything in place. Progression wise, after the gymnastics abuse in the USA came to light a few years ago, there was a massive shift – athletes suddenly felt confident to speak up and sports were forced to act.

"Anti-doping has made progress, but there is also still work to be done. Blood spot testing is one of the more recent developments – the tests are cheaper and more efficient than blood or urine tests, but they only pick up a limited range of substances. All methods of testing are expensive, and sports have limited budgets."

There is plenty, therefore, to discuss during HealthAccord today – and much more for sports administrators to consider as the industry continues to evolve.

However, from the viewpoint of somebody who has been there and done it, has there been sufficient change in terms of representation of women in governance?

"The landscape is shifting very slowly but probably not quickly enough," Sanders says. "Some sports are much more progressive than others and some countries are much more progressive than others. Generally speaking, there is still not enough representation by women in senior leadership roles."

• **HealthAccord – 'Keeping Female Athletes Healthy': Today, 15:15-16:30**

ACTIVATE YOUR DAY

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 delegates can kick-start their day and meet other attendees in a fun and friendly setting by taking part in a variety of morning activities this week.

The sessions begin today with the Run of a Kind running team guiding participants on a 5km route that will pause in places to give participants the opportunity to discover fascinating facts and stories about Birmingham's 1,600-year history while they catch their breath.

Tomorrow, a walking tour with Positively Birmingham will include a short history of the city, taking in Centenary Square, Gas Street Basin, Chamberlain Square and Victoria Square, which is home to Birmingham Town Hall.

On Wednesday, delegates will be able to choose from two very different activities. The Bustling Birmingham Kayak Tour will take delegates on a relaxing 90-minute journey through the city's canal system. No

previous experience is required, with the sit-on-top kayaks perfect for beginners and experienced kayakers alike.

However, if a burst of energy is more your thing, the ever-popular Good Morning Muaythai session will blow off the cobwebs in the Symphony Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham. Returning for an 11th consecutive SportAccord, the session is designed to accommodate all ages and fitness levels.

The final morning activity of the week on Thursday will be Reformer Pilates with former European gymnastics champion Ellie Downie MBE at The Reformer Studio, an inner-city retreat about a mile away on foot from the International Convention Centre.

Check SportAccord's event app for start times, locations and further details about the activities.

Also, remember that SportAccord's Official After-Hours Social will be at the Grand Hotel's Madeleine bar from 19:00-23:30 every evening.

TODAY AT A GLANCE

MEETINGS:

- WOF General Assembly (08:30-13:00, 14:00-15:30)
- ASOIF Council Meeting (10:00-12:00)
- AIMS Council Meeting (14:30-16:00)
- IOC/ASOIF Joint Meeting (14:00-15:00)
- IOC/ARISF Council Joint Meeting (15:00-16:00)
- ASOIF Working Meeting (15:15-16:15)
- IOC/WOF Joint Meeting (16:00-17:00)

WORKSHOPS:

- ARISF Sustainability Workshop (10:00-12:00)
- ARISF/WADA Clean Sport Workshop (14:30-16:30)

CONFERENCES:

- SportAccord Conference Programme Opening (11:00-12:00)
- Speakers' Corner: Dr. Gongsak Yodmani, Sports Authority of Thailand (12:00-12:30); James Tibbetts, Director of Operations and Delivery, Trivandi (14:00-14:30)
- HealthAccord (14:00-17:00)

SOCIALS:

- Morning activity: Run of a Kind running tour (07:00-08:00)
- F1 Arcade (12:00-14:00)
- SportAccord Opening Ceremony (17:00-19:00)
- ASOIF Dinner (19:00-22:30)
- AIMS/ARISF Welcome Dinner (19:00-21:30)



THIS IS THE GAME

EXPLORE EDMONTON

DISCOVER WOMEN'S SPORTS IN EDMONTON