

# Impulse Quarterly

Edition #5  
June 2021



# ABOUT US

## Dear sports enthusiasts

We hope you're healthy and enjoyed a beautiful spring season.

Despite uncertainties and restrictions in our daily lives, we have embarked on the journey towards the Impulse Summit 2021, taking place on October 28th in St. Gallen, Switzerland. We look back at the first successful Education Program, a structured six-week onboarding program that guarantees continuity and longevity.

As they embarked on a ten-month journey towards the annual Impulse Summit and beyond, all team members experienced multiple workshops and other activities to provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools for successfully organising the upcoming Impulse Summit. The Impulse Education Program shall educate involved students to enable and empower them to connect with political, business, cultural, and other society leaders to create impulses for change in the industry. The program is organised along the pillars of Team Building, Personal Development, and Organisational Culture.

We lay great importance on empowering every team member and fostering their entrepreneurship. Conceptualised and organised by one of our active members, we are happy to conduct our first Essay Competition, which offers a platform for young talents to share their innovative ideas. Students are encouraged to think outside of the box and elaborate on an industry-relevant topic by elaborating their thoughts about a given statement. Due to the diversity of the applicants, the essays offer re-

volutionary ideas from tomorrow's leaders. We invite the most innovative authors to the Impulse Summit and give the winner the possibility to present his/her essay to further elaborate on the topic with industry leaders.

Furthermore, our current projects are progressing well, and we are proud to present further details about one of them in this edition. The platforms of the Impulse Network are based on the core topics of the initiative and the representation of our content-based output focus. Each platform sets its own focus point from which it aims to address the current challenges and opportunities within the sports industry to create valuable impulses for change that are based on the vessel sports, but may be applicable for society in general and are therefore aimed to be holistic, global and system-theory based.

We are looking forward to exchanging and meeting physically with you soon, and we wish you a wonderful summer.



**Julien Petat**

HEAD OF NETWORK



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# CHANGING THE STATUS QUO

*Diego Valdes and Dr. Stefan Walzel were both separately interviewed by a member of the Impulse Program 2021.*

*The two prestigious sports management professors share insights into their everyday life and how they research to improve the education of current and future leaders.*

*We would like to thank Diego Valdes and Dr. Stefan Walzel for their time.*

**Diego Valdes** is the founder and general director of the Sports Business Institute Barcelona, widely known as SBI. SBI Barcelona provides executive education for those who intend to move into the football industry, mainly in a leadership role. They focus on online education by delivering a Master's degree in Football Business & Management as well as various other courses, seminars and workshops. Diego himself has a Master in Sports Management in Barcelona. The Master was one reason for deep diving into sports academia, as he felt it was too generic and not focused enough on Football. Thus, he began to move into the industry and, with his previous expertise in corporate training working with multinational companies he designed a fitting program. His contacts from his journalistic career helped establish an institute focusing on the football industry and offer from an academic standpoint practical and real-life scenarios, mainly delivered online.

*Interview by Rado Simeunovic*





**Dr. Stefan Walzel** is a senior lecturer at the German Sport University Cologne, teaching management and focusing on international sports management, sports marketing, and sponsorship. He studied Sports science with a Major in Sports Economics and Sport management. Him becoming a teacher was an „accident“ as, after his studies, he used to work for a club, but then got an offer for a Ph.D. and since then fell in love with teaching and educating future talents. He is also secretary-general and board member of the European Association for Sport Management (EASM) and takes responsibility for establishing high-quality academic programs in Europe. Furthermore, he is researching current trends and developments to create a platform for knowledge exchange between academia and the professional field.

### **How do you research in the sports field to get the right insights, and what are possible difficulties?**

**Diego:** Prior to launching our Master in Football Business & Management, we did a lot of research as we wanted to make sure the program we designed met the market needs. We analyzed the trends, the industry's challenges and talked with many decision-makers about the opportunities, obstacles and projects they were facing or working on. Also, they taught us firsthand how those challenges needed to be addressed. Having first-hand knowledge from them was very valuable for us, as it validated many of the theories we had previously researched.

**Stefan:** There are some fundamental differences to other industries. We need to consider the specific features of sports, like the monopolies of the sports federation, which are common and mostly beneficial, compared to other industries where you try to avoid these.

### **How do you transfer knowledge to students during classes? What is your teaching method?**

**Stefan:** My approach has always been: „What can you give to the students in terms of skills and competencies to solve tomorrow's problems and challenges?“ More than teaching theories and theoretical frameworks, it includes making sure students are able to apply them. As I realized, a lot of students struggle to connect the frameworks. It is important to help them and to provide insights on how they can apply certain theories to current problems and current challenges. Furthermore, from an academic perspective, solving the problem isn't sufficient. We also need to think of how to avoid problems in the future. For that I like using simulations, case studies, or a management game with international students which allows





students to work in diverse groups and focus on cases over multiple days.

**Diego, what was the main reason to go completely online with SBI?**

**Diego:** By establishing SBI as an online educational institute, we could reach people in the main football markets as well as countries where these types of programs don't exist. Also, we can have top professionals from around the world deliver many of our classes. For example our sessions can be taught by an executive from England on one day, the USA the next and Asia the following week. One of the challenges we faced at the beginning was convincing people the online setup delivers the same value as face-to-face classes. Today, however we are glad to say that many professionals prefer the flexibility and quality that an online program can offer as far as content, global networking opportunities, and tailored mentorship. We also look to offer a competitive program with an affordable price point for students. All this being done in parallel with other professional or academic commitments.

**What is a big challenge in sports management with various stakeholders?**

**Diego:** One of the important things in any academic sports management setting is understanding that sport is different from any other industry. In sports, there are sporting results and economic results. Both important priorities yet sometimes not working in unison across all organizations. The symbiotic relationship between these two can sometimes become a challenge. In the past years, for example, the economic pressures and demands that the industry has had through its growth and massive market expansion globally have made it difficult for clubs to appease local and global fans, a challenge many sports properties are currently navigating inside their organizations.

**Stefan, why is it hard to justify disproportional wage distribution at a club?**

The majority of the revenues always goes to the players. And this is one main criticism. Managers in sports clubs tend to neglect to develop the organization as a whole.



It is not only the sporting department but also the marketing department, the facilities, infrastructure. I noticed that when a coach asks for renewing their license, an amount of 5000 Euros is not worth discussing. But if, for example, the marketing manager was asking for 5000 Euros for education programs to gain new knowledge, that becomes a matter of discussion. And this is something we need to consider when we say that sporting and economic success depends on each other. And suppose you maximize the sporting success but cannot grow with an economic perspective within your back office, the marketing or sponsorship department, and all the rest. In that case, you will fail to exploit the sporting success. So for that reason, you need to develop both ends simultaneously, as they are mutually dependent. If you fail to do so, then you will not be successful in the long term. Like the financial crisis a couple of years ago or the current pandemic, such crises make it very obvious where the problems are.

**„Managers in sports clubs tend to neglect to develop the organization as a whole.“**

**Do you think current decision-makers are not doing a perfect job?**

**Diego:** I believe for decision makers to perform better they must be prepared to affront the challenges facing the industry today. This preparation can come in the form of a formal education and/or experience. A strong leader must understand the complex ecosystem of the sports industry and ensure that all stakeholders are properly cared for, with a particular emphasis in the fan. Just recently, the example of the Super League showed that fans can disengage from the sport if they don't feel respected. And without

fans there is no product, there are no sponsors, there's no game, so it's very important to be aware of this. This is why I believe that tomorrow's leaders must be prepared to make better decisions that impact the game in a positive manner.

**Stefan:** In some organizations, I would say yes, but I do not blame the individuals. It's the environment and the circumstances where people behave. And this is something we have to ask ourselves, in many situations, what have we done, what have the athletes done, the coaches, other NGOs, officers and so on and so forth. To change this, I think understanding different perspectives and a change of mind is coming through step by step. Still, we should keep in mind that these organizations were successful in the past years by following their decisionmaking process. Now they start to realize that something is wrong and, in this case, external professionals can help.





**Stefan, could you please elaborate on the external professionals?**

**Stefan:** This depends on the problem. I mean, if you, for example, have any legal problem, then probably lawyers with expertise even from different industries might be helpful. Especially external people have a certain distance to the organization, so they see this and perceive a problem on a different level. They are not emotionally attached to the organization, and they have experience from other industries and can mutually and objectively analyze the situation and provide solutions. It is often a problem for people within the organization that they are emotionally attached to it. They don't have the distance to objectively and neutrally evaluate the situation.

**Do you think it is necessary to have a sportive education or can a former consultant do the same job equally?**

**Diego:** Although it is a unique industry from other corporate sectors, sports at the end of the day is still a business. As such it must have qualified professionals. I don't see any problem in having an executive that doesn't have a sports management specialization work in the industry. There are many transferable business skills that can be applied in sports. That said, sports has a unique idiosyncrasy that must be understood to be able to have success in it. For this reason I believe that sports management educational programs can provide that additional specialization for professionals to level-up and acquire the necessary skills to thrive.

**How accepted is academia's input in the sports industry, and is the sports industry ready to accept an academic path for future leaders?**

**Stefan:** There is more professionalization coming up and also with the increasing



number of graduates from universities. When they get the chance to perform, I think many sports organizations also value the quality of the education at the university and the knowledge they bring into the organization. This is a process in which they need to get experience, and people within this organization need to realize that sport management is an accepted academic discipline and field, and these are the persons to recruit.

**Diego:** Yes, I think so. As I mentioned before, I believe sports management academic programs are offering many valuable solutions to the industry precisely because the curriculums are being adapted to the current realities facing sport. Furthermore, the research prepared in academic settings can also prove to be of great value to such a fast-paced industry.

**Are former athletes suitable leaders in the sports industry?**

**Stefan:** Yes and no. I think what they have is unique expertise and knowledge when it comes to sports because this kind of experience and knowledge you gain from your sporting career. This is something you cannot teach at universities, so this is unique. On the other hand, the disadvantage is not having a proper education at





**„We need to provide the current generation of athletes the opportunity to study next to their sporting careers. It doesn't matter in which aspect they specialize, like sports management or any other sport science. However, especially sports in general could then be a preparation for a perfect fit later on in the industry.“**



**Dr. Stefan Walzel**

SPORT UNIVERSITY COLOGNE

university, which is my criticisms of the entire system. We need to provide the current generation of athletes the opportunity to study next to their sporting careers. It doesn't matter in which aspect they specialize, like sports management or any other sport science. However, especially sports in general could then be a preparation for a perfect fit later on in the industry. We missed the major opportunities. And this is a challenge, where many stakeholders have to work on to enable athletes to study and share their knowledge.

**Diego:** Yes, however just because they were former athletes does not mean they will perform well off the pitch. They must educate themselves across a number of areas such as finance, legal, business development, etc. to be able to perform from a business and corporate standpoint. Evidently many former athletes have numerous leadership qualities that are valuable assets in a business setting. Many of our former students at SBI include current and former professional football players that seek to leverage their skills as athletes and complement them with the academic support that SBI offers. Some of our most recognizable alumni include Wes Morgan, captain of Leicester City FC,

Troy Deeney, captain of Watford FC as well as numerous other current and professional footballers looking to make an impact in leadership roles in the sports and football industry.



# HOW ACADEMIA CAN SAVE THE FUTURE OF SPORTS

The sports industry is one of the most interlaced industries due to its various stakeholders. Instead of offering a physical product to its customers, an emphasis is put on the entertainment sports provides and the emotions that it entails. Although fans around the world often see the athletes competing on a global stage, the work done behind the curtain by back offices is often overlooked. In general, business is measured in terms of numbers generated. However, success in sports is made up of two pillars: the economic and sporting results. Thus, these two entities need to form a symbiotic core (relationship) to improve and grow together.

Unfortunately, it seems that the management aspect is neglected nowadays. In a cyclical environment where short-term success is valued more than longstanding and sustainable development, investing more than a year in advance appears to be a waste of money. As clubs and athletes worldwide are required to perform year in year out, managers tend to focus on the short-term sporting results and thus distribute a prominent share of revenue to these athletes' wages. Meanwhile, human capital of economic activity continues to be disregarded, resulting in a lack of commitment to further train it. As in every macroeconomic setting, an equilibrium is reached where demand meets supply. But which one lacks in the case of the sports industry? In my opinion, a lack of supply has been apparent for a while, as academia has not been incentivized or

was not eager to examine the sports business and offer an adequate education or further training programs. Yet, it seems this imbalance is shifting to the demand side. Whereas other industries willingly and thoroughly invest in their employees' education and development, the sports industry appears to be behind the curb.

Nevertheless, academia has begun to catch up regarding practical development within the sports industry and can help by offering the correct curriculum. There has been a gradual increase in schools offering an executive or entire study program. These programs must be related to the praxis if we are to prepare both current decision-makers and future generations for the roles that await them. Research and teaching methods have generally improved and are now held close to practical examples, resulting in lessons learned from past theories and new adapted ideas to tackle the challenges of tomorrow. Unfortunately, current leaders didn't have the chance to follow such education and have consequently transformed sports into a money-making machine. More specifically, they have traded the love of the fans for economic success in the sporting pillar, thus neglecting their back office. Thankfully, change is knocking on the door, and sports entities become aware of the importance of qualified individuals for overall success. Hence, there is enormous hope in fitting education for athletes and professionals to complement their unique experience gained on the field, which cannot



be taught in an academic curriculum. Evidently, having a past sporting career does not and should not guarantee a role in management. We must stress the importance of academia if we are to take a step in the correct direction.

Although this process takes time, tomorrow's generation and leaders already have accepted the academic input. Thus, education and „know-how“ will become the deciding factors of tomorrow instead of a plethora of connections. Nevertheless, decisions are generally taken by single individuals based on the circumstances given. For such scenarios, academia won't manage to provide the best practices or solutions. But, the decision-maker will know how to adapt these theories into practical settings and consider all involved stakeholders. By stakeholders, I mean the fans, of course! The pandemic and several decisions have shown the importance of fans in sports. Without the most loyal supporters, the sport as a product depreciates, leaving no opportunities for sponsorships and further revenue streams. Therefore, I am looking forward to counting on my generation and the ones to come to take advantage of academia in sports and increase the acceptance of proper education and improve decision making.



**Rado Simeunovic**

IMPULSE PROGRAM





# THEY SCORE

## A Q&A with Spencer Wadsworth

*In connection with a joint research project with US-based sports marketing and talent management company Wasserman on the topic of women's football in Europe, team lead Enya Dietze did a Q&A with Wasserman's Senior Vice President of Global Soccer.*

*Spencer Wadsworth is a player agent who is representing some of the top women's footballers in the world and leading women's practice at Wasserman.*

*His passion:*

1. *Women's football in general*
2. *Its potential for growth*
3. *Helping to grow the game to become a major player in the sports world and beyond*

**Do you think the current landscape in women's football is promising and will lead to an even better development in the future? What movements will lead to this outcome?**

Yes, it has a lot of potential. What's important to the movement is progression, and we need continued support, resources and exposure that the men's side has. Change is not going to be immediate, but it's important to move toward our end goal with consistent progression.

**What are in your opinion the biggest achievements in women's football (soccer) in the past 5 years? Do you think they developed to their full potential and impact?**

To me, the biggest success is that every year the game is getting bigger and bigger, growing at a consistent and steady pace. The game is becoming increasingly global. Providing more young girls and current pros more opportunities will help to reach full potential.



**„We need continued support, resources and exposure that the men’s side has.“**



**Spencer Wadsworth**

SVP GLOBAL SOCCER WASSERMAN

**Is diversity and inclusion still a problem area in women’s football? What are the main challenges and which areas would produce the most effective outcome for the better?**

Access to lower-income communities. Not enough availability of the sport in underserved communities around the world.

**How could women’s football become a sport that fans watch all-year round, not only in times of major competitions?**

Accessibility to watch the games on TV on major networks. This exposure is key – it must be easy to find and watch games on TV.

**What are some topics that need to still be addressed to further develop women’s football?**

Resources – more professional environment and better infrastructure such as soccer-specific stadiums, training environments and facilities need to be provided.

**What would your ideal football scenario in 2030 look like in terms of sponsorship, training and education support as well as infrastructure for matches?**

I hope the game continues to grow and we see improvements in every area from where we are today.

**Do you think brands tackle women’s football (soccer) at the right angle in terms of ads, associations and depiction?**

We are headed in right direction, as the depiction of women focuses more on soccer. More emphasis about journey and their professional career is essential.

**In your work as an agent, do you experience privileges men’s football (soccer) players have that women do not have?**

The level of professionalism from certain clubs in regards to resources and providing safe training environments.

*In a joint research with Wasserman we conducted a survey across 7 countries in Europe to gain insights into the accessibility of women’s football, especially towards younger people. With a surprisingly high number of viewers of women’s football and a common demand for more games accessible to society; Spencer’s real-life experience supports our findings. The survey will be published beginning of June as a whitepaper on our website and social media.*



**Enya Dietze**

PLATFORM MANAGEMENT IN



# ESSAY COMPETITION

## 2021

While our conference already incorporates formats of interactivity with young minds raising their voices and sharing their learnings, our aim is to further the intergenerational dialogue through an essay competition. Through this format, the next generation is offered a platform to share their opinions, which form an equally important part of the dialogue as the insights/knowledge of the experts. For participating in the essay competition we ask innovative minds to elaborate on the question below. The authors are encouraged to use their imagination while always referring their ideas and opinions to academic knowledge.

At the Impulse Summit 2021 we ask leaders of today's sports industry to share the lessons they learned in the past 21 years.

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### Topic



Imagine yourself being an expert in the sports industry in 21 years (in 2042). How would you assess the question we pose to current executives for the Impulse Summit in 2021? What is your biggest lesson learned from the past 21 years?

### Prices



The prizepool consists of **5000 CHF** and will be split among the best three participants. Additionally the most inspiring writers will be **invited to the Impulse Summit** as Global Talents.



### Find more information under

[impulse.network/network#essay\\_competition](https://impulse.network/network#essay_competition)





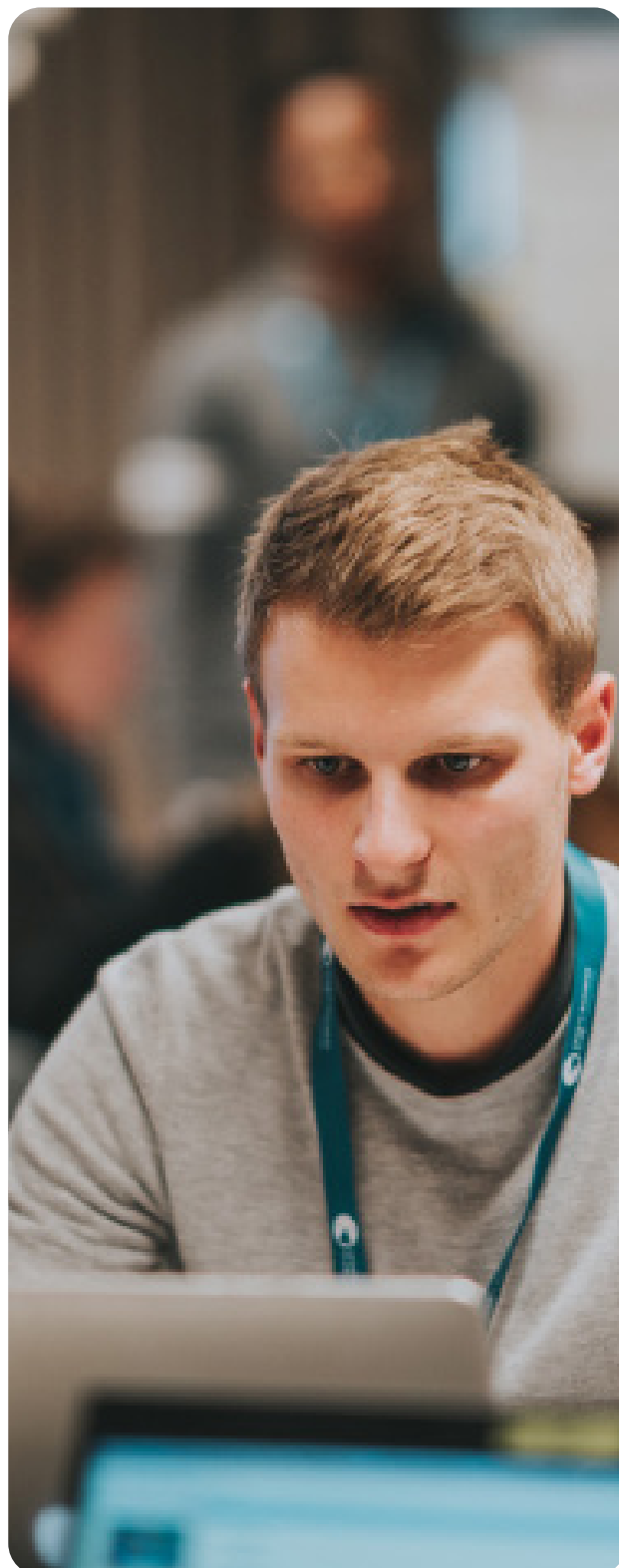
# GLOBAL TALENTS

## Reasons to apply

International innovative talents have the opportunity to become part of our four-day Global Talents Program for free. The first two days of the Program are fully dedicated to the personal and professional development of the students. While the Experience Day opens the doors to see behind the scenes of a key player in the Sports Industry, the Talents Day includes different learning formats, in order to educate and prepare the students for the conference. At the Impulse Summit 2021, they will get the opportunity to meet industry leaders on an eye-level. Thus, the next generation will not only get insights into the industry but will have the chance to share their ideas and work with experts on highly relevant topics. While expanding their professional network, we make sure that the international students have the chance to socialize with their peers, learn about their different backgrounds and build lasting friendships. Becoming a Global Talent offers students a unique opportunity to make one's own first steps into the sports business world.

**Apply now!**

[impulse.network/impulse-summit-2021](https://impulse.network/impulse-summit-2021)





## IMPRINT

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# Impulse Quarterly

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Thank you.

