



Francesco Ricci Bitti speaks during his final ASOIF General Assembly as President



Thomas Bach and Neil Rami

THE HEART OF SPORT

The SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 is demonstrating to delegates that Birmingham and the West Midlands “is the heart of sport in the UK”, according to Neil Rami, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Growth Company.

Rami said: “This week has provided the perfect opportunity for our global visitors to see the region’s bold ambitions as a major sporting events host.” This was exemplified, he said, by Birmingham City Chairman Tom Wagner’s announcement about plans for a world-class stadium and sports quarter (see P5).

“From a buzzing exhibition hall to our varied excursion programme, it has been heartening to receive such positive feedback from delegates, and to highlight our sporting credentials to IOC President Thomas Bach, who visited our West Midlands stand ahead of the spectacular Opening Ceremony,” Rami said.

RICCI BITTI’S BACKING FOR SUCCESSOR DE VOS

Francesco Ricci Bitti, the outgoing President of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), backed his successor Ingmar De Vos to provide “brilliant” leadership after the latter’s election was confirmed during yesterday’s General Assembly.

De Vos, the sole candidate for the Presidency from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028, received unanimous support among voters.

De Vos, President of the FEI, the global governing body of equestrian sports, told ASOIF Members: “Thank you for your trust. It’s a big honour and I know I have very big shoes to fill.

“I would like to thank our President for all the work he has done and continues to do... and



Francesco Ricci Bitti and Ingmar De Vos

I hope to be able to build on this legacy for the future of ASOIF.”

Focusing on the build-up to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, Ricci Bitti said: “Paris presents a great opportunity for a fantastic Games in iconic locations. We are very confident that 2024 will be a great Olympic year.”

However, one issue that is yet to be resolved is the amounts ASOIF International Federations will receive from this year’s Olympics. ASOIF Executive Director Andrew Ryan said:

“We know the percentage [split between the IFs themselves], but we don’t know what the total amount will be as that will be dependent on the outcome of the Games.”

Ricci Bitti added that the revenue-share model in place with the IOC would need to be reviewed, especially in light of the Olympic programme increasing to 36 sports for the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

“The point we made to the IOC very firmly was that we want to review the system,” Ricci Bitti said. “The new situation is dynamic, so it [the revenue-share agreement] needs to be more flexible in the future.

“Hopefully, there will be satisfactory distribution for Paris, and hopefully we

CONTINUED ON P2

INSIDE ROUND-UP
Talking points from the LawAccord and CityAccord programmes
PAGE 3-5



Kansas City Chiefs’ Rob Alberino: Taylor, Travis and becoming the “world’s team”!

PAGE 11



ALSO

2 AIMS Sessions

6 The esports opportunity

8 World Rugby’s Alan Gilpin

12 What’s on today



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AIMS SESSIONS INSPIRED BY YOUTH

ASSOCIATION FOCUS

The Alliance of Independent Recognised Members of Sports (AIMS) celebrated past achievements and looked to the future as its International Federations gathered at SportAccord 2024 to mix business with pleasure at yesterday's AIMS Sessions.

The serious business came with the planning of future events and was followed by a party atmosphere with a cast that included SportAccord President Prof Dr Uğur Erdener and Saudi Arabia's Sports Minister and Olympic and Paralympic Committee Chair Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Faisal.

Also playing a starring role was a team of young people, including the inspirational 10-year-old Harmonie-Rose Allen, who contracted meningitis as a baby and two years ago became the youngest person in the world to use prosthetic legs with computerised knees.

Stephan Fox, President of AIMS, told **The Daily** that



the Sessions began with a discussion about the new criteria for the SportAccord membership process.

The meeting also launched the AIMS-Mission89 Safeguarding and Human Trafficking Module.

Members confirmed Malaysia as the host for the next United Through Sports event in 2025 and then celebrated the UTS Impact Report and Partnership Awards from Saudi Arabia in 2021 and Thailand in 2022.

The awards were presented by the young people in the presence of the SportAccord President and the Prince, who then both presented the

awards to the IFs that took part in the Riyadh 2023 World Combat Games in Saudi Arabia.

"Malaysia will bring together about 140 organisations and between 20,000 and 25,000 young people, as well as some leading figures from sport and the United Nations," Fox said.

"It has been an excellent week at SportAccord. The atmosphere is good, the people are very happy and we are only halfway through. Our meeting attracted nearly a full house and the highlight was our UTS presentation which brought together a President, a Prince and some wonderful children."

FOUR NEW MEMBERS APPROVED

CONTINUED FROM P1

can start working on a new system for LA28." During the General Assembly, the overwhelming majority of ASOIF Members also approved four new Associate Members: the International Cricket Council, the International Federation of American Football, World Lacrosse and World Squash.

Meanwhile, 28 Members backed the exclusion of the International Boxing Association (IBA) as an ASOIF Member, with one abstention. Ricci Bitti, who described the development as "sad", added that the exclusion was in line with ASOIF's constitution after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last week dismissed an appeal by IBA against the

IOC's decision to withdraw recognition of the organisation.

"We had no choice," said Ricci Bitti, who expressed hope that an "alternative organisation" will take responsibility for boxing's global governance. "Boxing is a very important sport," he added.

The General Assembly also heard discussions about the implications of the expanded LA28 sports programme on areas such as athlete quotas, Olympic qualification systems and Games optimisation. Additionally, in-person reports were delivered from the IOC, the Dakar 2026 Organising Committee for the Youth Olympic Games, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Testing Agency (ITA).

TRANSGENDER POLICIES 'MUST BE BASED ON SCIENCE'

LAWACCORD ROUND-UP

International Olympic Committee (IOC) Medical and Scientific Commission Member Professor Yannis Pitsiladis (pictured) urged International Federations to remember scientific findings when developing rules for transgender athletes during an insightful LawAccord session yesterday.

"We have to focus on science and medicine in the context of law, and in the context of all the other aspects that we need to consider," Pitsiladis, a Professor of Sport and Exercise Science, said.

"If an IF puts all of those things together then it will reach a different conclusion depending on what it decides it wants.

"Is it fairness, is it inclusion, is it safety? Depending on what you want in your Federation you can reach a different conclusion, but do not forget the science."

A lively discussion took place in



the second LawAccord roundtable session of the day, which examined IF implementations of regulations surrounding transgender athletes.

Inclusion was a key part of the debate, but legal questions emerged as to whether it should hold such importance.

"There is no right to compete in elite sport," said Jonathan Taylor KC, Partner at Bird & Bird. "There is only a right to compete in elite sport if you comply with the rules put in place by the IF."

Barrister Louise Reilly praised the importance of updates provided by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) during yesterday's LawAccord conference.

"I think both spoke very transparently and honestly," Reilly, of Kellerhals Carrard, which helped to organise LawAccord, told **The Daily**.

"They gave people the type of insight and information that is not readily available from the outside."

WADA is in the process of making improvements in its Code for the protection of minors.

WADA General Counsel Ross Wenzel gave the report in light of the case of Kamila Valieva, the Russian figure skater who was given a four-year doping ban in January.

Later on, CAS Director General Matthieu Reeb said he was encouraged by the fact that more athletes are accessing the organisation's legal aid scheme.

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BUILDING RELATIONS

FIFA, football's global governing body, and the international football players union FIFPRO, discussed their evolving relationship during an engaging LawAccord discussion.



"I don't think [FIFA and FIFPRO] have had as good a relationship in the last decades as right now, and it has got better in recent years in terms of FIFA hearing the players' voices," FIFPRO's Senior Legal Counsel Alexandra Gómez Bruinewoud (pictured) said. "That being said, I don't think we can say that we have a CBA [Collective Bargaining Agreement]."

Emilio Garcia, FIFA's Chief Legal & Compliance Officer, said: "Over the last 20 years, we haven't always been aligned, but I would say that our relationship with FIFPRO is good and we have worked well in many areas."

"The best example of this mutual collaboration is the Dispute Resolution Chamber and the regulations on the status and transfer of players. These are the two elements that are at the core of our relationship, and they are both very stable."

The session, which focused on integrating the athlete's voice in sports governance, also featured insights from FEI Deputy Legal Director Áine Power and Florian Yelin, Head of Policy and Research Coordinator, World Players Association.

BOOST INTEGRITY COMPLIANCE BY CLAMPING DOWN



Biathlon Integrity Unit's Tanja Haug

LAWACCORD ROUND-UP

Sports integrity units should show that nobody is above the law to instil confidence that they can operate with credibility and strength, delegates heard during a LawAccord panel session yesterday.

Athletics Integrity Unit Head of Case Management Huw Roberts described how "success in the field is vital" through clamping down with determination on offenders to encourage greater compliance in the future.

Roberts said: "In the first couple of years after we set up, we imposed a provisional suspension on a council member and a provisional suspension on one of the biggest agents in the sport, we were able to expose new corruption in the Russian Athletics Federation and we pursued a number of high-profile cases against Olympic and World Champions."

"That was really important to show that no one was immune from investigation and prosecution."

All four panellists were representatives of integrity units

that were established following a scandal in their sport, whether that was in relation to abuse, doping or match fixing.

That prompted a discussion on how to rebuild trust among fans and stakeholders of a sport.

For Tanja Haug, a Biathlon Integrity Unit (BIU) Board Member, transparency is the way forward.

"It is all about transparency and communication to regain credibility and trust," she said.

"Another issue was education. One part of the BIU's mandate is to educate all athletes, but also the officials, the staff members of the International Federation, National Federations, and their personnel to learn their responsibilities and how to react in cases of concern."

Another way of restoring this trust is to change the perception of how integrity units are viewed.

According to International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) Legal Counsel Julia Lewis, the body was initially seen as a police force set out to punish people instead of offering them support.

To change this, the ITIA has been engaging with junior athletes in an effort to be as approachable as possible.



MUAYTHAI

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THE ADDED DEMANDS OF ‘FESTIVALISATION’

CITYACCORD ROUND-UP

Concerns around the size and scale of sporting events were highlighted as a CityAccord panel explored the issues around “festivalisation” at the International Convention Centre yesterday.

Kris Gemmell, Head of Marketing and Commercial, World Triathlon, said his organisation had discovered benefits from such an approach. However, he added that the concept can place additional demands on sponsors.

He said: “There was an opportunity to give sponsors more bang for their buck, and they had more time to activate, but it was taxing for them to be in one place for a greater length of time.”

Alana Vought, Programme Manager, Olympic and Paralympic Games Brisbane 2032, City of Gold Coast, said they plan

to spread activations across Australia and Oceania.

She said: “It’s a challenge around engaging with each of those areas, so it’s important to know why cities bid for events. Most cities have robust strategies to engage communities in their regions.”

Nicola Turner, CEO, United By 2022, said the addition of a cultural festival to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games programme was a big success, helping organisers to generate interest in some of the less popular sporting events.

“If you want to widen your audiences and sell more tickets, it’s important,” she said.

Georg Spazier, CEO, ITS GmbH, Innsbruck World Masters Games, warned: “It is a big burden for the organisers and there is a threat that sport moves out of the spotlight. We have to look at it more from a holistic entertainment perspective.”

Sport needs to engage earlier with

host venues around the world to collaborate on keeping major events on track with modern priorities, CityAccord delegates were told.

Reflecting on the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Trivandi CEO James Bulley said the bid was about socio-economic community benefits as well as tourism, business

and opportunities for sport.

Esther Britten, Head of Major Events, UK Sport, added: “It’s about making sure we spread events in different places with that community and social impact connection.”

Katie Sadleir, CEO, Commonwealth Games Federation, touched on the evolving landscape.

“The market is telling us that things need to change,” she said. “Reduce

costs, reduce impact and increase social value.”

Meanwhile, Perttu Pesä, Chair, International Association of Event Hosts, outlined the long-term impact of a successful sporting spectacle.

“Events are very effective at selling your city and much easier to sell to politicians,” he said. “The idea of a big event might cost you something, but the legacy projects are important.”

BIRMINGHAM UNVEILS HUGE STADIUM PLAN

CityAccord attendees heard first-hand about a major sports investment project in the West Midlands



from the man behind the scheme – Birmingham City Chairman Tom Wagner (pictured).

He told the audience that Knighthead Capital – which he co-founded – had just acquired a 48-acre site that will accommodate a new stadium and much more.

“When you are going to spend £2-3bn you are going to make a difference,” he said.

Wagner said the investment will create a second city centre focused on sport, and his plans for a walking route from the main city centre resonated with an earlier CityAccord discussion on active travel.

Chris Boardman, Commissioner of Active Travel England and Chair of Sport England, was joined by Tine Eriksen Green, Head of Major Events, City of Copenhagen, in highlighting the growth of cycling.

Paul Bush, CEO of SportAccord 2024 Silver Partner EventScotland, highlighted the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in Glasgow as the latest evidence of the nation’s event-hosting capabilities.

The biggest cycling event in history generated over £205m of economic activity for Scotland, according to a report by professional services firm EY. This far outstripped the hosting budget of £60m, which was described by Bush as “great value”.

He added during CityAccord: “Major events are criticised for being in one geographical location, but we went to 13 in Scotland. It was an investment that brought benefits, not just for sport and the economy, but also for the nation and our society.”

BRITISH OLYMPIAN DEARING BACKS PARALLEL EVENTS

Olympic swimmer Alice Dearing has expressed her wish for esports and traditional sports to feature side by side in the future.



Dearing (pictured) became the first black female swimmer to represent Britain at an Olympic competition at the Tokyo 2020 Games when she competed in the 10km marathon swim.

In addition to her sporting accomplishments, she is also a gamer and regularly takes her PlayStation away with her to competitions.

Increasingly, in recent years, esports competitions have been held alongside multi-sport events, such as with the Commonwealth Esports Championships alongside the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Dearing says she is fully supportive of this model, but has her eye on further inclusion.

“I think the approach of having parallel events at the moment makes a lot of sense,” Dearing told **The Daily**. “For many people of older generations, they will find esports just alien.

“Especially if they haven’t been brought up playing video games, it could be a bit confusing why there may be someone playing a shooting game next to someone running at the Olympics.

“So, I think the approach at the moment makes a lot of sense.

“It is very refreshing and exciting to see esports having these opportunities next to major sporting events.

“Further in the future I would love to see them merge into something that makes sense, but of course with these things it is going to take time and understanding from International Federations, the IOC and more to manage how this works.”

The rise of esports in the traditional sports movement has turned heads, and many International Federations are figuring out how best to capitalise on the industry’s boom in popularity.

The fact that Dearing is set to speak at the SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit is evidence itself of esports’ new-found influence, she added.

“I think SportAccord 2024 can highlight to the sporting industry and to the esports industry that esports is entertainment for the future. It has already had a huge impact on so many,” she said.

• Plenary Conference Programme – ‘Gaming and Esports’: Today, 10:20-11:05



ESL Pro League Commissioner Alex Inglot

EMBRACING THE ESPORTS OPPORTUNITY

DID YOU KNOW?

Rugby, half an hour’s drive east of Birmingham, is known worldwide as the birthplace of the sport. It was in this market town in 1823, while playing football at Rugby School, that William Webb Ellis picked up the ball and ran – and the rest is history. Today, you can visit the momentous spot and its dedicated museum.



Sports Authority of Thailand, a SportAccord 2024 Bronze Partner, hosted a “Muay Thai Talks” session featuring the sport’s key stakeholders in the Exhibition Hall yesterday

SESSION PREVIEW

Costs, conversion rates and collaboration are among the key issues around the continuing growth of esports and the relationship with traditional sport, according to Alex Inglot, Commissioner of the ESL Pro League.

Inglot told *The Daily* he has every confidence esports will continue to grow, and he challenged International Federations to keep pace.

"The last word is that esports is and has to be the future," he said.

"It is in line with the growth in mobile gaming, technology, digital engagement, virtual reality and the way we all work, play and interact online. No trajectory is a straight line and there will be bumps, bursts and troughs along the way, but overall, this industry will grow."

Inglot will join today's Plenary Conference Programme panel session to debate the merits of gaming and esports for sports rights holders. At the ESL Pro League he oversees governance,



finances, stakeholder relations, legal matters and communications. Before his move into esports, Inglot worked in several roles in traditional sports, including as a Board Director and European Player Representative at the ATP Tour in men's tennis.

"I have had senior leadership roles in both worlds and there needs to be a real humbleness and a recognition that what may have worked before is not certain to work with these new landscapes, tools, platforms, options and expectations," Inglot said.

"If traditional sports think they will engage current esports fans by creating a digital version of their own sport for

people to play or engage with, I am not convinced the conversion rate from current esports fandom to new digital versions of traditional sports will be quite as high as they would hope for.

"Behind the game itself is the question of governance, control, format and marketing. The more these aspects of the whole experience mirror those in traditional sports, the less they look respectful and curious about the way modern young fans want to see their entertainment run, structured and promoted."

Inglot added that the typical demographic make-up of esports followers is evolving.

He said: "The truth is that we are seeing the mean age slowly climb up. Once the preserve of misunderstood youth who couldn't or wouldn't connect with their parents, that same youth is older, bringing their own children into the fandom they pioneered."

• **Plenary Conference Programme – 'Gaming and Esports': Today, 10:20-11:05**

SCOTLAND THE PERFECT STAGE FOR EVENTS

Scotland continues to underline its reputation as the perfect stage for major sporting events.

In 2024 and beyond Scotland will host World Athletics Indoor Championships, World Orienteering Championships, The 152nd Open and the AIG Women's Open and UEFA EURO 2028.

SUPERCHARGING WOMEN'S RUGBY TO NEW HEIGHTS

**Q&A: ALAN GILPIN,
CEO, WORLD RUGBY**

Ahead of his appearance in the Plenary Conference Programme today to discuss strategies for the sports industry's evolving challenges (14:35-15:20), the World Rugby CEO looked ahead to next year's Women's Rugby World Cup in England.

Yesterday marked 500 days until the start of the tournament. What will be the legacy of the event?

AG: "Working with the Rugby Football Union (RFU), UK Government and UK Sport, our collective mission is to deliver the greatest Women's Rugby World Cup ever – a generational moment that supercharges the advancement of women's rugby and the sport as a whole.

"The competition has been expanded to 16 teams, and our ambition is to set new attendance and engagement records and sell out Twickenham Stadium for the final. It is also our mission to ensure that Rugby World Cup 2025 is the most impactful women's rugby event ever.

"Beyond the field, it will play a central role in empowering real change, shaping positive perceptions at all levels of the game, championing gender equity, and enriching local communities. We are really excited about the overall Impact '25 programme, officially launching domestically this week, and the international programme launching later in the year."

What does the Impact '25 programme entail exactly?

AG: "It's a true cross-



"Women's sport is on an incredible, unstoppable rise presenting new participation, audience and revenue opportunities"

stakeholder initiative, led by the RFU in partnership with HM Treasury, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Sport England and UK Sport. Some £12.3m will be injected into the sport in England and also the home unions ahead of Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 and beyond, which is truly transformative.

"It's all about building capability and capacity to support the growth of the game in England across four major pillars – Facility Development, Coaches and Match Officials, Playing and Volunteering, and Community

and Fan Engagement. In practical terms, this means better facilities for women and girls and more opportunities for women at all levels of the game."

How do you maintain the growth of the women's game globally in the coming years?

AG: "Women's sport is on an incredible, unstoppable rise, presenting new participation, audience and revenue opportunities. The business case is compelling and the commercial value of women's rugby is projected to grow tenfold over the next decade to reach £200m which, alongside major markets, makes it the most addressable growth opportunity for the sport as a whole.

"Women's rugby is a key pillar within our strategic plan and we are looking to supercharge growth via five key drivers – raising global standards, increasing visibility, developing and empowering female leaders, a dedicated focus on women's welfare, and sustainable investment.

"To highlight a couple of really impactful areas, in

partnership with Capgemini, we have awarded 73 scholarships to aspiring leaders across 54 nations and we are already seeing the benefit of that in the boardroom where seven have progressed to the World Rugby Council, two to our Executive Board and many more within union structures. We are also delivering a coaching programme with Gallagher that aims to advance female coaches at the elite level, and we hope that 40% of the coaching staff at Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 will be women – a huge leap forward from our last edition."

How confident are you that the law changes that emerged following the recent Shape of the Game forum will improve rugby, and how important is it for sports to explore ways of enhancing the spectacle?

AG: "All sports are in an attention economy, and we must make rugby more accessible and relevant to a broader audience if we are to meaningfully grow our audience share within an increasingly competitive global sports and entertainment market.

"Change is in rugby's DNA. As a sport, we were born 200 years ago from positive disruption, and that's why we should be bold, think and act differently and look at the game through the fan lens.

"The Shape of the Game plan seeks to put the fan first without compromising on player welfare and determine the moves that we must make to simplify, dial-up the entertainment value and optimise the sport's potential."

Lisa Allan
International Judo Federation

Sustainability focus
8/10

Future target
Gender equality

” Outlook Paris 2024
Looking forward to great judo and para-judo competition.

SPORT EVENT DENMARK

SUSTAINABILITY TEMPERATURE

SportAccord World Sport & Business Summit 2024 Gold Partner Sport Event Denmark has been taking the temperature of the global sports movement’s sustainability focus at the organisation’s stand in the Exhibition Hall this week – and the results have been intriguing.

Delegates from across the global landscape have been asked to mark their sustainability focus out of 10 – with an average score of about 8/10 emerging from a wide range spanning 3/10 to 10/10 so far.

Meanwhile, when asked to state a future target for their sustainability efforts, gender equality has been the most popular answer by far, ahead of other key pillars such as climate action and responsible consumption and production.

PERSONALISATION IS GATHERING PACE

SESSION PREVIEW

Personalisation of content is hugely important to the future of sport and esports media, but accessibility rather than exclusivity is the top priority, according to the moderator of a session during today’s Plenary Conference Programme.

David Dellea, Director, Altman Solon’s Sports Practice, said he will be looking for today’s discussion to provide clues to future trends.

“I am convinced that gaming – and gamification – will play a key role in the way we think of ‘media experiences’ in the future,” Dellea told **The Daily**.

“The focus has pivoted back and I look forward to unpacking the opportunities that sport has in this space.”

Dellea acknowledged that changes in consumer behaviour are having a

significant impact on the way sport needs to think about media distribution. Whilst he believes that 95% of monetisation comes from live content, research published in the latest Altman Solon’s Sports Survey found that younger audiences are increasingly favouring highlights or short-form content.

“I am convinced that the live experience per se continues to be relevant, even to younger generations,” he said.

“Owing to the increasing fragmentation and restrictions around exclusivity, 59% of fans struggle – in some way or another – to access their favourite sports.

So, addressing issues of ‘accessibility’ along with evolving the media product should be priority No.1 today.”

• **Plenary Conference Programme – ‘Gaming and Esports’: Today, 10:20-11:05**

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FALCONS CHASE COMPELLING CONTENT

A dedicated digital production facility is helping the Atlanta Falcons to expand its fan base, but the future is more about the broader strategy than the studios.

Scott Kegley, Vice-President of Digital Strategy at the NFL American football franchise, told **The Daily** that the opening of the Falcons' Ticketmaster Studios in January 2023 had helped to turn on-field stars into on-screen talent. However, the real skill lies in knowing how to use the content.

Ahead of his appearance today on the Plenary Conference Programme, Kegley said: "The percentage of your fan base that comes to a game is relatively low. We have fans in Atlanta who may decide to come to Mercedes-Benz Stadium, but what about displaced domestic fans and international fans?"

"The majority might only have a digital relationship with the organisation. They watch games on television and get their news about the Falcons via various news outlets. We want to use our unique

SESSION PREVIEW



advantage to provide compelling content that only we can offer.

"Ticketmaster holds the naming rights to the studio and several pieces of content that come from it. When looking at the overall cost to get up and running, you have to consider the increased number and value of the content series you're able to produce. The launch of Ticketmaster Studios has been incredibly valuable."

Kegley added that access to the team is at the heart

of that engaging content, but four videos that had nothing to do with on-field action accounted for 50 million video views across the franchise's channels.

Kegley said: "Our video of a mascot stunt appealed to a wide audience as it transcended sports. Highlights filmed from the roof of the stadium revolutionised sports video, and our production team was even asked by [US network] CBS to replicate those shots for their team at the Super Bowl in Las Vegas. The challenge is looking at content you see every day through a different lens.

"We all have unique challenges, but don't let those hold you back. When you start to look at those as opportunities to innovate is when you can create something that's truly special."

• Plenary Conference Programme – 'Touchdowns, Home Runs and Slam Dunks': Today, 11:05-12:05



Scott Kegley
Image: Atlanta Falcons



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THE BIG INTERVIEW: ROB ALBERINO



CHIEFS OF THEIR KINGDOM

Rob Alberino explains Kansas City's goal of becoming the NFL 'world's team'...

In a sport in which global awareness has historically been of Dolphins, 49ers and Cowboys, the Chiefs are mounting a serious challenge.

Rob Alberino admits to being a little surprised initially at the notion that Kansas could conquer Miami, San Francisco and Dallas by winning the hearts of NFL American football fans and newcomers worldwide. But the view now is "why not?"

Alberino, Vice-President of Content and Production at the Kansas City Chiefs, tells **The Daily** that the goal of "world's team", as previously outlined by Chiefs President Mark Donovan, is very much on the agenda. Even Taylor Swift is on the team!

"It's a lofty goal for certain," Alberino says. "When I first heard it a few years ago I wondered how a small, Midwestern American city of under one million people could achieve it. Then I saw the momentum, excitement and determination not only of the company, but the team themselves."

Alberino rejoined the Chiefs in his current role in 2021 after originally serving as the club's Vice President of Media and Marketing from 2010 to 2013. The 2024 season will be his 30th in the NFL.

His job is to lead all content efforts, including creation and distribution across traditional, digital, social and over-the-top platforms. He tackles it with innovation and impact, and never in isolation, as he also oversees all aspects of game production, presentation and entertainment elements at Arrowhead Stadium.

"The Chiefs are working overtime to use the on-field success to help catapult the stories – both historically and currently – to fans of all levels," he says.

"With a robust media and marketing team, daily work continues from short-form to long-form work so that there is a great 'buffet' of content for novice to avid fans."

That on-field success has elevated the likes of Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes to global recognition. Alberino

"The more access you can get from the team, the more fans can live their fantasy and feel closer to the team"

says the team's achievement in becoming only the ninth in NFL history to win back-to-back Super Bowls this year is "rocket fuel" for the mission. But when it comes to media, simplicity is the watchword.

"World-class content and access plus great storytelling equals hearts and minds won," Alberino says.

"We are getting people's attention across the globe and all are

welcome in the Chiefs' Kingdom! We need to make more trips to places that need tangible connections to the Kingdom – the word needs to be spread, but also touched and experienced. We are working on this and on educating the world about American football. It's a tall task, but we are all in!"

The relationship between Grammy-winning superstar Taylor Swift and Chiefs player Travis Kelce did not need any promotion.

"We have truly let the world do the work for us," Alberino says.

"We don't tout or amplify the relationship, as all of our players are treated very similarly coverage-wise. The world has linked to the phenomena and so we are riding the story-book wave as well."

But at the heart of everything is the recognition that the most important link is between the players on the field and the fans – a bond that builds loyalty in times of celebration and resilience if results are poor.

"It is our job to entertain, drive emotion and keep that place rocking," Alberino says.

"When the fans are down, we bring them up and when they are up, we keep them there and push the limits. The more access you can get from the team, the more fans can live

their fantasy and feel closer to the team. Nobody roots for logos – they root for people."

• **Plenary Conference Programme – 'Touchdowns, Home Runs and Slam Dunks': Today, 11:05-12:05**



Rob Alberino with the Vince Lombardi Trophy

IWGA LOOKS TO CHENGDU

ASSOCIATION FOCUS

The World Games 2025 in Chengdu, China, will dominate the agenda at today's International World Games Association (IWGA) Executive Committee Meeting at the International Convention Centre.

IWGA President José Perurena told **The Daily** that the Association is “bouncing back with our sporting spirit” after the success of the most recent edition of the flagship event two years ago in Birmingham, Alabama, in the United States.

Looking ahead to Chengdu, Perurena said: “Over the 10-day competition period, a total of 262 gold medals will be awarded in 35 sports and 62 disciplines. Around 5,000 athletes from more than 100 countries are set to compete in Chengdu, with the most gender-balanced and inclusive platform ever delivered.”

Venues and the competition schedule for the flagship event will be confirmed during the IWGA's Annual General Meeting in May in Esslingen, Germany, where applications to host

The World Games 2029 will also be reviewed.

The World Games will also be strengthened by the introduction of The World Games Series, which will serve as a platform for test events and offer extra qualification opportunities. The first round is planned for October 2024 with two more being organised for the first half of 2025.

Meanwhile, an IWGA Athletes' Committee was established last year and is currently chaired by Spanish karate legend Sandra Sánchez, who retired from competitive sports after The World Games 2022.

Perurena said the focus for the rest of this year will be on developing the IWGA's sustainability strategy in support of the environmentally friendly concept of The World Games.

He said: “For all of us at the IWGA, partnering with experienced host cities that already own the sports infrastructure, as well as adapting the sports programme accordingly, are top priorities in our business model.

“We care about the footprint of The World Games for the future of our planet.”

TODAY AT A GLANCE

MEETING:

IWGA Executive Committee Meeting (13:00-15:30)

WORKSHOPS:

Sustainability Workshop – From Vision To Victory: Glasgow 2024 World Indoor Championships presented by thinkBeyond (08:00-09:30)

Media Workshop – Optimising Federations' Operations presented by iSportConnect (12:00-13:15)

CONFERENCES:

Plenary Conference Programme (09:30-16:30)

Speakers' Corner: Jen Falding, Strategic Lead for Major Sports Events, Sport Liverpool (11:30-12:00)

SOCIALS:

Morning activities:

- Bustling Birmingham Kayak Tour (07:30-08:45)
- Good Morning Birmingham Muaythai (07:30-08:30)

Jewellery Quarter Sports Heritage Walking Tour (10:00-12:00)

Golf at The Belfry – Nine holes of golf on The Brabazon Championship course (13:00-22:00)

Host City Official Dinner (19:00-22:00)

SPORT EVENT DENMARK

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