

Winter 2018

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SPORT

Gaining momentum: Sports mission in Northern Ireland

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New year, same mission

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pre-season ever

From skeleton to
the corridors of power

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Welcome to your new Back Pages! We love seeing God at work in the world of sport. With articles ranging from Northern Ireland to the Winter Olympics, and Sports Plus leaders to students at Clubhouse Xtra, we hope this magazine gives you plenty of reasons to praise our Heavenly Father as you start a new year.

Ed Mezzetti
Back Pages Editor
City of York Athletic Club,
St Thomas' Church, York



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2018

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The joy of gospel partnership

.....

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
Philippians 1 v 3-6 (NIV)



Just as Paul thanked God for his gospel partnership with the Philippians, how marvellous it is to celebrate being partners together in this work of growing the gospel amongst sportspeople!

Teamwork is vital in the sporting arena and it's equally important as we seek to carry out this God-given work together. This might be gathering sportspeople to pray and encourage each other as they seek to carry out the Great Commission in their local towns and cities. It could be serving as Team Leaders, Coaches or Support Staff at Sports Plus camps. It also involves all those who faithfully pray and give financially to this work. By these, and in so many other ways, we see gospel partnership in action.

In this magazine you'll read of lots more great examples. Our student work continues to inspire university level players to share Christ amongst their teams and with Clubhouse Xtra just around the corner, we'll give you an insight into how we train our student

leaders. At the heart of this issue is the story of how God has grown the work amongst sportspeople in Northern Ireland. We yearn for this kind of growth for the sake of the gospel amongst sportspeople all over the UK, Europe and the world.

We have a great God and terrific partners in this work of reaching the world of sport for Christ. This brings me to our Partner Evenings. Every now and again we invite our faithful partners in this ministry to come together in person to enjoy a catch up with each other and to get a further insight into the gospel growth that God is bringing about. This is a highlight for all of us who share in this God-given partnership. I really look forward to seeing you there!

Graham Daniels
 General Director

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





Guildford Sports Quiz



Newcastle prayer meeting



Christian Resources Exhibition

BACK PAGES BITE-SIZED

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.

I have always found it difficult to share my faith at football due to the limited time spent together on Saturdays and at training, so a few Christian players and I decided to run a six-a-side footy tournament at our club St Peter FC.

We also invited Dan Cutting (DC Freestyle) who is a professional freestyle footballer to do a demonstration and talk about his faith. The event was a great success, played in a great spirit and everyone listened intently to Dan talking about Jesus. Please pray for good follow up and continued opportunities for us to share our faith.

[Jon Jefferson, St Peter FC, Jersey](#)



The winning team at the Jersey football tournament

to make use of other video clips from the pack in the future.

[Judith Givan, Seagoe Parish Church, Portadown](#)

I hadn't previously heard of Christians in Sport, but I happened to see a tweet about the Sports Mission Pack. I downloaded the pack, watched through the videos and decided to put on 'The Great Escape' during half-time of a Northern Ireland football match we were showing at church.

We normally serve food at half time, so I thought I could introduce the video clip, let it play and then just conclude by saying anyone with questions could speak to one of us, keeping it all quite informal. It went well. We had around 35 people there. There was some good feedback and people were receptive to watching the clip. We have shown rugby matches during the Six Nations too, so we hope

I invited my hockey team to come for a curry and questions night at mine. I couldn't believe how many great questions they had. Everything from 'Why have you invited us for dinner?' to 'Why is Jesus relevant today?' came up! Another Christian in the team and I did our best to answer them. The guys were so engaged with it all. It was so incredible seeing God challenging their ideas and using us too.

At the end, I asked them if they'd be keen to read what Jesus says over a pint and all I needed from them was a yes or no. A few of the guys seemed interested and we've continued having good conversations off the back of it. I'm hoping to run another dinner in January!

[Calum, Scotland](#)



Christ College Brecon visit



Brunel University dodgeball tournament



Edinburgh University Sports Quiz

Last year I was the only Christian in sport I knew at Leeds Beckett University. I have to say it was tough. But God has been so good. After a lot of prayer, the group has gone from one to six people!

God has massively gone beyond my expectations and prayer requests for a couple of freshers to come in. I've been so encouraged now having a group focused on taking the good news of Jesus to sportspeople at Leeds Beckett and meeting together to challenge, encourage and pray with one another week in, week out. I can't wait to see what God has planned for us this year!

Tash Wroe, Leeds Beckett University Netball Club

I spoke to a colleague I work with at the European Tour and Ryder Cup about my faith and what it meant to know Jesus. Looking back, it was one of *those conversations*! I would have said everything differently if I had the chance again.... but God is much bigger than my words. Soon after, I asked the same friend if he wanted to come to Christianity Explored and to my surprise he said yes. For the next three months he came each week and then also to the follow up course. He then started coming to church, and had lots of questions. Over time, he began to see who Jesus really was and why it mattered what his response was - and he gave his life to Him! It's pretty



Members of the Leeds Beckett University Group.

amazing that God uses us in his plans, and especially amazing to see my friend standing next to me in church on Sunday.

Ben Hayden, Worpleston Golf Club

I run a health and fitness company called BreakFit and one of our aims is to reach Northern Ireland's fitness industry for Christ. This summer, we helped the global mission community Faith RX'd host their first evangelistic event in Ireland. A mix of Christians and non-Christians involved in CrossFit across Belfast suffered together in a gruelling fitness session.

Afterwards, I spoke about what it meant to have true spiritual fitness in Christ and we enjoyed a barbecue together. There were some brilliant conversations about Jesus. We pray this will lead to new gospel activity in fitness clubs. We are now working with the Christians in Sport team to train leaders and fitness coaches and develop our mission strategy.

Simon Lennox, BreakFit, Belfast

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

MY SPORTING LIFE



Name: Pete Murray

Age: 27

Where from: Birmingham

Church: City Church, Birmingham

Sporting involvement: Plays for Black Country Volleyball Club

Sporting highlight: Played in the Volleyball England Super 8s. Won National League Division 1 and National Shield.

What encouragements have you seen as a Christian in your sport? People do notice the difference you make, whether it is the positive attitude to training, how you praise a good performance or your own ability and not shouting at the ref.

What do you find tough about living as a Christian in your sport? It can feel like no progress is being made, or even that I'm not being a good or effective witness because I am not having regular conversations about the gospel or seeing people soften to it. This is especially the case whilst continuing to play a team sport and working full time.

How do you look to share the gospel in your sports club? The most notable opportunities to share the gospel have

been through post-match celebrations/socials where the team often go on nights out, drink lots and in some cases attend strip clubs. Being part of the group but not getting drunk and refusing to go to strip clubs gives me an opportunity to explain what my faith means to me and why I do not want to act in those ways.

What one piece of advice would you give to Christian sportspeople to help them share their faith?

Keep persevering and be ready. Continue to engage, socialise and be around your teammates. The opportunities I have had to talk about the gospel, or even just give advice based on a different world view, have come few and far between. But they can quite easily come when you are off guard or really not ready for it. The challenge is to know what you believe, and be ready and bold enough to say something that could mean you get left behind or even become unpopular with your teammates.



NEW YEAR, SAME MISSION

.....

Clubhouse Xtra, our new year student conference, kicks off in England on 2nd January and a day later in Northern Ireland. Here, Bath University rugby player Bertie Kennedy (pictured below) shares what he's looking forward to.



Bertie Kennedy

'New Year, New Me' is the common phrase across social media in the beginning of January. However, for me and a large number of Christians playing university sport across the country, we look forward to doing exactly the same thing we did the year before - Clubhouse Xtra.

For those of you who don't know, Clubhouse Xtra is a conference run for student Christian sports players, aimed

to equip and encourage us as we go back to our various universities, to reach this world of sport for Christ. It is a massive encouragement to see that there are a great number of workers in this harvest field, fighting similar challenges, encountering the same lows and rejoicing in the highs that Christian mission brings.

The training is focussed on helping us pray, play, say; living our lives with integrity and speaking of the gospel to our teammates. It has become a constant reference point for me at uni and many of the scenarios we practised have happened in real life! A great example was a talk where the process of 'Jesus and a question' was first explained to me. Mentioning Jesus and then asking a question about Him when discussing what I got up to on the weekend, or over the summer, has unlocked so many conversations with my teammates!

The evening meetings are always a highlight. Hearing God's word and seeing how He has changed the lives of the students there or their friends, shows we're not involved in a pointless exercise! As I head back for my final year, I can't wait to hear of those who have come to faith, to see brothers and sisters running the race and be challenged again by the gospel - seeing just how relevant and life changing it is for my rugby mates.

For more information on Clubhouse Xtra 2018, head to christiansinsport.org.uk/chx18

GAINING MOMENTUM: SPORTS MISSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Although Christians in Sport was founded in 1980, the work in Northern Ireland only really got going at the turn of the millennium. Since then, it has been so encouraging to see sportspeople, churches and schools really grasping the vision to reach the world of sport for Christ.

With 23% of adults belonging to thousands of clubs, Northern Ireland is a country that lives and breathes sport. Just consider the fact that school sports competitions, like rugby union, are shown live on BBC TV! If you love Jesus and your sport, what a mission field you have in front of you.

Known as Maccers, Keith McIlwaine is the assistant pastor at Hamilton Road Baptist Church in Bangor. On hearing of Christians in Sport as a student in 2002, he joined the Queen's University, Belfast group and has seen this growth at first hand.

"I loved what they were about. I continued to go to the Pray Play Say group at university, and signed up for the first Sports Plus in Armagh in 2004. This was so good, I've gone every year since, and it's only got better. I then got involved in adult work, finding player gatherings really helpful."

Now a church leader, Maccers has a bigger picture of how the gospel is bearing fruit in the world of sport across the country.



Maccers and his fellow leaders at Sports Plus Belfast 1 in 2016

First Christians in Sport weekend
2002

First staff member appointed to work full-time in Northern Ireland.
2008



First Northern Ireland Sports Plus camp at Royal School, Armagh
2004

"The number of young people attending Sports Plus has increased by 600% - that's encouraging! More people are joining the dots between Christian faith and their sports at an earlier age which is wonderful.

"Filling leadership roles hasn't always been easy, but God has provided each year. Going forward, the challenge is to really root the core values of Christian in Sport in the Northern Ireland context. Thinking a bit more widely, I guess the big challenge is the Republic of Ireland, and impacting Gaelic sports in the north and south."

Numerically at least, our works seems to have grown more in Northern Ireland than other parts of the UK. For example, Sports Plus Belfast traditionally fills up in a day.

"It's hard to pinpoint why," said Maccers. "But (Northern Ireland Co-ordinator) Rachel Aicken (née Young) was a major catalyst in the early years, working hard at preparing the ground. We might have more of a 'Christian culture' than other parts of the UK; and it helps that everyone knows everyone, so you could be serving together at Sports Plus and playing against each other throughout the year, creating a network amongst volunteers.

"One club I played at had so many Christians, we had a weekly prayer time after training. God has certainly blessed the work. It gives us a great opportunity to witness to our teammates."



Allen McCluggage leading Pray Play Say training at Glenabbey Church

At its heart, our work is about helping Christians live for Jesus in their clubs and teams. With thousands of sports clubs in NI, there is a huge opportunity and need for Christians to get stuck in.

"I owe Christians in Sport a massive debt for the investment they placed in me as a person, especially during Sports Plus. From here I was encouraged to go back to my rugby club and represent Christ there."

Keith McIlwaine

"The teaching was straight out of God's word and straight into my rugby club, helping me to connect the dots. What I found really helpful over the years were events to bring mates to. This has ranged from the Sports Quiz, to Twenty20 cricket matches and a week in Lanzarote at Club La Santa."

Partnering with local churches is vital to

Both Sports Plus camps now at Campbell College

2014

Second Sports Plus camp launched at Campbell College

2011

First Northern Ireland Intern appointed

2016



The Northern Ireland team (from left):

Coaching at a school mission

Jenny McClaughlin (Staff Worker), Russell Bowers (Elite Sport Team), Allen McCluggage (Staff Worker), Phil Small (Intern), Rachel Aicken (Regional Co-ordinator)

our work, making sure our focus is on sportspeople of all ages.

“Many churches have benefited from the impact of Christians in Sport, being able to send young people to camps along with youth leaders,” said Maccers. “The key so far has been good connections with youth workers who now trust and know Christians in Sport.

“The challenge is moving beyond young people and figuring out the best way to support local churches with adult sportspeople, without adding another meeting to the schedule!

“I think training and evangelistic events are the key to this. Rachel and staff worker Allen McCluggage have been great at partnering with churches, and hopefully there is more to come in the future.”

Partnership in action

Glenabbey Church is among those we are partnering with.

We organised three ‘Pray, Play, Say’ training evenings to envision and equip sportspeople within the church to reach the world of sport for Christ in their local clubs and teams.

Around 50 sportspeople from a range of different sports attended and now gather every month to pray and encourage one another as they look to share Christ with their teammates.

Following this, we held two evangelistic events to reach local clubs and teams through a Sports Quiz and youth sports tournament.

Chris Cooke, church leader

FACT FILE

- Numbers attending Sports Plus have increased from **33** in **2004** to **198** in **2017**
- There are Christians in Sport University Groups at **Queen’s University, Belfast** and **Ulster University, Coleraine**
- **13** churches hosted Christians in Sport events in **2016-17**
- We know of around **1,200** Christians in sport looking to represent Jesus in their clubs and teams across Northern Ireland



Clubhouse Xtra student conference

Find out more

Subscribe to our Northern Ireland newsletter by emailing jenny@christiansinsport.org.uk

SPORTS PLUS: THE BEST PRE-SEASON EVER



Bridget Fulton



Paul Fulton



Dawie Holley



Inonge Siluka

Hundreds of people serve as Team Leaders, Coaches and Support Staff at Sports Plus each summer. But what's it like to be involved? [Back Pages editor Ed Mezzetti](#) got four members from the 2017 cohort together to find out.

Paul and Bridget Fulton, whose Sports Plus involvement dates back to the late 1990s, returned to camp with their children at Repton last summer after several years away. Paul was a rugby coach and Bridget, a former Ireland rugby international, was on the medical team. Inonge Siluka was a Team Leader at Perth and has been a Sports Plus regular for six years, while Dawie Holley, whose debut was in 1999, coached hockey at Belfast 2.

What were your first impressions of Sports Plus?

Inonge: I thought 'wow, there are people who are serious about sport everywhere. It's so weird! Why did I not know about this when I was a young person!'

Bridget: I agree, that was my first impression too - although I don't think

they existed when I was that age! It was that realisation that I would have loved it.

Paul: It was amazing to be surrounded by people who love sport, who were happy to be competitive in a good way.

Fantastic, so how did you get involved?

B: Last year, our eldest hit the age where he could go to Sports Plus and he loves his sport, so we thought this is going to be a dream for him. Then a friend suggested 'why don't you all come?' We said we've no idea whether you need anyone like us, but we would love to come and do a supporting role.

P: It was a real blessing for us as a family. As we were on the team, the children were welcomed and they could be a part of it. That was a really big plus.

I: I was playing hockey and netball and getting involved in the Christian Union as a student. Everything was clashing and I was on the verge of thinking 'actually I won't play'. Sports Plus was really helpful in getting me stuck into a team at uni and I picked hockey. It was a lightswitch moment - 'Oh, you can glorify God with your sport and that is your mission field.'

It might be hard to pin down, but is there one thing that stands out for you as key about Sports Plus?

P: I loved the focus on excellence in everything – it was really challenging. The second thing was the clear Bible teaching presenting the gospel (That's two, but we'll let you get away with it!).

That's awesome. Are there any other ways that Sports Plus impacted your own faith?

D: For me, it's that challenge to find an opportunity to speak of Christ. As you get older, maybe you're saying 'do I want those opportunities?' But Sports Plus



Dawie (centre) talks tactics

Inonge with her team at Sports Plus Perth 2017

D: I love hearing the gospel so clearly taught in its wholeness. It's not just a camp for young people to take away, I take away every single year.

B: A highlight for me is the evening meetings. Sitting at the back, watching a couple of hundred young people jumping in their seats, all this kind of banter and fun, and yet through it all worshipping God. You just sit there thinking 'where else do you get that?'

I: One of the girls on my team said the treatment she received from one of the physios made her notice 'she's so different'. Just watching that physio not even realising the impact she was having, by caring, by asking questions - God was using that.

gives you a great reminder that I need to speak of Christ.

I: I come away with a confidence that the gospel is for everyone. That it is what my teammates and my friends need. You're reminded that the gospel is powerful and able to save anyone.

P: In one of the training sessions, we were reminded about how many sports teams there are in the UK and challenged 'are we being part of those teams, do we have the urgency of reaching the world of sport for Christ?'

B: I made really great friends in the medical team that I was in, who I am now in touch with after camp. It's just hugely encouraging that God knows what we need and puts those people in place.

I'm loving this chat. Can you share any more laugh-out-loud moments?

B: Absolutely. The only problem is that when I try to explain them, they're not generally as funny to the listeners! There was a lot of hilarity - especially about high viz clothing. We were crying with laughter

D: You get sing-offs in the dining room in Belfast and anybody who's English tries to stand up and sing 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'. Very quickly, everybody else is on their feet singing 'Shoulder to shoulder, together standing tall' or some of the Healy songs come out when



Bridget (right) with England's Ann O'Flynn after facing each other in a 'legends' match before the 2017 Women's Rugby World Cup



Paul (background, white and blue t-shirt) coaching rugby with Mike Smith (left) at Sports Plus Repton 2017

at one point. There were practical jokes we were playing on each other. I miss that in a lot of areas of my life now!

P: Mike Smith, the head rugby coach, always gave me a list of warm-ups I would be showing the young people the next day. We had many an evening of him laughing at me as I tried to figure out what a reverse lunge with twist was!

I: This summer, we tried to write out a rap from Fresh Prince of Bel-Air to perform for our team song in the evening meeting. It was good in practice [laughs]. We were nailing it at the dining table, but when we tried it, we couldn't quite squeeze it in! It was a bit awkward but quite funny as well.

Northern Ireland beat England at football. It's quality!

Lastly, could you sum up Sports Plus in three words?

P: I would say 'fun, friendly and focussed'.

B: I went for 'glimpse of heaven'. I look at Sports Plus and think if that's a little bit of what heaven is going to be like, then I want to be there.

I: For me, it's 'Bible, banter action'.

D: I went with more of a sentence, if I am allowed that? As it happens in the summer, how about 'best pre-season ever'?

Leaders' applications for Sports Plus 2018 are now open. For more information, visit christiansinsport.org.uk/sportsplus2018leaders

FROM SKELETON TO THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

.....

For a time at Turin 2006, Adam Pengilly led the Winter Olympics.

Hurting down an icy track at 90mph - trying not to smack into the rock-solid wall - the pressure of being a Winter Olympian in the skeleton event is immense. Now though, as a retired athlete, there is a different type of pressure.

When the Winter Olympics start in PyeongChang in February, Adam will be far more than just an interested spectator.

Having competed for Team GB in the 2006 and 2010 Games, he is now making an impact off the track as an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member.

Adam is one of 15 representatives on the IOC's Athletes Commission, putting forward the views of sportspeople competing in the winter and summer Games. He joined the IOC at the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics and retired from competition in 2012.

In this role, he has helped organise February's Games in the Republic of Korea and, just as he did as an athlete, the 2009 world silver medallist is looking to represent Jesus in the world of sport's governing bodies.

As well as his IOC position, Adam is on the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) Athlete Committee and Vice President International Affairs of the International Bobsleigh & Skeleton Federation. It all started with a small role representing his fellow British winter athletes in 2003, but what motivates him to stay involved?

"I like to improve things to be done well



or better than they were at the time. I thought and still think that athletes could be more involved in decision making within sport and athletes' interests could be taken into account more."

"My whole life is impacted by my Christian faith. While I am far from perfect and get things wrong, I try and live my life as Jesus taught."

His IOC role alone is certainly keeping Adam busy.

"I have been involved in the monitoring team for the PyeongChang Winter Games and did the same for the Winter Youth Olympics in Lillehammer 2016. I am also involved in evaluation for the 2022 Winter Games and the anti-doping piece, which is where my role with WADA came in."

As an athlete, Adam looked to live out his

faith among his fellow sliders - now it's the officials he serves alongside.

"My whole life is impacted by my Christian faith. While I am far from perfect and get things wrong, I try and live my life as Jesus taught - to serve and follow Him."



Adam Pengilly

As an IOC member, Adam faces many big decisions, so how does he prepare?

"I will try and read as much as I can, so I have got as much information as I can; bearing in mind where that information has come from, and what that person or group's agenda might be.

"Then I pray and ask for God's help and His wisdom because numerous times I have thought 'Lord, I don't know what to do here, please help'."

Adam has a great opportunity to witness for Jesus among his colleagues and the staff, but he says the political nature of the IOC also throws up many challenges.

"It's a weird and wonderful mix of people, quite eclectic in some ways. You have got members of royal families, sporting greats and then you have people who don't really have that much sporting history, but have great experience in other areas.

"Because there are often elections going on, it is hard to make deep friendships and establish trust. But when you are there, in some ways it's like a family."

Six years after retiring, Adam still fondly remembers his time competing, especially his Olympic debut at Turin 2006.

"There was just so much to see and the atmosphere in the Olympic Village was just incredible. It was a place people had dreamed of, and wanted to be, most of their lives and now they had made it.

"There was a real euphoria, particularly around the opening ceremony and the early part of the Games."

Skeleton involved four one-minute runs producing a cumulative time.

"It was about not making mistakes and being solid all the way down, rather than being exceptional. When I competed, I was always really nervous. It was about trying to control things. I did that by praying for safety for everybody and that I would perform well. Then I would go through my race routine."

Adam was the first man to go in the skeleton at Turin.

"It was a real privilege and meant of course that I was leading the Olympics for a couple of minutes."

He added: "Hurtling down a mountain at 90mph is just so much fun - as long as you don't hit the wall too much. It is just a brilliant gift from God!"

To hear more from Adam listen to christiansinsport.org.uk/olympicpodcast and look out for a new interview with him in February.

PARTNER EVENINGS

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.



January 12th	Birmingham
January 15th	London
January 19th	Oxford
January 26th	Cambridge
March 5th	Cardiff
March 9th	Belfast
March 12th	Edinburgh
March 16th	Bristol

More evenings to be confirmed in 2018

To find out more and book please visit
christiansinsport.org.uk/partners
or call the office on 01869 255 630