

Spring 2018

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SPORT



A rugby weekend like no other

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Sharing Something More in Edinburgh

Making disciples in the Midlands

Why should you stay involved in the world of sport?

WHAT'S INSIDE

Happy Easter and welcome to your new Back Pages! With articles ranging from student mission to rugby weekends, and the history of this work to Partner Evenings, we hope this magazine gives you plenty of reasons to praise our Heavenly Father for how He is active in the world of sport.

Ed Mezzetti

Back Pages Editor

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



Read rugby coach Lois Newcombe's story - Page 12

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PARTNER EVENINGS

We've added two new dates for the north of England.

You are warmly invited to join the team as together we thank God, pray and look ahead to see how we can further reach the world of sport for Christ.

June 4th

North East England Newcastle

June 5th

North West England Merseyside

To find out more and book please visit
christiansinsport.org.uk/partners

For more information on who we are and how we can help you, please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.
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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Continuing Cyrille's legacy

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"After he came to faith, we watched Cyrille influencing hundreds of young leaders with his generosity, kindness and unashamed standing for Christ."

In the past couple of months, I have often had the privilege of speaking about the life of former England footballer and Christians in Sport Trustee Cyrille Regis.

His death in January, at the age of 59, was a major shock and came just two days after he had joined us at our Birmingham Partner Evening.

Cyrille was a giant of this work and is sorely missed, but what a legacy of faithful service he leaves behind. We give great thanks to our Heavenly Father for how He used Cyrille for His glory.

Cyrille had been a Trustee since 2011 and was a committed supporter of Christians in Sport. He defied the racism that regularly followed black players of his generation to carve out a successful career at the top level as a centre forward with West Bromwich Albion, Coventry City, Aston Villa, Wolves and England.

He was a real pioneer. A man who played in front of 40,000 people and was bombarded with racist abuse, but refused to give in. What character he showed. Significant footballers cried their eyes out at his death because he had done so much to make their lives better.

It was the death of his best friend and

former West Brom teammate Laurie Cunningham in a car crash in 1989 that prompted Cyrille to ask questions about faith. His search ultimately led to him becoming a Christian after what he said was "a real encounter with Jesus".

The former West Indies cricketer Ron Headley, Bryan Hewett, whose story you can also read in this issue, and local Baptist minister Colin Day all played their part in Cyrille's journey of faith.

For the next 28 years, we watched Cyrille influencing hundreds of young leaders with his generosity, kindness and unashamed standing for Christ.

We may not all have Cyrille's sporting gifts, but we are all called to follow Jesus' Great Commission of Matthew 28 and make disciples of all nations.

People come to know Christ because Christians like Cyrille, like us, live for Him and speak of Him in their world of sport. What better way to continue Cyrille's legacy than by doing just that!

Graham Daniels
General Director

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





Scottish staff team meeting



Northern Ireland mission



Moldova mission trip

BACK PAGES BITE-SIZED

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

We are a church of 50-60 adults based in Putney, London. After going to a Christians in Sport event a year ago, we worked out that we had several church members involved in sport. Some were regularly going to the gym or fitness classes; others were committed to sports clubs or Parkruns and there were others who enjoy going for a jog when they can.

We decided to start a monthly prayer gathering to pray for each other and those that we come into contact with through our sport or physical activity. We meet an hour before our morning church service with breakfast and coffee and spend time praying that God would be at work in our friends' hearts.

Our big prayer for the days ahead is that we would be useful to God here in Putney and that He would help us to keep praying for our friends and that He would work through our prayers. We are grateful to God for some answers to prayer already and we are looking forward to hosting our first Sports Quiz.

[Beth Cutting, The Boathouse Church Putney](#)

At Clubhouse Xtra, we were really challenged about holding Dialogue Dinners. We thought it would be great if we could have a week at Keele where we would all try to host dinners, pray



Peigi McKellar (front row, middle) with fellow Christians in sport at the BUCS Cross Country Championships

and motivate each other. We had six dinners taking place the week before our CU events week. All of them were encouraging, but they were all really different. At the hockey one, they were about 20 people all asking questions. There were only three people at the frisbee one, so at first they felt a bit disappointed, but there were still some really good discussions. We had seven people at the cross country dinner. It was a really nice atmosphere and the perfect number for it. We gave out flyers and spoke about Uncover Bible studies. Eight of those at the hockey dinner were keen to go through Uncover, while three rugby girls wanted to come to church! We're praying this is just the start of our teammates coming to know Jesus.

[Peigi McKellar, Keele University Cross Country Club](#)



Showjumping Sports Quiz



Church of England sports mission day



Clubhouse Xtra Northern Ireland

I wanted to spread the Christian message in the Cardiff Sports and Exercise Medicine Society which I'm part of. We wanted to do a fundraiser for the Welsh Rugby Charitable Trust and I suggested the Sports Quiz. We had around 40 people attend. I invited some rugby teammates and we also had netballers and others from the society. The quiz was fantastic and it generated a good bit of interest in my faith in Jesus. At half-time, I showed a video with Chris Jones, the Welsh coach, talking about how you could be a rugby man and a Christian. The quiz had a really positive impact on the society and I pray I will have more opportunities to share my faith as a result.

Dan Phillips, Cardiff Medics RFC

Most of my friends are full-time riders. They are on the circuit 24-7. It was not so much a case of inviting them to an event at my church in Cambridge, but going to them. With the help of people from Christians in Sport, I was able to run the Sports Quiz for 30 showjumpers during the All England Championships at Hickstead. It was particularly amusing because we had disguised images of horses instead of sportspeople in the picture round! I was able to share the gospel and the event was so encouraging. It was then great to have the opportunity to open the Bible with some friends afterwards. Recently, a guy I have got to know has shown a real hunger for the gospel. He's the first person I have known



Members of the Boathouse Church Christians in Sport group

who has asked is there a course I can do to explore the Christian faith. It was humbling and amazing.

Clark Glasgow, showjumper

We are meeting together as Christian guys from rugby clubs across Northern Ireland to encourage each other, look at God's word and think about how we can share the gospel with our teammates. We have had up to 25 of us in the room. Last time, we looked at the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4, seeing that we shouldn't choose where we sow the seed in our clubs and that it is God's work to grow it. We would love to see Christians in every Northern Irish rugby club. As the only Christian at my club, I find the gatherings so helpful as I'm re-envisioned what it means to be a Christian in sport.

Dan Kerr, Malone RFC

Get in touch

Share your stories of God at work by emailing ed.mezzetti@christiansinsport.org.uk



A RUGBY WEEKEND LIKE NO OTHER

(From left) Ben Leathes, Tom Hocking and Andy Bryce

Ben Leathes and Andy Bryce were playing at Stewart's Melville Rugby Club in Edinburgh when they came up with an idea. Their vision was to create a weekend where you could play rugby, watch the European Cup Final and find out about Christian faith. Since the first gathering in Cardiff in 2006, hundreds of players have joined their Christian teammates on a rugby weekend like no other.

The match sees a combined England and Wales team take on their Scottish and Irish counterparts and ahead of this year's contest in May, the series stands at 5-5. These Anglo-Celtic clashes have provided plenty of stories to tell in their own right,

but the weekends have consistently shown how God can work when His people step out in faith.

Ben explained: "We wanted to try and involve our teammates in a bit more of what we were about as Christians. At the same time, we were thinking we want to create a vehicle for other Christians to do the same. Sometimes it's not easy to share our faith with our teammates, so we thought 'what's the easiest way to do that?'"

Creating an event around the European final and getting tickets for the big match proved a huge draw and brought players back year on year. While Ben and Andy drove the logistics and looked to ensure both teams had enough players and all the positions filled, many others really caught the vision too.

“We knew it had the right ingredients,” Andy explained. “If we got the tickets, people would bite your hands off for them. The day after the event, we were already looking for tickets for next year! It’s something that works. I genuinely think it could work with lots of different sports. How about the tennis Davis Cup? You could plan a playing and watching event around a home tie.”

The pair tweaked the format over the years and found the best plan was to have a meal and gospel talk straight after playing.

Ben said: “After the match, we sat down for a meal together to enjoy that camaraderie that comes with rugby and hear a talk explaining the Christian faith. That was a huge part of what we were trying to achieve. It felt almost like a mini rugby tour. That first year we had a bit

of a ‘court session’ on the Saturday night and some people ended up having to eat a few raw items!”

Andy and Ben have now passed the organisation on to Christians in Sport staff members Dave Hampton and Mike Harris, who have been involved since their own student days. But they remain hugely encouraged at how God has used the rugby weekends.

“There’s no doubt that people who have come on this weekend have become Christians,” said Ben. “I can think of two guys in particular who came on three or four of those weekends we organised and are now Christians as a result. It’s those stories that make it so worthwhile.”

Andy added: “For the first one, I had to get Christians in Sport to write a letter to the school where I was teaching, so I

Mike Smith saw straight away how the rugby weekend could help him share Jesus with his teammates. Now first-team coach at Southport RFC, he went to the first one as a player.

“I came down to Cardiff with five lads from my rugby club. They were all rough diamond types. It was a very physical game, which was great. For them, it was a realisation that being a Christian and playing a contact sport like rugby could go very much hand in hand.

“One of the joys has been coaching with a guy who came along on one of the early weekends. We still have conversations about that now. He’s not yet a Christian, but that shared experience allows relationships to

build and more opportunities to speak about faith.

“It’s been amazing to see how often people say ‘sure, why not’ when you invite them to these weekends! It can be really difficult to have conversations about faith at your club, so it’s really great to see this response to invites.”



Mike Smith (left) with cousin and Southport teammate Rik Potter at the inaugural match



A Scotland and Ireland team from 2009 featuring (from left): Stu MacLean, Stephen Dixon, Alasdair Walker and Chris Dixon

Stephen Dixon was brought up in a Christian home and had a strong faith, but said that by his 20s, he was not living life as God intended. His brother Chris invited him, and a few others from Preston Lodge RFC, near Edinburgh to the first rugby weekend in Cardiff.

“At the time, I think I had a surface-level faith. I couldn’t reconcile it with my obsession with sport. Going to the European Cup weekend proved a key jigsaw piece for me as I saw Christian rugby players who walked the walk and talked the talk.”

“It was just amazing to see people who were so at peace with their lives. Even though their career and family lives weren’t all ‘sorted’, they knew where they were going as they were following God’s direction. That was a bit of a lightbulb moment. It re-energised my faith.”

Stephen said he also benefited from the fellowship and advice Christian rugby players gave him.

“Even in the last few years, I have reflected on the impact of that first weekend. I now feel completely comfortable speaking about my faith to the guys at the club. There are at least two guys known to me and my brother who have come to faith in recent times.”

could get the Friday off to travel down to Cardiff!

“When we started it, we hoped it could become like this. At the first one, there was a high percentage of Christians. After that, we said ‘you’ve seen it now, why not bring a mate next time’. Now there are around 45% guests coming and they’re inviting their friends too.”

Since the tops are provided, Andy said there is a Barbarians feel as everyone is playing in their own club’s shorts and socks.

“That is a special part of rugby as it accepts that people are individuals and brings them together for a team.”

Each year, the teams compete for the Thimble Trophy, but Andy explained all is not quite what it seems.

“We were going to watch the Heineken Cup Final, which was a huge match, so we wanted to have a thimble as our trophy because our match was so much smaller. But the engraver misspelt it, so it’s actually the Thimble Trophy!”



Mike Harris sharing the gospel at the 2017 weekend.

Ed Mezzetti
Back Pages Editor

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



This year’s rugby weekend will link in with the Premiership Final at Twickenham on May 26th. For more information, visit christiansinsport.org.uk/rugby

SHARING 'SOMETHING MORE' IN EDINBURGH

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It was a privilege to play our part in 'Something More' as Christians from across Edinburgh's universities held a week of events to share the gospel with their fellow students. We provided speakers in Graham Daniels, Pete Nicholas, Dave Hampton and Rosie Woodbridge, plus a team of Interns on the ground to support sportspeople in their outreach. Here are some highlights of an epic week...

Monday 29th January

Lunchbar talks are taking place in three different slots each day. Today we had 'More than hearsay: Can there be truth in a fake news culture?' Pete Nicholas spoke twice, while Dave Hampton took the other slot. This talk title set up the week as students grappled with the truth of Jesus.

Wednesday 31st January

We were really encouraged to see students packing into Greyfriars Kirk for Monday night's opening evening talk as Dave spoke on 'Something More than a myth'? Is Christianity credible?. There is clearly an appetite for investigating Christianity as just one of today's lunch events saw a crowd of 70 consider 'More than Pleasure: Where does true happiness



The Heriot-Watt University touch rugby tournament was one of the highlights of Something More

lie?' It has been great to help students like footballer Sean and rower Jen share Jesus with their sports friends at Dialogue Dinners. Sean said: "I'm absolutely buzzing that God answered prayers to bring seven of my teammates to one of the talks - some cracking questions being thrown round." Jen added: "The girls heard the good news of Jesus and know there's a choice they need to make."

Friday 2nd February

Our Interns have been linked up with Christian students who they are staying with and encouraging in their witness. Jos Edwards said: "I have been so encouraged myself sharing a house with a rugby player called Gideon. I have loved being able to walk through things with him. He asks lots of questions, which is great." It has been awesome to begin each day with a team prayer meeting and we had the great encouragement of ending last night by thanking God in prayer for a hockey player from Heriot-Watt University who had given his life to Jesus. Amazing news! Whether it has been time all together or on our own as we have been handing out flyers, what a privilege it has been to commit all this work to our Heavenly Father!

Find out more

You can read the full 'Something More' blog at christiansinsport.org.uk/edinburgh

MAKING DISCIPLES IN THE MIDLANDS

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What began as a desire to witness at his cricket club has led to more than 30 years of sports mission for Bryan Hewett.

Seeking to share the gospel at Hagley CC, Bryan organised a church service to mark the club's 150th anniversary in 1984. Not sure how to proceed, he heard of Christians in Sport for the first time when pioneer and tennis commentator Gerald Williams was interviewed on the radio and Bryan got in touch with him at the BBC. This 'God-incidence', as Bryan calls it, proved the catalyst for a new Christians in Sport work in the West Midlands where Bryan has lived all his life.

A lifelong sportsman, Bryan joined Hagley CC, near Stourbridge, as a player coach in 1976. Alongside the club in the grounds of Hagley Hall is St John's Church, which prompted Bryan to suggest a service as part of their anniversary celebrations. Although a committed Christian, he had no real idea what to do next. "I went away thinking 'Oh my, what have I done?'" Later on, he prayed: "I want to be a good witness at this club. Will you help me?"

The answer came via the radio programme and a letter to Gerald Williams, who he asked to speak at the service. "I'm not your man, but Andrew Wingfield Digby is," was Gerald's reply. Andrew, who had recently become Christians in Sport's first Director, accepted the offer. Having warned



Hagley Cricket Club. Photo: John Garghan

Andrew that despite his efforts, there may only be 10 from the club alongside the usual small congregation, Bryan's pessimism was unfounded.

"We walked out and amazingly, there were about 70 people, mostly from the cricket club. Andrew preached the gospel and it was a great occasion. People still talk about it after all this time. Afterwards, Andrew said 'What you've done Bryan is what we want to do at Christians in Sport. Why don't you come and join us?'"

A few months later, the first Christians in Sport meeting in the West Midlands took place at Selly Oak Elim Church in Birmingham. "From that moment, for 24 years we had a Christians in Sport prayer meeting once a month at that church."

From here, Christian sportspeople from across the West Midlands got involved, including cricketers Jane Powell, Ron Headley and Mark Frost and footballer Peter Hart. The group would often visit local churches, showing them how they could get involved in sports ministry.



Bryan Hewett

A first West Midlands evangelistic dinner followed in 1985 where Gerald Williams shared the gospel with 120 sportspeople at Hagley Hall. A year later, it was 250 people in Birmingham's Grand Hotel.

From that moment, for 24 years we had a Christians in Sport prayer meeting once a month at that church.

"There were Aston Villa, West Brom and Birmingham City players as well as those from amateur clubs and other sports."

Bryan was introduced to the late Coventry and England footballer Cyrille

Regis, who went on to give his life to Christ, while new Christian golfer Alison Nicholas joined the group. "Over the years, these dinners were so wonderful spiritually. We had several people, who came to the Lord through them."

Bryan and the team then continued the work more locally "We tried to encourage people to do things themselves." A Stourbridge Golf Club dinner saw 85 of the 93 seats filled by those investigating Christian faith, while St Matthew's Church, Walsall hosted a Christians in Sport Songs of Praise service.

As a young teenager, Bryan had been encouraged to use his passion for sport for God's glory. "From that moment in time, God put in me a spirit of evangelism, which is still here today."

Trusting God, he saw how he and other Christian sportspeople had so many opportunities to share the gospel. "For a sports person, to come into contact with a Christian who has that same love and respect of sport, that is a fantastic way of witnessing. It sticks in people's minds."

Now 84, nothing has changed for Bryan, who is still playing golf at Ombersley GC and looking to represent Jesus there. "It's a super environment to witness in because you're with people for three and a half or four hours during a round."

Bryan remained good friends with Cyrille Regis until his death in January and is still a regular at gatherings for current footballers in the West Midlands.

As we move forward, we would love to see more and more 'Bryans' sharing their faith. By 2020, our vision is to see sustainable sports mission in 121 towns and cities across the UK.

More information

To read Game Plan 4, our strategic plan for 2017-2020, visit christiansinsport.org.uk/gameplan4

Ed Mezzetti

Back Pages Editor

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



WHY SHOULD YOU STAY INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OF SPORT?

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For rugby coach Lois Newcombe the answer is very clear: "It's a joy and there are so many gospel opportunities."

Moving from university to the world of work is often when people drop out of sport. Suddenly there is so much more pressure on your time and you may need to travel far further to be part of a club. The immediacy and camaraderie of the student sporting bubble can quickly become a distant memory. University of Surrey Women's Rugby Club coach Lois Newcombe felt those pressures when she graduated in 2011, but was determined not to give up on her passion for the sport. And that was where Christians in Sport came in.

Wales Staff Worker Heather Lewis explained: "Lois was a leader at Brecon Sports Plus, where we encouraged her to stay involved in sport. From there, we had a follow-up process and I stayed in contact with her and went to visit her in Guildford. We bonded over a love of rugby and talked about how she could have an impact in witnessing to people like Lucy at her club. We prayed about it and held each other accountable."

Having got stuck in at her rugby club, Lois had the joy of seeing Lucy Cook, one of the players she coaches, become a Christian.

Lois said: "I can definitely sympathise with people who struggle to stay in the world



of sport. It's such a high commitment, but there's also the joy that staying involved brings. Sport is a wonderful thing. I absolutely love playing team sport, being involved, coaching, watching sport, being part of sport, hanging out with my friends who love rugby as well. I find that sport is my best opportunity to talk to my friends about Jesus.

Lucy was one of those friends Lois was able to talk about Jesus with. She agreed to go to church with Lois, having previously been to another friend's church a few times.

"The people there were so welcoming. From the moment I walked through the doors, there was somebody to talk to. I

got given a book that said a lot of things about how it was to live as a Christian. I read that and was completely amazed by it and a bit mindblown.



"I texted Lois and said 'What should I do?'. She directed me towards the gospels and that was when I started reading them. I just couldn't put the Bible down. I was trying to read as many books as I could and was still going to church regularly. I heard a sermon about Pentecost and the summary was 'they couldn't stay away'."

This account in Acts 2 of how the early church grew rapidly struck a real chord with Lucy, who gave her life to Jesus.

"At that point, I identified with the 3,000

people who believed in Jesus when they heard Peter's message and I couldn't stay away. I knew what I needed to do."

Lucy's story has been a massive encouragement to Lois, who has seen the impact living out her faith at the club can have.

"The way in which I act is very much a part of sharing my faith, showing myself to be distinctive, to be living with integrity as a Christian. There are aspects of not conforming to what they expect a women's rugby player to be like. There are great opportunities to invite people to events that my church might be running, but there are also times when you can just talk. Up in the bar, after the game, there's a wonderful opportunity just to chat together about life."

The story continued with Heather and Lois bringing Lucy to Sports Plus and they are now encouraging her to stay involved in the world of sport when she graduates. Whether it's moving from school to university, or graduating into world of work, we have programmes to help Christian sportspeople stay witnessing for Jesus. The first step will be linking them up with a Regional Staff Worker, if there's one nearby, or a local Christians in Sport 'multiplier' (advocate).

It is a real privilege to hear of stories like Lois and Lucy's as we go about this work. There are 'Lucys' coming to faith thanks to the witness of Christians like Lois at clubs up and down the country. Staying involved in the world of sport can mean sacrifices, but also great joy, so in Lois' words, let's encourage each other to stick at it!

For more information on staying involved in the world of sport, visit christiansinsport.org.uk/unitowork



PARTNER EVENINGS IN FOCUS

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Partner Evenings have been fantastic opportunities to praise God for what He has done in the world of sport, domestically and internationally, over many years.

As we begin our next three-year plan, we wanted to bring together as many of those involved in the work as possible to share the encouragements and challenges we face. Eight have taken place across the UK so far, with more in the pipeline.

It has been a privilege to gather together with just some of the many people who contribute to this work. The word 'Partner' for us encompasses a whole range of people: from those who give up time to put on evangelistic events in their communities or sacrifice holiday to serve at Sports Plus, individuals who faithfully cover the work in prayer, or who financially enable Christians in Sport to function. Any one of these things is 'partnering'. We could call it 'supporting'

but there is more going on than that. We know that we are working in a mission field we can't reach alone. Only through God's grace and through other workers in the same harvest field can we really reach the world of sport for Christ together.

A wonderful mix of demographics, experiences and passions have been evident at the evenings so far. Take, for example, the prayer partner who has prayed for the sportspeople in their city for over 30 years, being introduced to a local sportsperson who encountered Jesus for the first time just last year. Or for the parent meeting the Team Leader their child spent a week with at Sports Plus and sharing how they are walking with Jesus post-camp. At the heart of each event is a God-filled desire for sportspeople to hear of and know Christ,



represented by a large cross section of people who are aiming to do just that.

As we look ahead to the next season of Christians in Sport, we look out on a changing and challenging landscape. Urgency for the gospel to go out to the world of sport is as important as ever. We know we can't do it alone, we know that God is sovereign over all our plans and so we ask all of our partners to help us realise these plans under Him.

Unfortunately, we aren't able to get to every corner of the UK but fear not, we have put all the talks online. Each evening, we delved deeper into six focusses of the work in the next three years, specifically looking at:

- **International** - What does it look like to reach the whole world of sport for Christ?
- **Elite** - Why do we support elite sport disproportionately to other areas of the work?
- **U.K** - How do we reach the UK's 150,000 sports clubs and teams with the gospel?
- **Student** - How do we sustain a gospel work in an increasingly hostile university environment?
- **Youth** - What does the future of Sports Plus look like and how can you reach your local youth world of sport for Christ?
- **Resources** - We can't have staff in every city or every country of the world. How can our resources can be used all around the world to envision and train sportspeople?

These six talks can be accessed at christiansinsport.org.uk/partnertalks

The next round of Partner Evenings will include events in North East and North West England. For more information, visit christiansinsport.org.uk/partners

Jen Warnock
Development Team

North Oxford Tennis Club, St Ebbe's Church, Headington





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