

BEYOND PERFORMANCE

2026 #6

Your sports business snack.

MADE BY GPS PERFORMANCE
ISSUE #6

In a world where sport evolves faster than the seasons, staying ahead takes more than passion: it takes perspective. This newsletter serves it up: sharp insights, fresh trends, and bold ideas. A smart snack for those shaping tomorrow's sport industry.

EVENTS
SPONSORING
COMMUNICATION
RESEARCH
TECH

EVENTS

SPONSORING

COMMUNICATION

RESEARCH

TECH

TECH

EVENTS

SPONSORING

COMMUNICATION

RESEARCH

RESEARCH

TECH

EVENTS

SPONSORING

COMMUNICATION

#6

Data drives the athlete. Tech reshapes the game. Brands fuel the story. In today's sports world, performance is built as much off the field as on it, where science, innovation, and image collide.

EVENTS

World Cup: Final whistle, and what comes next

Curtain down on the first 48-team World Cup. On 19 July at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, Spain outlasted Argentina 1-0 after extra time, Ferran Torres striking in the 106th minute to hand La Roja their second world title after 2010. Argentina came within one match of a feat unseen since Brazil in 1962: back-to-back crowns. History leaned the other way. The expanded format delivered 104 matches across three nations (the United States, Mexico and Canada) and a first-ever live halftime show, curated by Coldplay's Chris Martin, that turned the final into a global entertainment property as much as a sporting one. What's next? Attention shifts fast: the tournament doubles as the launchpad for a new commercial cycle, with venues, host cities and federations already recalibrating toward LA 2028 and the next wave of rights negotiations. The takeaway for the industry: scale is no longer a ceiling, it's the new baseline.

Esports World Cup: Seven weeks, Paris, and a \$75M signal

From 6 July to 23 August, Paris hosts the third Esports World Cup, and the first outside Riyadh, relocated to the French capital amid regional instability. The numbers command attention: a record \$75 million prize pool, the largest in esports history, up from \$71.5M in 2025 and \$62.5M in 2024. On the ground, that's 25 competitions across 24 titles: VALORANT, Counter-Strike 2, Dota 2, League of Legends and more, with over 2,000 players from more than 200 clubs and 100-plus countries

feeding into a single cross-game Club Championship worth \$30M on its own. Last year's edition drew roughly 750 million viewers. For the industry, the story sits in the sponsorship column: the roster spans Sony, Lenovo, Allianz, Aramco and Hilton, and 2026 quietly opened the door to licensed crypto and blockchain sponsors, under strict French rules, no on-site activation, no token integration. A telling marker of where competitive gaming's commercial model is heading, and who's now allowed to buy in.

Tour de France: Barcelona start, Paris in sight

The 113th Grande Boucle rolled out of Barcelona on 4 July, a third Spanish Grand Départ after San Sebastián in 1992 and Bilbao in 2023, and the southernmost start in Tour history. The opening act was a rarity: a team time trial to launch the race, the first in that slot since 1971. Twenty-one stages, 3,333 kilometres, 23 teams, finishing on the Champs-Élysées on 26 July after three ascents of Montmartre. What comes next is the Alpine finale, including back-to-back ascents of Alpe d'Huez, a first in Tour history. For host cities and sponsors, the Spanish opening is a reminder that cycling's biggest asset travels, and monetises across borders.

Wimbledon: Sinner defends, Nosková breaks through

The 139th Championships wrapped on 12 July at the All England Club, and the grass told two stories. Jannik Sinner

defended his men's crown, downing Alexander Zverev 6-7(7-9), 7-6(7-2), 6-3, 6-4 for a second Wimbledon title and his fifth major overall, extending a decade-defining rivalry at the top of the men's game. On the women's side, a new name lifted the Venus Rosewater Dish: Linda Nosková, 21, beat compatriot Karolina Muchová 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 in an all-Czech final for her first Grand Slam. Beyond the results, the fortnight reinforced Wimbledon's pulling power as a cultural event, celebrity-packed stands, record-adjacent broadcast figures, and the women's final topping viewership charts. The lesson for the industry: heritage and modern audience appeal aren't opposites. Handled well, tradition remains one of sport's most bankable assets.





SPONSORING

Pro Padel League's new partnership

On 1 July, the Pro Padel League struck its first exclusive national-TV deal: a partnership with USA Sports putting five 2026 championship matches on CNBC, across New York, LA, Playa del Carmen, Guadalajara and the Miami finals. Founded only in 2023, PPL now sits in a rights portfolio alongside the WNBA, NASCAR, the Premier League and the PGA Tour, capping a year that also brought a \$15M Series A and deals with Frederique Constant, Franklin Sports and Padeltek. The tell: airing on a business-news channel, not just a sports one, is a bet that padel's audience is affluent, urban and worth reaching where investors watch. Emerging sports don't just need eyeballs, they need the right ones.



Will Omnicom win Adidas?

Per Adweek (30 June), Omnicom Media Group is set to win Adidas' \$512 million global media account, beating Publicis and incumbent WPP, with OMG agency PHD running the business, fresh off a Media Grand Prix at Cannes. None of the parties confirmed on record, so treat it as reported, not official. Why it matters: where a sportswear giant's media planning sits shapes how hundreds of millions in sports-adjacent spend gets deployed, from athlete campaigns to event activations. When Adidas reshuffles its roster, the ripple reaches every federation, athlete and property hoping to feature next.



Nike and its lots of littles

Nike is rewriting its playbook around micro-communities. Instead of leaning only on one hero film, its World Cup push ran a three-month «12 Weeks of Football» programme, collaborations, drops and social content feeding many small cultural moments rather than a single blockbuster. CEO Elliott Hill said the next generation wants sport on its own terms: «every story a doorway» for a different community.



COMMUNICATION

The World Cup's other competition: the ads

Every great venue is two contests at once. There's the one on the pitch, and there's the one playing out on screens, where sponsors fight just as hard for a place in the memory. A World Cup is the ultimate arena for that second game: the largest audience in sport, the highest stakes, and a rare licence to go big. So the smartest brands treat it less like an ad slot and more like a stage, pouring craft, budget and a fair bit of nerve into films built to travel far beyond the final whistle. Some chase emotion, some chase the laugh, some just chase the algorithm. Here's our pick of the campaigns that got it right this year.



When «censorship» becomes a marketing play

Brands are borrowing the visual language of censorship, redaction bars, blacked-out claims, to turn regulatory friction into publicity. The Drum flags Levi's, Heinz, Oatly and Patrón, the latter redacting wording it couldn't run and making it the campaign. Clever, and built for social. But experts warn of a line between amplifying genuine censorship concerns and staging a «clapback» at routine regulation as a stunt, lean too hard and you trivialise the real thing. For sports brands, it comes down to tone: audiences can tell a stand from a stunt. Bold, or borrowed outrage? Worth asking before reaching for the black bar.



11:37 PM
KICK OFF

«The Other Kick Off» the smartest use of a big moment

This one lands because it pairs a serious cause with a brilliant tactic. On 17 June, as England kicked off their World Cup, domestic-abuse charity Women's Aid launched «The Other Kick Off», flagging a second kick-off time: 11:37pm, when abusers tend to come home after the match. The tactic is sharp: it commandeers football's most-asked question, «what time is kick-off?», and bends all that built-in attention toward something people too often look away from. And the substance is real, reported domestic abuse rises 38% when England lose and 26% when they win, so the tournament isn't a random backdrop, it's exactly where the risk spikes. It ran on billboards, vans and fly-posters by the fan zones, with the out-of-home space donated. The lesson for the industry: the moments everyone's already watching are the best possible platform to say something that matters, but only when the message is worth the megaphone. Hijacking attention is easy; earning it with a cause this important is the real craft.



Physiological demands of alpine skiing and injury prevention: Alpine skiing is not inherently risky but physically demanding

The scary reputation doesn't match the data (Belhedi, Clerc & Tscholl, 2025). Recreational skiers see about 0.4 to 2.6 injuries per 1,000 skier days, in line with everyday sport. Elite racers post far higher, more severe rates, which is what feeds the «extreme» image. The reframe: skiing isn't dangerous, it's demanding. Most injuries (lower limb, ACL) hit when the slope outruns a skier's fitness. Coaching and conditioning beat reputation.



The other side of sports betting

The money doesn't come out of other entertainment, it comes out of savings (Baker et al., 2026). Across 183,821 US households, legalised online betting cut deposits into investment accounts by roughly 14%, about \$81 a quarter for the average household and around \$221 among frequent bettors, with low-savings households hit hardest. An Eras Tour placebo test settled the question: households in states where Taylor Swift played spent more on entertainment but kept investing normally. The effect is gambling-specific. For an industry leaning hard on betting partnerships, the revenue is real. So is the cost behind it.



No perfect stride: what really makes a sprinter fast

Coaching gospel says there's one right way to run fast. New research disagrees (Flinders University, Sports Medicine, 2026). Speed doesn't come from copying a textbook technique, it emerges from each athlete's own mix of body, coordination and training, which is why the fastest athletes look so different at full flight. Lead author Dr. Dylan Hicks points to Australia's Gout Gout: fast on his own mechanics, not an imitation of Bolt.

The shift for coaches and talent scouts: stop drilling one model, let each athlete find their most efficient movement. Individuality might be the edge.



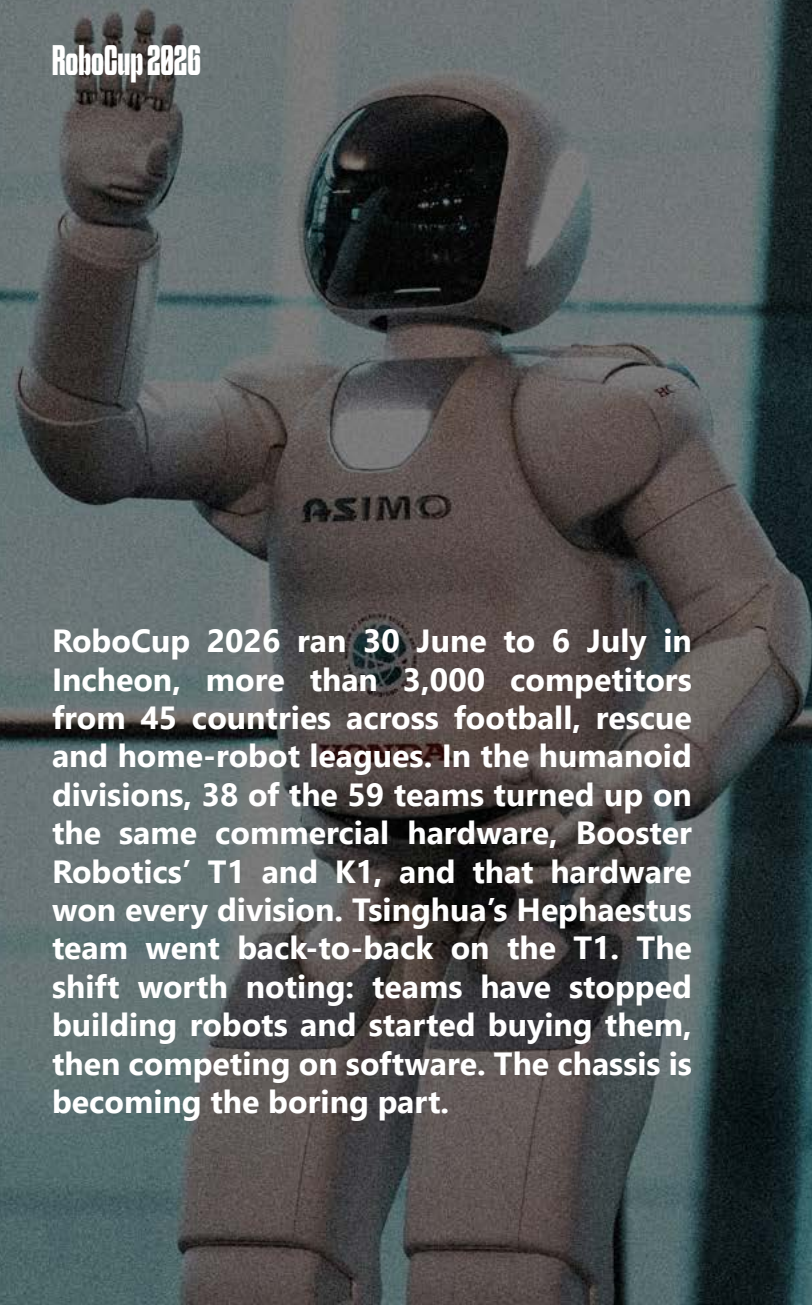
The transfer market halo

A star signing can move more than the standings (Campayo-Sanchez, Mas-Ruiz & Nicolau, 2025). Across 21 marquee moves to Saudi Arabia's Pro League, announcing a player's arrival lifted the market value of hotel chains operating there, stronger when the fee was low and the player's Instagram following high. Athletes are destination marketing engines now, and their reach moves markets well beyond the pitch.



TECH

RoboCup 2026



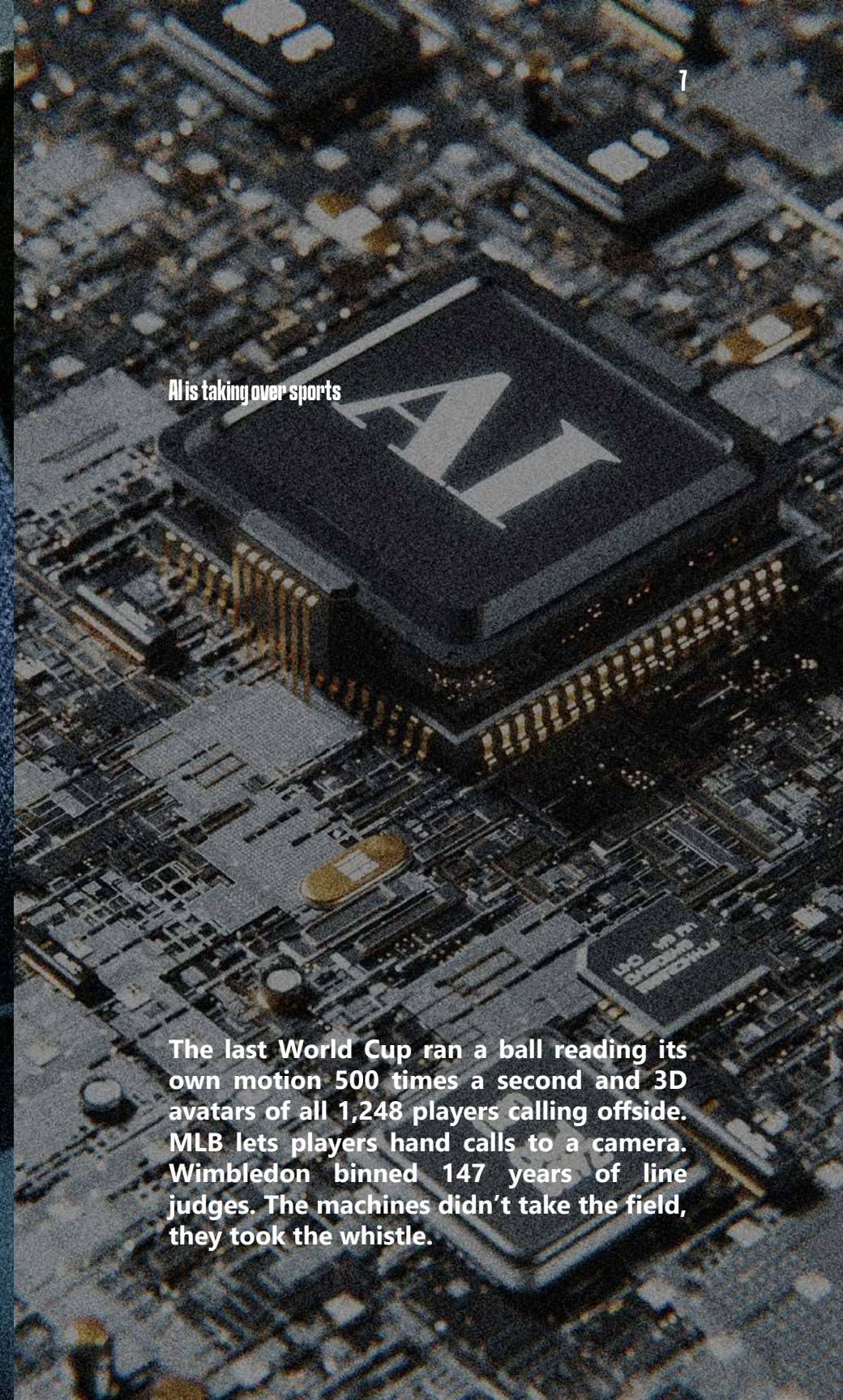
RoboCup 2026 ran 30 June to 6 July in Incheon, more than 3,000 competitors from 45 countries across football, rescue and home-robot leagues. In the humanoid divisions, 38 of the 59 teams turned up on the same commercial hardware, Booster Robotics' T1 and K1, and that hardware won every division. Tsinghua's Hephaestus team went back-to-back on the T1. The shift worth noting: teams have stopped building robots and started buying them, then competing on software. The chassis is becoming the boring part.

Garmin Cirqa



Fresh off the press: Garmin unveiled the Cirqa, its first screenless smart band, going on sale 24 July at \$199 / £179. It's a direct shot at Whoop, but with a twist that fits your audience: no mandatory subscription. It covers 24/7 heart rate, SpO2, sleep and up to 10 days of battery, with optional paid insights via Garmin Connect+. Why it matters: the screenless, subscription-optional category is heating up fast (Fitbit Air, Polar Loop, Whoop all circling), signalling a shift toward cheaper, calmer wearables that track without a screen shouting at you.

AI is taking over sports



The last World Cup ran a ball reading its own motion 500 times a second and 3D avatars of all 1,248 players calling offside. MLB lets players hand calls to a camera. Wimbledon binned 147 years of line judges. The machines didn't take the field, they took the whistle.

NEWS FROM GPS

At the UCI BMX Racing World Championships, persistent wind forced the cancellation of the quarters, semis and finals, leaving the titles to be settled on Saturday's round-of-16 times. **Zoé Claessens** took her heat comfortably, with no way of knowing that a few hundredths more would have put her on the podium: fourth, 0.245 off bronze, the rainbow jersey going to Britain's Beth Shriever. It followed European silver at Sarrians in early July. She sits fifth in the World Cup standings, with racing resuming in October.

Annique Niederhauser and **Menia Bentele** reached the final of the Geneva Futures and came through qualifying at the Gstaad Elite16 in early July, the beach season running on through the summer while the snow athletes are still in the gym. That gym work follows a winter that delivered. **Loïc Meillard** closed his season

with two second places in the finals at Lillehammer, and has since been celebrated at home in Hérévence, where he became a father for the first time. **Elena Curtoni** ended a three-year drought with victory in the Val di Fassa super-G on 8 March, her fourth career win. **Alexis Monney** banked two downhill podiums before surgery on a fractured right wrist after a Swiss championships crash, successful and timed to leave his summer preparation intact.

April brought two markers. **Marc Rochat** announced his retirement on 13 April after fifteen years at the top, thanking his family, sponsors and federation for helping him live a childhood dream. Days later, Swiss-Ski confirmed its 2026/27 selections: **Luca Aerni** holds his national-team place at 33 after his Val d'Isère podium, alongside **Alexis Monney**, **Loïc Meillard** and **Mélanie Meillard**. **Sue Piller** was the one moving

up, earning cadre A after her breakthrough season, while **Amélie Klopfenstein** continues in cadre B.

In Italy, **Marta Bassino** had her final surgery in late May, the plate out of her left knee, and has been training on skis through the summer with a full 2026/27 return in her sights. The FISI squads announced on 29 May confirmed her in the elite group, **Elena Curtoni** in the speed team, **Mattia Casse** in the men's speed group, and **Filippo Della Vite** and **Giorgia Collomb** in the technical groups, for the season leading to the Crans-Montana Worlds.

The roster has also grown with the arrival of **Aymeric Hannart** (2007) at GPS Performance. Hailing from Vissoie in the Val d'Anniviers, Aymeric is one of Switzerland's promising young technical skiers. Following an excellent 2024–2025

season, during which he claimed his first FIS podium finishes, he confirmed his potential in 2025–2026 by notably finishing 11th in the slalom at the FIS Junior World Championships. He begins the new season as a member of Swiss-Ski's C squad, aiming to continue his development, improve his FIS points, and achieve strong results on the Europa Cup circuit

Next up: Sölden in late October, then Crans-Montana, 1–14 February 2027.



GPS PERFORMANCE

Crafting Collaborations That Shape the Sports Industry

Founded in Lausanne at the heart of the global sports ecosystem, GPS Performance is a strategic agency dedicated to advancing elite sports. With over 25 years of experience, we support athletes, brands, federations, and events, helping them thrive in an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment.

performance@gps-performance.com
+41(0)21 614 34 00
gps-performance.com



Empowering Athletes

We help world-class athletes build sustainable careers. From commercial optimization to personal branding, contract management, legal guidance, and communication strategy, GPS Performance provides tailored support so athletes can focus fully on their sport.

Amplifying Brands

We enable brands to maximize their impact through sport. Our services include sponsorship strategy, athlete and event partnerships, activation planning, and performance measurement, ensuring that every collaboration delivers both visibility and value.

Elevating Events

GPS Performance brings expert support to sporting events: from sponsor acquisition and hospitality concepts to global promotion and operational management. We create high-impact experiences that resonate with audiences and partners alike.

Driving Federation Growth

We help federations and sports institutions professionalize and expand their activities through strategic consulting, sponsorship development, and enhanced management practices.

DISCLAIMER

This document is intended for a selected audience within GPS Performance's professional network: partners, sponsors, athletes, and trusted contacts. It is the result of GPS Performance's independent research and ongoing industry monitoring. The insights and perspectives shared herein do not aim to cover all developments in the sports industry and are provided for informational purposes only. They do not constitute professional, legal, or commercial advice.

The information presented reflects the state of knowledge at the time of publication. GPS Performance cannot guarantee its completeness or continued accuracy, and accepts no liability for any use made of this content. All texts, data, and materials remain the intellectual property of GPS Performance and may not be reproduced, distributed, or shared externally without prior written consent.