

Summer 2017

back pages

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SPORT



CHRISTIANS IN
SPORT



WHAT'S INSIDE

Welcome to your Back Pages. Thank you for partnering with us in reaching the world of sport for Christ. This issue includes a special feature on our Sports Plus camps, which have seen more than 9,500 young people attend since 1995, the diary of a Regional Worker and a focus on our cricket ministry. Happy reading!

Ed Mezzetti

Back Pages Editor

City of York Athletic Club, St Thomas' Church, York



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Our Mission

To reach the world of sport for Christ.

Our Vision

Christians everywhere living out their faith in sports clubs and teams.

Churches everywhere engaging with their local sports communities.

Sportspeople everywhere having the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus.

Key:	Youth	Student	Adult	Performance	International	Church

THE
SPORTS
MISSION PACK

For free resources to reach sportspeople, visit sportsmissionpack.co.uk

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Summer is such a special time of year for Christians in Sport because of Sports Plus. The camps have been transformational for 22 years. Thousands of stories could be written about Sports Plus and no one story could do justice to the amazing work God has done in the lives of young people at camp.

from the combination of Bible teaching, community and its application to the sporting life which shaped their lives as young people.'

There have been thousands of young people who have come to know Christ and grow in Him over these years. It is a remarkable work, one that has been a source of great growth and joy in the advancement of God's kingdom in the world of sport. Do enjoy the stories of



"Sports Plus is a remarkable work, one that has been a source of great growth and joy in the advancement of God's kingdom in the world of sport."

Since our first camp at Cokethorpe School in 1995, they have made a huge impact for the gospel in the world of sport. At the most matter-of-fact level a significant number of the Christians in Sport staff appointed over the years have come through our Sports Plus camps and at least 50 people who have gone on to lead churches in the UK have been involved as young people or leaders.

There are also a number of individuals who have progressed to the highest level of sport. All these things are a great joy as it means many in significant leadership positions have benefited

God at work in the lives of sportspeople as you read this magazine.

Please join with us in praising God for the thousands of young people who have come to know Christ and grown in their faith over the years of Sports Plus. Thank you for your continued support in prayer and finances that enable this wonderful gospel opportunity to reach all parts of the world of sport for Christ.

Graham Daniels

General Director

Director at Cambridge United FC, St Andrew the Great, Cambridge





These photos are from some of the events we have been supporting in recent months



GOD'S WORK IN THE WORLD OF SPORT

Summer 2017

Christians in sport are reaching out with the gospel where God has placed them. Here's a collection of recent stories we hope encourage and inspire you.

I'd been part of rugby teams all my life, but this year was the first time I'd really felt able to share my faith with my teammates. God really blessed me with a close group of guys that I had genuine personal friendships with, which made sharing the gospel with them so natural. I ended up having some friends over for a Dialogue Dinner, where Christians in Sport staff member Mike Harris gave a gospel talk, and met up one-to-one with one guy to read through the Bible. Whilst the journey's not over yet, it was so encouraging to see God working in a place I'd never really opened up to Him before.

Dan Viner, Bristol University Rugby Club

Through being involved in Christians in Sport events for five years now, it has made me realise just how big the mission field in the world of sport is. After listening to Allen McCluggage (Northern Irish staff worker) share at my church one Sunday evening, God gave me a vision to see Christians in Sport brought to the sports fields of rugby mad and hockey driven Ballymena Academy. With a good support network of others behind me, we were able to run a team challenge event, open to the whole school. We had a challenging talk from Allen at the end with



Ballymena Academy Team Challenge

pizza to round the evening off. God was so good to us in that we had 14 teams, with just over 110 people attending, which meant that 110 people heard the gospel of Jesus and got to play the sport which each of them greatly enjoyed.

Rebecca Orr, Ballymena Academy

We started the year with a fairly small group, with three maybe four people at our meetings, but we've been gaining momentum since then, getting to know each other and supporting and praying for each other. For the first time two members from our group attended Christians in Sport's student conference Clubhouse Xtra in January which spurred us on to see Jesus' name made great in the world of sport at Aber. We put on a Sports Quiz, and everyone was faithfully



praying for the event and so boldly inviting friends to it. We had 75 people there, many who do not know Jesus. There was a challenging message and some great conversations. Some attended CU mission week events, some have come to church, and some are now reading the Bible with members of our group.

Beth Saunders, Aberswyth University Ultimate Frisbee Club

Our Sports Quiz night was a resounding success - we were expecting two teams at the start of the week, but we were turning people away by the evening itself. We had over 50 people participating - the majority of them non-church goers. All said how much they enjoyed the quiz - it is a great resource and one we may well run again as there was talk among our guests of when we would do another. Andrew Wingfield Digby's talk was brilliant. We are praying for take up on the follow-on events, but feel we have taken ground!

Lara Froud, St John the Baptist Church, Kingston Bagpuize

The Church of England's Ministry of Sport scheme is up and running in Blackburn Diocese following a launch at Preston North End Football Club. Designed to help local churches share the gospel in and through sport, the initiative is being

rolled out across the country and is backed by Christians in Sport. Bishop of Blackburn, Rt Rev Julian Henderson, is fully supportive and attended the launch. He said: "I want to see us maximise opportunities sport presents to us for meeting and serving people while sharing something of the gospel of Christ through sporting activity." Keith McIntosh, one of the driving forces behind the Ministry of Sport in Lancashire, is an active member of St Andrew's Church in Leyland, and has been involved with Christians in Sport for over three decades. He said: "The positive aspects of sport can benefit everyone - specifically those aligned to integrity, honesty and fairness, which are the basis of the gospel. Team members - including me - are available to visit parishes and explain how they can use sporting activities in their mission work and reach the world of sport for Christ."

Blackburn Diocese



Keith McIntosh at the Blackburn Diocese launch

Get in touch

We'd love to hear your stories of how God is working in your world of sport. Share yours by emailing ed.mezzetti@christiansinsport.org.uk



The highlight of the summer

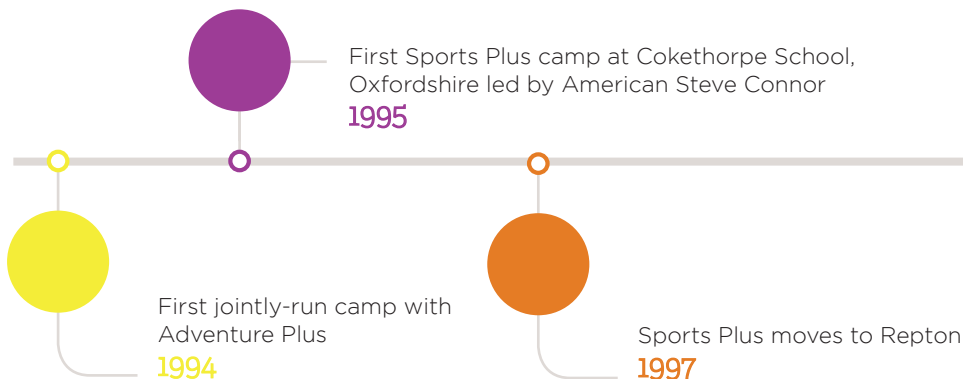
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There really is nowhere better to see God's incredible grace in action than at Sports Plus every summer. From the young people, to the leaders, from the spontaneous singing in the dining hall, to the new friendships formed, from the coaching expertise to the break-time banter, it's a place where the gospel is at the heart of everything. Sports Plus is a week where sport is rooted in the gospel, where young people discover Christ's love and where they develop their sporting talent. Who can forget their week at Sports Plus? It is so often the highlight of the summer.

The Sports Plus story began in 1994 under the name Adventure Plus, but the vision was born there: to disciple young sportspeople. Since then, hundreds of parents and guardians will be able to echo these words of Dave 'Willo' Willis, our first official Sports Plus Director. "From a personal point of view, my eldest son was saved at Sports Plus,

so that's got to be a huge highlight. My youngest son would say that Sports Plus really helped him to see the whole picture of his faith. The amazing bonds of friendship have also really stood out."

Although the 2017 camps, which begin in Perth on 9th July will look a bit different from the first official Sports Plus one at



Cokethorpe School in 1995, the vision remains the same.

"We had around 30 young people at the first camp in 1995," said Dave. "There was no such thing as just doing one role, coach or a leader, you were supportive in all the roles - even the sandwich making and table preparations as it was all self-catering! It was very small beginnings and it's amazing to look at what God has done. It's a real joy for me.

"It was really well-received at the time and proved to be a brilliant framework for what we have now. It's been great for me to see behind the scenes how the work, the level of quality and expertise has developed over the years. I look at what we have by God's grace and am blown away by His goodness."

By 2005, there were camps in all four home countries and we expanded into

Jersey in 2015. More than 650 young people will attend camps this summer. It has also been a real privilege to see the Sports Plus vision extend beyond the UK, with similar camps starting up across Europe and beyond.

Dave said: "God can do far more than we ask or imagine. When I see other people coming to the camps, looking at the model of Sports Plus and putting it on in their own countries, I'm just amazed at what God is doing."

Ian 'Lancs' Lancaster has been the Sports Plus Director since 2005. In his time, there have been two main, gradual changes - increasing the standard of sport and sharpening the Bible teaching programme.

Ian explained: "We've made sure that Sports Plus targets the young person who loves sport and plays and trains



Dave Willis takes over much of the administration from Steve, who headed to Scotland to continue the camp work there

1998



First Sports Plus in Wales at Christ College, Brecon and start of trainee leaders' programme; Ian Lancaster joins staff team to head up youth work

2001

SPORTS PLUS BY NUMBERS • 1995 TO 2017

- 12 venues in 5 countries
- 9,500 young people have attended 89 Sports Plus camps
- More than 4,000 people have served as leaders, coaches and support staff
- Nearly 1,000 gospel talks have been given
- More than 200,000 litres of water have been drunk
- 2,670 hours of sport have been played
- 350 Team Challenge champions have been crowned

regularly in a school or local club team. That's why it's serious sports action for the serious sports young person! We've also moved towards making sure that the gospel accounts are at the centre of our Bible teaching sessions. This is the most accessible place for young people to see Jesus - who He is and what He has done!"

Now a Sports Plus veteran, Ian has many highlights, but a couple stand out for him.

"Leading a team at Armagh a few years ago, I remember helping a boy grapple with the truths of the Bible and watching the way the Spirit opened his eyes to the point where he recognised he needed to be saved and prayed a simple prayer to accept Jesus.

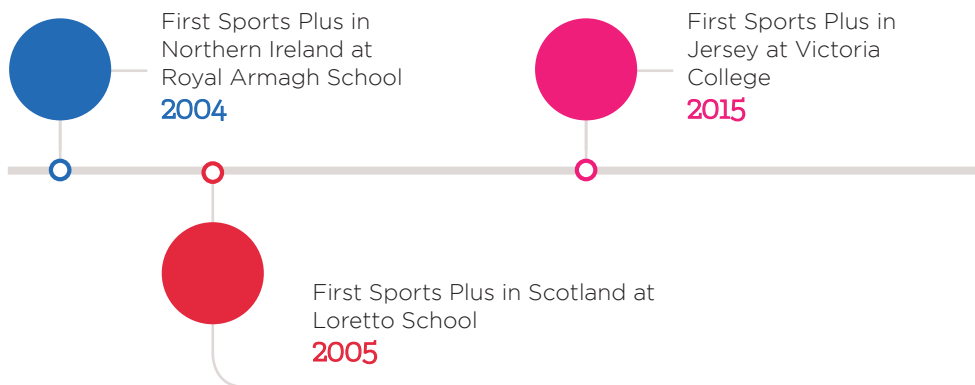
"I also love the circle we form after the final Team Challenge on Friday, singing



Dave Willis

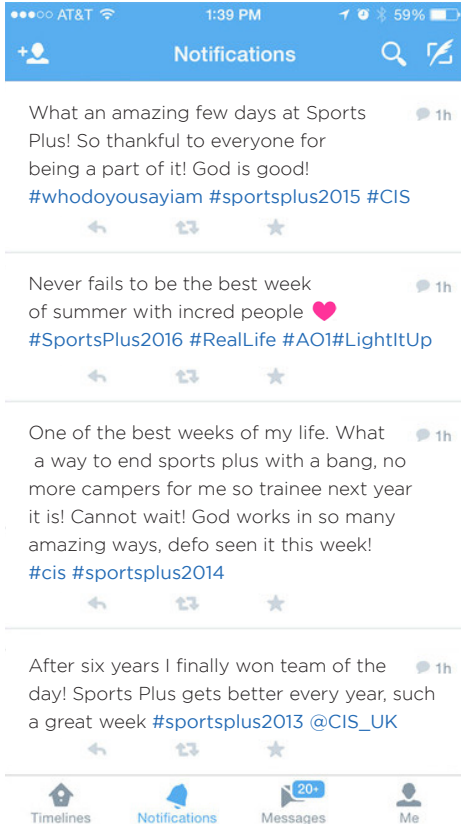
and praying together. The parents and guardians who see it really get a flavour of Sports Plus."

Being part of Sports Plus over the years has been a real joy to so many of us. Dave sums it up like this: "Seeing young people come to faith and grow in their faith and then coming through into leadership is amazing too. I say 'God, You're so kind to me because You've allowed me to be part of such a brilliant thing'.



WHAT THEY SAID

Here are just a few of the comments we've received from young people on social media:



THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

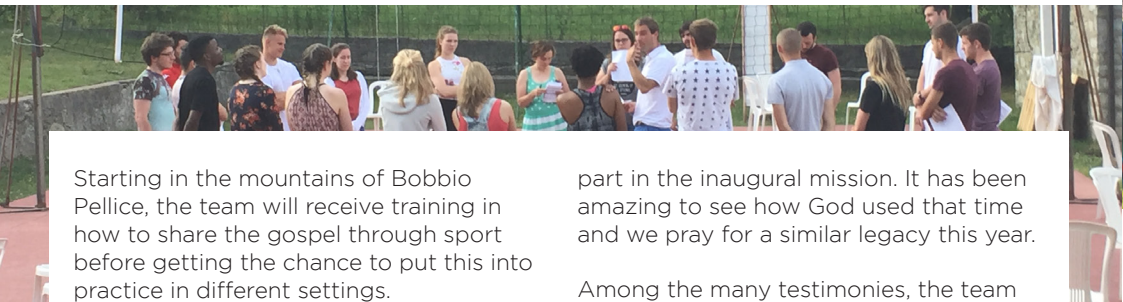
Thanks to your generosity, the Sports Plus Bursary Fund has enabled 1,200 young people to attend the camps. Now in its seventh year, the fund has had a real impact across the UK, with more than 150 young people benefitting in 2017 alone. Bursaries support young people who are financially restricted and would otherwise have been unable to attend Sports Plus. This year's residential camps cost £295, which the Bursary Fund reduces to £160. Donations come in from both individuals and trust funds. There is no amount that cannot be used to help young people enjoy great sports coaching and hear the good news.

Sports Plus Director Ian Lancaster said: "We never want finance to be a barrier to any young person who wants to access Sports Plus. Therefore, we are very grateful to God for His provision through the faithful and generous giving to the Bursary Fund - thank you! We really value this gospel partnership and are excited to see how God will use it for His glory."

For more info on the Bursary Fund, email sportspluscamp@christiansinsport.org.uk or phone 01869 255630.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

More than 20 young leaders from across the continent will head to Italy on 3rd July to kick off the second European Sports Mission.



Starting in the mountains of Bobbio Pellice, the team will receive training in how to share the gospel through sport before getting the chance to put this into practice in different settings.

A four-week summer school, which is supported by Christians in Sport, the European Sports Mission aims to build and nurture leaders of the future. It is our prayer that they will have a big impact for God's kingdom across the continent.

The team will have two weeks of ReadySetGO sports mission training with teachers from across Europe. This will be a mix of practical and theory, with topics such as Bible handling and evangelism.

After that, the leaders will get stuck into mission, with an itinerary that includes sports camps in Romania and Serbia.

Christians in Sport's International Co-ordinator Caroline Reid said: "The European Sports Mission is a great way to invest in and train our leaders and give them the scope of global mission, training them amongst their peers from Europe.

"We want to train future leaders together, as brothers and sisters across Europe, to help widen horizons, form partnerships and help spread the gospel in sport."

In their second week of training, the team will be joined by leaders who took

part in the inaugural mission. It has been amazing to see how God used that time and we pray for a similar legacy this year.

Among the many testimonies, the team leader of one of the delegates from Serbia last year said:

"He is totally transformed by the training in Italy, praise the Lord and thank you for your effort."

Team leader of Serbian delegate

We were also really encouraged to see one of last year's team from Portugal travel to Serbia to help another of the delegates run a KidsGames event. This strategy had never been used before in Serbia and was a great example of how the training should work.

At the end of their 10-day missions, the team will return to Italy for debriefing and to think through how they can use the lessons learnt to proclaim the gospel in their own countries.

Pray

Please join us in lifting the European Sports Mission up to our Heavenly Father by following the prayers set out in the first fortnight of the new Prayer Diary.



MY SPORTING LIFE

However you are involved in sport, we pray this feature encourages you as you as you read of others looking to share the gospel where God has placed them.

wrong". He then gave me a lesson in how to do it. I then went on to come last by a very big margin.

What encouragements have you seen as a Christian in your sport? I find that I'm happier playing hockey knowing that the most important thing isn't whether I lose or win. The most important thing is that I strive to play in a way which honours God.

What do you find tough about living as a Christian in your sport? Most of my teammates are a lot older than me, so I find it quite daunting talking to them about my faith to them and dropping Jesus into my conversations with them.

How do you look to share the gospel in your team? I get questioned quite a lot by my teammates as they know that my Dad is training to be a vicar. I use this as a way to share my own faith with them and chat to them about what the gospel tells us about Jesus and the amazing things He has done for us.

What one piece of advice would you give to Christian sportspeople to help them share their faith? If you're struggling with being able to open up about your faith, I would urge you to pray and ask God to provide some opportunities to have a conversation with a teammate and to give you confidence and the knowledge to answer the questions that they ask.



Profile

Name: Matthew Ward

Age: 17

Where from: Lincoln

Church: St Peter's in Eastgate, Lincoln

Sporting involvement: I play in goal for Lindum Hockey Club's first team

Sporting highlight: My sporting highlight definitely has to be playing against Beeston Hockey Club in the National Cup. Even though we lost 8-0 it was still an amazing experience to play against a team of that standard with a few of their players having international caps.

What is your most embarrassing moment in sport? I somehow managed to get myself picked to throw shot put for my district at a county competition. After my first throw one of the officials turned around and, in front of the rest of the competitors, said "you're doing it all

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A REGIONAL WORKER

As we look to reach the world of sport for Christ more effectively, we are seeking to place staff in different regions. Here Mike Harris, our man in Bristol, opens up his diary for us...

Monday

The week always begins with a short skype call with all of the Christians in Sport team who work with students around the country, to make sure we are all on the same page and to pray for the work – an important time for all the regional workers. Then it's time to gear up for the week, praying specifically for Bristol, arranging meetings and preparing for all that's to come.

This week I'm getting a talk ready for Friday's curry night and making sure invites are going out. Often I might meet a sports player working in the city for lunch, or a church leader on a Monday afternoon to chat about how their church might reach out to local sports clubs.

Tuesday

Being based in Bristol means it's easy to meet local sports players

and church workers whenever it is convenient for them. Whether it's a Christian sports person I've never met before or a church leader who is really thinking through how to better support the sportspeople in their congregation to reach their sports friends, it's just great to be talking together, encouraging one another and working through how to reach the 550 sports clubs in this city. Then I'm on my way and praying that God will use those conversations to help those individuals reach the world of sport for Christ, much the same thing I'm praying for myself and my teammates as I head to Old Redcliffians RFC training in the evening!

Wednesday

8am and it's the Bristol University Christians in Sport group meeting. So I'm up and on the bike up the hill to the university, arriving a bit sweatiest but with more sleep under my belt than if I'd been travelling from the Bicester office! We're talking sharing life and the gospel with teammates, and after digging into the Bible together, praying and planning, the students head out to get stuck in – a number are





inviting teammates to a curry and quiz night this Friday. Then it's time to meet with some of the students individually. After a great morning of being encouraged, challenged and provoked by God's word together it's back on the bike to check out the curry house venue for Friday evening. How is everywhere in Bristol uphill?

Thursday

Usually I'd spend a good chunk of time on a Thursday getting in touch with church leaders and sports players in the region, to arrange meetings and to work out how we can support them to reach their local sports clubs. In this final short university term, I'm also spending some good time on the phone with students across the south west who are graduating to help them think ahead to joining an adult sports club to represent Jesus. Another joy of the regional work is to be able to link these graduating students to others and churches we know in their new cities to help them keep going as we seek to reach the 150,000 local sports clubs in this country. I'm looking forward to meeting new graduates joining this mission team in Bristol in September! Evening time and it's back to Old Reds for training before Saturday's game.

Friday

Tonight is the curry night with a sports quiz for local sports players in Bristol and I'm giving a talk half-way through to introduce those there to Jesus, so a big focus of the day is preparing for the evening ahead. It's exciting knowing too that some of my Old Reds teammates are coming along to one of these events for the first time.

Crammed into the small room at the back of the curry house, we have a great time together, and there's plenty of good conversations for us to be following-up on. I'll be chatting and praying with the other Christians bringing teammates soon to help this happen!

Saturday

Saturday - game day! Most Saturdays from September to April it's scrambled eggs, four slices of toast, a banana and off to the ground. Always a highlight of the week, however mixed the results might have been this season!

Sunday

Sunday nights is church together at Emmanuel City Centre - good times! Back, something to eat and bed - ready to go again.



Mike Harris

Emmanuel City Centre Church, Bristol
and Old Redcliffians RFC.



WINGERS RETURNS TO THE CREASE

.....

Former Director Andrew Wingfield Digby (Wingers) is now back on board as a volunteer, spearheading our outreach to the world of professional cricket. Here he describes how that work has grown over the years.

ANCIENT HISTORY

If you have only become involved with Christians in Sport in recent years you may find it hard to imagine what it was like in 1984 when I became the first full-time employee and therefore the Director. We had been a registered charity for four years and I had worked there one day a week as well as being a local church minister building up contacts and creating a mailing list since 1980. Whenever possible I had played a few games of Minor Counties cricket for Dorset each year, which at least kept me in touch with the game. I was fortunate that almost all my teammates from the Combined Universities side I played in from 1975 to 1977 were by then county professionals.

Setting up an office in Oxford, employing a secretary, trekking around the country speaking in churches and at evangelistic events for sportspeople, and following up rumours of 'so and so' becoming a Christian was how I spent my time. In the summer, cricket became the centre of my



Photos: Oxford Mail

attention and I managed 50,000 miles one year I recall.

There were a handful of Christians playing county cricket, some of whom came on tour with me to India. My dear friend and fellow sports ministry pioneer Rev Robin Paul hosted our visits and on the first trip we played a full India side four times in charity matches on Test grounds – we came second. Our guest Indian player was a young Paul Moses – now the leader of Sports Ministry in India. Tours to Zimbabwe and South Africa, including several professional players, followed. They had a big impact on all of us who went and on the countries we visited, with many hearing the gospel as a result.

CHAPLAINCY

I kept playing Minor County Cricket and captained the Dorset team with unexpected success from 1988-91. By then I was 41 and certainly past my best and the World Student Games at which I led a chaplaincy team was a good excuse to retire from playing for Dorset.

No sooner had I done so than I received a phone call from Ted Dexter, the England cricket director, inviting me to become spiritual adviser to the team. For 10 years,

I had the privilege of access to the team both at home and on tour. I could bore you with numerous stories! I am not sure I achieved a great deal in one sense, but God used the publicity to open more doors for the work of Christians in Sport.

I returned to parish life with St Andrew's Church, Oxford in 2002 and it was a great joy to see how Christians in Sport, under the leadership of Graham Daniels and Keith Proctor, has grown far beyond what I would have ever managed to do.

Despite the tremendous progress, things have gone quiet in cricket in the last few years. Ex-Leicestershire professional Nick Ferraby, now a Staff Worker in Jersey, did a good job keeping in contact with the handful of players whom we knew to be following Jesus. But with central contracts and T20 cricket going on all year round, attempts to get another tour together never quite came off.

SO WHAT NOW?

I have retired from parish work and am now getting alongside and encouraging the players of my era now coaching county teams (quite a few actually) and also meeting up with those we hear are Christians. Of course, I would love to put another tour together, but we shall see.

Several of the counties now have chaplains who are part of Sports Chaplaincy UK and I shall be working closely with them whenever possible. I value your prayers as I reconnect with old friends and make new ones, praying that God will build His Kingdom in the world of cricket.

Pray

For Andrew's work and that God would open many doors to the gospel in the world of professional cricket. You can contact him at andrew.wd@christiansinsport.org.uk



Andrew Wingfield Digby

Swinbrook Cricket Club, St John the Baptist Church, Burford



About Christians in Sport

Formed in 1980, Christians in Sport has more than 35 years of experience supporting Christians in the world of sport and helping sportspeople explore the Christian message. For more information on who we are and how we can help you, please get in touch using the details below.



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Registered Charity number for England and Wales 1086570
Registered Charity number for Scotland SC045299
Company number 4146081