

The business of sport

 By [Mike Sharman](#)

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The sport industry is at a crossroads. The impact of Covid-19 on revenue streams has been tangible.



Mike Sharman

Conversely, we have witnessed pockets of innovation such as Kevin De Bruyne negotiating his new Man City contract with data analysts rather than a traditional agent service. Connor McGregor made more money last year from his whiskey side hustle than he did from punching people in the face.

We have even experienced attempts at disruption with the 'Weekend Special' ESL... but we know how quickly that investment bank-backed flame, fizzled.

With legislative developments at collegiate sport level in the United States - Fair Pay to Play Act and NIL - as well as the boom in blockchain technology supported NFTs and the adoption by major players such as the NBA and more recently - at home - Bryan Habana becoming the first South African to sell an NFT commemorating his infamous cheetah sprint (for approximately R150,000 for the benefit of his foundation), sport is one of the most bankable bets for the decade ahead.

Let's rewind... how we innovated when the sporting world came to a halt.

Sign one: October 2019, Bryan (Habana) and I had dinner with one of South Africa's most highly-rated VCs. He planted a seed: '(Bryan + ) x scale = y'.

Sign two: I read one physical book a year, in December. It's my holiday pleasure. 2019's read was *That Will Never Work*, by Netflix co-founder Marc Randolph. It chronicles the genesis of the streaming platform with the initial considerations of running a 'VHS rental business via mail'. Fortunately, Japan invented the DVD and Randolph and Reed Hastings were spared from sending tapes in the post. This planted the seed of 'scale'.

Sign three: Bryan provided the insight into the lack of website adoption by athletes - rugby players in particular - and post Japan 2019, a domain name search for some of the most valuable Springboks will return figures of \$100,000+ just to acquire 'namesurname.com' for some of our Rugby World Cup winners.

The reality is that, with social media, most athletes don't have a website because it's neither easy nor cost effective to create one - there's design, development, hosting costs, templates that aren't geared purely to an athlete's needs. The problem with a pure social media play is that your personal brand lives across the internet in an extremely fragmented way.

If a fan or brand is looking for you, they first need to know who you are, and then guess your handle on the various social platforms in order to find you to follow you. Lastly, because of the way in which social media algorithms distribute your content to your timelines, not all of your followers or fans see all of your content, all of the time. This is a problem for your sponsors as they are never exposed to your entire audience - the universe that defines the value of your digital presence.

Let's build one destination to house your social media, key stats, and a place to showcase your sponsors

Ben Karpinski and I were inspired by Tinder's focus on the predominant profile picture. Its purpose is to find you dates, ours is to make athletes more marketable and there is one social channel where these individuals are always presented at their professional best - Instagram.

On 30 January 2020 we registered MatchKit.co.

Some sketching ensued until we agreed on a more refined approach - website builder, best social media content featured, key stats, and the integration of a charity or foundation page to raise funds for something close to an athlete's heart.

The kicker, however, was when we obsessed over a store - for both personalised, branded merch where every athlete has the potential to brand their own clothing without ever having to see, touch or house / deliver the stock (MatchKit takes care of all of this for you), and for those who want to sell personalised voice notes and custom videos for fans and their friends' special occasions - there's an option for that too!

We have fast-tracked our MVP (minimum viable product) due to the impact of Covid-19 on the sporting world and those athletes in particular who are the journeymen and women; the ones who rely on physical sporting fixtures, in order to make a living and to pay their bills.

MatchKit is for them, to help them get back into the game and turn on the gears of their earning potential.

What is MatchKit.co?

1. MatchKit.co - a platform to help athletes make money, regardless the status of sporting events
2. It's a DIY website builder that enables athletes or their agents to showcase their sporting pedigree and sponsors - live within minutes
3. It integrates into existing social media channels - including TikTok - to show potential sponsors the scope and quality of an athlete's influence
4. It provides athletes a hassle-free, plug and play e-commerce store - where your fans can purchase everything from

bespoke branded merchandise to personalised video and audio shout-outs

5. It allows you to crowdfund for your sporting events, competitions and other financial needs

The Olympic games served up the opportunity for us to leverage our tech to crowdfund solutions for two alternate, yet purpose-driven initiatives:

1.) Help SA Hockey become financially independent from SASCOC to get to Tokyo.

SA Hockey crowdfunds its way to the Olympics.

2.) Deliver justice to our two Olympic medalists who were said to not be receiving bonus funding.

South Africa crowdfunds medal bonuses for our two Olympic medalists

We provide insights to both athletes and teams with regards to the value of their audience and provide ancillary data to the commercial managers of teams, in order to articulate value above and beyond traditional metrics. Data truly is gold wrt the MatchKit value proposition.

1.) USA Women's 7s Tokyo 2020 - an experiment in data insights and engagement during the Olympic games for four women rugby players



[click to enlarge](#)

2.) Dricus du Plessis fan engagement and social media explosion during the week of a global, UFC bout



[click to enlarge](#)

From a trend perspective, we believe Friendsorship is on the rise and the vertical to keep an eye, based on this piece we wrote on Bizcommunity in 2021 - and we are looking at integrating NFT and the associated digital representation of value where fans can purchase art, coupled with experience.



Friendsorship: the future of sport sponsorship

Mike Sharman 17 Sep 2021



Sport is not a game, it's one of the most lucrative value chains in the world.

ABOUT MIKE SHARMAN

Mike Sharman is the owner of Retroviral Digital Communications, an online communications consultancy specialising in communication strategy, social media and content creation.

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