

# GAME ON



## THE POTENTIAL OF OMAN'S SPORTS ECONOMY

4	8	10	14	16	20	22	24	26	28	32
THE GLOBAL SPORTS GOLDMINE	SPORTING SUCCESS	BUILDING WORLD CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE	CRICKET'S BREAKTHROUGH	CYCLING'S NATURAL ADVANTAGE	SAILING HERITAGE	THE POWER OF RUNNING	HEALTH & SOCIAL DIVIDEND	DIGITAL SPORTS & TECHNOLOGY	SUSTAINABLE SPORTS LEADERSHIP	BONUS TRACK

## About Tejarah Talks

# INSPIRE EDUCATE ENTERTAIN

Tejarah Talks is organized by Oman Business Forum in association with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion. With a firm focus on Oman's current and future business, export and investment environment, Tejarah Talks is a series of informal, interactive evening discussions that brings together some of Oman's most inspirational and innovative thinkers and doers to share their stories, insights and ideas with an enthusiastic crowd. It is a platform for positive interaction.

## SESSION PANEL



**Panelist** **Joe Rafferty**  
Events Director  
Oman Sail



**Panelist** **Ali Al Ajmi**  
General Manager  
Sabco Sports



**Panelist** **HE Pankaj Khimji**  
Advisor, Foreign Trade & International Cooperation  
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**Moderator** **Jamal Al Asmi**  
Executive Producer  
RealityCG



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# SPORT HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

It has the power to unite in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination. The heroes sport creates are examples of this power. They are valiant, not only on the playing field but also in the community, spreading hope and inspiration to the world.

**NELSON MANDELA**



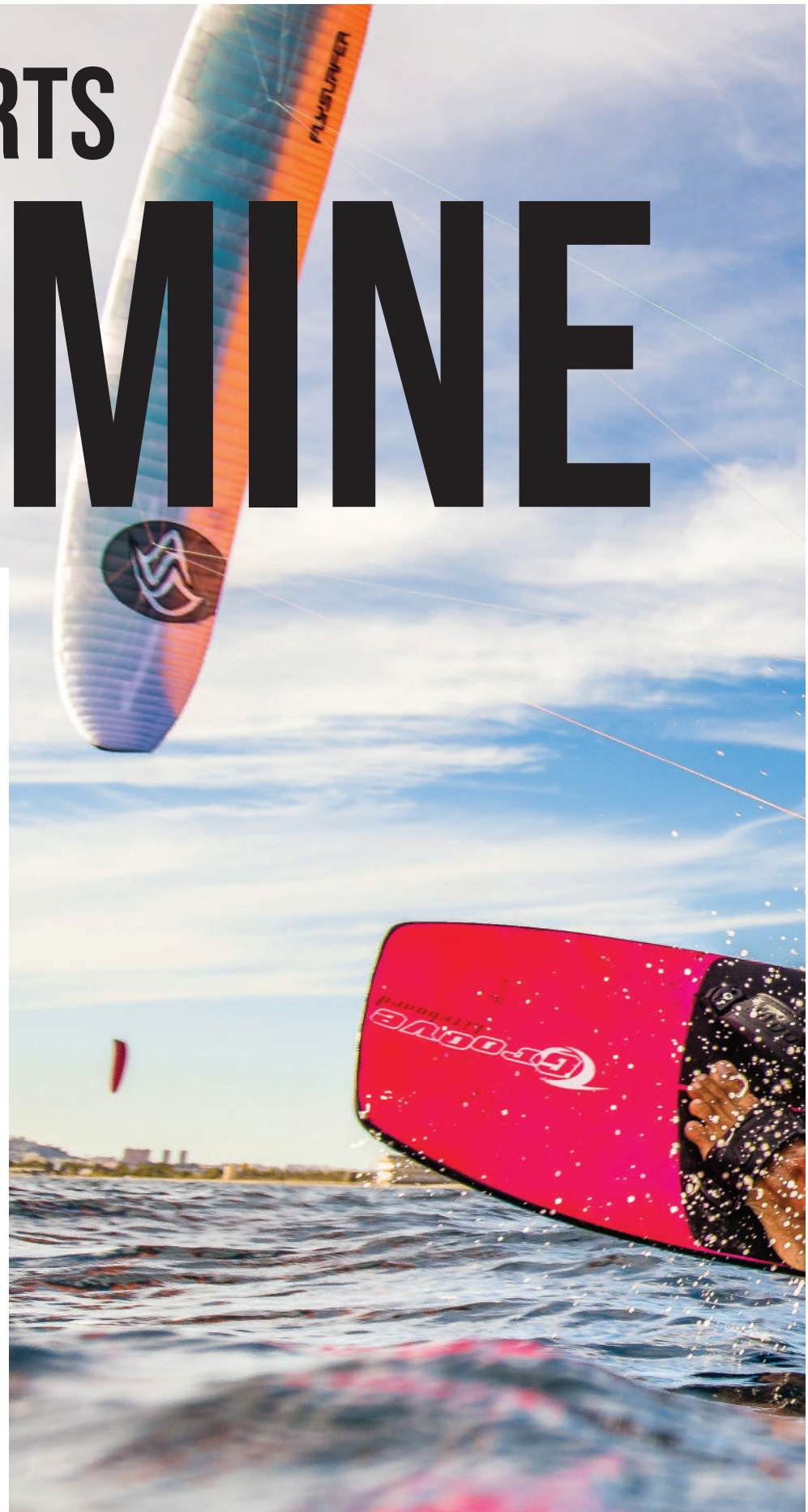
## Talking Point 1

# THE GLOBAL SPORTS GOLDMINE

**Sport is big business. Ranked as the 9<sup>th</sup> largest industry globally by the Global Institute of Sport it's an economic powerhouse that touches everything from broadcasting and sponsorship to merchandise sales and athletes.<sup>1</sup>**

Walk into any classroom and ask children what they want to be when they grow up and you'll probably hear "professional footballer". In fact, almost every child dreams of a career as a professional athlete at one point or another. The lifestyle is grand and romantic - fame, sponsorship and perhaps most importantly the financial rewards. To put the money in perspective, the average NBA player made US\$11.9 million in 2024, an NFL player US\$3.2 million while an English Premier League (EPL) player picked up US\$3.5 million.<sup>2</sup>

That universal childhood dream hints at something bigger – sport's incredible reach and cultural impact. The numbers back this up, with global industry revenues hitting around US\$2.6 trillion annually. That scale means almost everyone connects with sport somehow.





Footnotes

- 1 Best-Howard Model, 2024; Global Sports Insights
- 2 Ryan Phillips, What's the Average NBA Salary for 2024-25 Season? Sports Illustrated



The industry’s growth story is impressive – between 2019 and 2023 global sports revenue jumped from US\$2.3 trillion to US\$2.6 trillion – that’s US\$338 billion in new value in just four years. Much of this increase came from fan engagement which grew 6.4% as sport became truly international. For example, today, the EPL broadcasts to 188 countries with an audience of 3.2 billion generating over US\$1.1 billion per season from overseas TV rights – while more people watch NBA games in China than anywhere outside the US.

But sport’s impact goes far beyond economics. The most documented benefits relate to public health, with government studies showing how sports participation cuts healthcare costs while improving community behaviour and reducing crime rates. Research from Sport England highlights the fact that active lives prevent 1.3 million cases of depression, 600,000 of diabetes and 57,000 of dementia – the UK’s leading cause of death – saving the National Health Service billions every year. These broader social benefits help explain why sport commands such loyalty and why it ranks among the world’s largest industries.



## Talking Point 1 - The Global Sports Goldmine

### Tourism's New Frontier

Sports tourism has emerged as a major contributor to the global economy, reaching US\$618 billion in 2024 and expected to grow to US\$2 trillion by 2032.<sup>3</sup> This growth is fueled by both traditional sporting events and emerging sectors like eSports which has rapidly become a global phenomenon with a market value of US\$4.1 billion in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

Large-scale events such as the FIFA World Cup serve as powerful catalysts for infrastructure development, international exposure and local business opportunities. The scale and impact of these events can be transformative for host countries, creating lasting legacies that extend beyond the competition itself.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar perfectly illustrates this potential. The tournament generated over US\$7.5 billion in revenue for FIFA while engaging 5 billion viewers worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Over one million visitors traveled to Qatar to watch matches in person with the largest contingents coming from Saudi Arabia, India, the US, UK and Mexico.

The infrastructure demands were equally impressive. During the group stage alone - the tournament's busiest phase - Qatar's Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks recorded 9.19 million trips averaging 707,032 passengers daily. This movement of people required coordinated transportation planning and demonstrated the host country's logistical capabilities on a global stage.

The tournament's digital engagement was also remarkable. Across social media platforms, Nielsen recorded 93.6 million posts with a cumulative reach of 262 billion and 5.95 billion engagements, showing how modern sporting events create value through both physical attendance and digital participation. These events leave behind improved facilities, enhanced global awareness and proven infrastructure that continues benefiting host countries long after the final whistle.





Footnotes

- 3 Fortune Business Insights, Sports Tourism Market Size, Share & Industry Analysis
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Al Jazeera, FIFA earns record \$7.5bn revenue for Qatar World Cup
- 6 Custom Markets Insights, Global Sports Medicine Market: Growth Trends, Key Segments & Future Outlook (2025-2034)

## Beyond the Scoreboard

What sets the sports sector apart, especially for emerging economies like Oman is its dual impact. Economically, it creates jobs, attracts investment and stimulates tourism. Socially, it fosters community engagement, supports youth development and promotes healthier lifestyles. Research shows that investment in local sports infrastructure can lower youth crime rates by up to 30%, while the global sports medicine sector - valued at US\$7.4 billion in 2025 - contributes to better health outcomes.<sup>6</sup> This combination of economic and social returns makes sports a unique tool for national development. In Oman’s context, investing in sports can help address youth employment, encourage entrepreneurship and build a sense of national pride and unity.

Oman is well positioned to benefit from these global trends. The country’s natural landscapes, favourable climate – particularly in the winter months - and growing infrastructure provide a strong foundation for developing sports tourism and hosting international events. Rather than competing directly with established sports powerhouses, Oman can focus on niche areas - such as adventure sports, sailing and eco-friendly events - where it has natural advantages and can offer unique experiences.

The sports economy’s broad reach means Oman can create opportunities not just for athletes but also for professionals in media, marketing, event management, health and technology. By building on its strengths and targeting the right segments, Oman can carve out a distinctive place in the global sports industry. In brief, the sports economy isn’t just about games and competitions. It’s a dynamic, fast-growing sector that shapes economies, societies and international perceptions. For Oman, the challenge and opportunity lie in leveraging its unique assets to participate in this global movement - generating economic value, fostering social cohesion and enhancing its international profile.

### Year-Round

The Ministry of Heritage & Tourism (MoHT) has curated a carefully designed events calendar that maintains year-round visitor appeal, attracting diverse audiences with different interests across various months and locations throughout Oman.

### Geographic Distribution

Strategic placement of events like the Himam Trail Run Race in Al Hajjar Mountains and the 165km Oman Desert Marathon in North Sharqiyah ensures tourism benefits reach communities beyond Muscat, fostering more equitable economic development across the country.

### Major Events

Individual sporting events generate impressive returns, with Iron Man Muscat 70.3 bringing in US\$5.2 million, Himam Trail Run Race generating US\$3.6 million and Red Bull Car Park Drift World Final contributing US\$2.6 million to the economy.

### Portfolio Growth

MoHT’s total sports tourism revenue reached US\$16.9 million in 2024, representing a 30% increase from US\$13 million generated in 2023, demonstrating growing economic impact of sports events.

### Community Engagement

Events like the Oman Desert Marathon - US\$780,000 - and Muscat Marathon - US\$1.8 million - create multiple economic opportunities for local communities, spreading tourism benefits beyond traditional urban centres.





*Talking Point 2*

# SPORTING

# UCCFSS



**Oman's recent achievements in sports tourism show how well-planned events can boost both the economy and the country's international profile.**

## Racing Ahead

The 2024 Himam Trail Run Race, attracted over 4,000 runners from 65 countries – the event has quickly become the leading trail running competition in the MENA region. And this isn't just a one-off success – Oman is steadily building momentum across its sports calendar. The Muscat Marathon exemplifies this growth trajectory. What started with just 135 runners in 2012 has grown into a major international event, welcoming 13,000 participants from more than 60 countries in 2025. Sabco Sports, a key player in the local industry has now brought 100,000+ people to its events, highlighting the growing appeal of Oman as a sports destination.

## Collaborative Champions

Much of this progress comes from a collaborative approach. MoHT works closely with event organizers like Sabco Sports to use these occasions as platforms for promoting Oman’s unique landscapes and culture. Rather than focusing on expensive mega-events, Oman is investing in sustainable, recurring events that make the most of its natural assets and support local businesses.

This strategy fits well with global trends. Sports tourism now accounts for about 10% of all international tourism spending and it’s expected to grow rapidly over the next few years. What makes Oman’s approach stand out is its emphasis on authentic experiences – events are designed to connect visitors with local communities and the environment, not just the competition itself.

Looking ahead, the government’s commitment is clear. With a planned investment of US\$7.8 billion in tourism by 2030, sports will play a central role in Oman’s development plans, with the aim of sports tourism contributing 3.5% to the country’s GDP by the end of the decade. By focusing on quality, sustainability and local engagement, Oman is positioning itself as a model for how smaller nations can use sports to drive economic and social progress.

### Athlete Performance

Neural implants and brain-computer interfaces will become commonplace by 2050, enabling better injury prediction and extending the careers of professional athletes by many years.

### Virtual Reality

Wearable VR technology will allow fans to experience matches from inside stadiums while sitting at home, making geographic proximity to venues irrelevant and fundamentally changing how we consume live sports entertainment.

### Economic Polarization

The financial gap between major sports like football and cricket and smaller disciplines will continue widening, with many Olympic sports and secondary leagues struggling for sponsorship and viewer attention while top-tier sports consolidate their dominance.

### Contact Sports

Brain injury concerns are reducing grassroots participation in collision sports, though elite levels may survive through tech solutions that better monitor and manage player welfare, potentially requiring fundamental rule changes when real-time injury detection becomes possible.



### Biennial Olympic Games

Economic pressures and strong interest from wealthy nations could drive the International Olympic Committee to stage summer Olympics every two years rather than the traditional four-year cycle.



### Talking Point 3

#### Laying the Foundation

Sports facilities and infrastructure form the backbone of any nation's athletic development and public health initiatives. Countries with strong sporting infrastructure are better positioned to nurture athletic talent and encourage active lifestyles among their citizens. More recently we have seen efforts to modernize and expand sports facilities to meet international standards, though important opportunities and challenges remain.

#### Current Challenges

Several key obstacles continue to slow development. Funding shortfalls top the list, often compounded by bureaucratic red tape and difficulties securing suitable land for new facilities. Many existing venues suffer from poor maintenance - lacking basic upkeep like regular cleaning and equipment servicing that keeps facilities functional and appealing. Perhaps most concerning is the gap in youth sports development where inadequate facilities deny promising young athletes the training opportunities they need to reach their potential.



# BUILDING WORLD CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE



Footnotes

- 7 Zawya, Oman's Musannah Integrated Sports City project attracts major bidders
- 8 John Bradbury, Dennis Coates, Brad Humphreys, The impact of professional sports franchises and venues on local economies: A comprehensive survey, Journal of Economic Surveys

## Promising Opportunities

Despite these challenges, several positive trends are emerging. Public-private partnerships are creating new funding models that combine government support with private sector investment. There's growing interest in smart, multipurpose facilities that can serve different sports and community needs, maximizing both usage and return on investment. The construction industry is also evolving with specialized companies developing more sustainable, eco-friendly approaches to building sports venues that benefit both athletes and the environment.

## Stadium of Dreams

The Integrated Sports City project in Musannah represents one of Oman's most ambitious sports infrastructure investments. Spanning 1 million m<sup>2</sup> the development will feature a 25,000-seat football stadium designed to FIFA and IAAF standards along with state-of-the-art facilities for athletes and spectators.<sup>7</sup> Global best practices show that successful sports facilities achieve 70-80% utilization rates by incorporating multiple uses beyond professional competitions. Research also indicates that well-designed sports facilities can positively impact nearby property values, though effects vary by location and facility type.<sup>8</sup>





## Talking Point 3 - Building World Class Infrastructure

### Lessons from Barcelona



The 1992 Barcelona Olympics provides an excellent example – the US\$942 million infrastructure investment generated direct economic benefits of US\$7.3 billion and wider economic impacts exceeding US\$19.4 billion.<sup>9</sup>

While Oman's investments will be more modest, strategic alignment with broader development goals can achieve impressive returns. For Oman, the infrastructure challenge involves balancing elite competition requirements with community accessibility. The most successful global models integrate professional venues with recreational facilities, educational programs and commercial developments that serve local populations year-round.



**THE OLYMPIC STADIUM FROM THE 2012 LONDON GAMES  
NOW SERVES AS HOME TO PREMIER LEAGUE CLUB  
WEST HAM UNITED**



Footnotes  
9 Barcelona Olympic Legacy Study, La Caixa Research Service



**Make It Happen**

Begin with what’s already working. Double down on successful events like Muscat Marathon, Tour of Oman and the Himam Trail Run Race by improving facilities, expanding marketing reach and adding complementary activities. Use these proven winners to attract more international participants and build Oman’s reputation as a serious sports destination.

**Build it & They Will Come**

Focus on infrastructure that serves multiple purposes - not just elite sports. Develop cycling routes, upgrade Sultan Qaboos stadium’s swimming facilities and create multi-use sports complexes that local communities can enjoy year-round. Think Singapore’s 35-hectare Sports Hub model - world-class venue that also hosts school tournaments and community events.

**Sports Economy Taskforce**

Bring together government organizations, local businesses and sports federations under one roof. Give them clear targets, dedicated funding and the authority to cut through red tape. Success needs coordination, not just good intentions.

**Target Quick Wins**

Pick three achievable goals: get two more national sailing, swimming and hockey teams to train in Oman during the European winter, introduce an international swim meet that attracts regional competitors and launch two new niche events - drone racing championships or tennis tournament. Early victories build momentum and political support.

**Scale-Up**

Once the foundation is solid, invite private sector partnerships for bigger projects. Use proven demand from smaller events to attract hotel chains, equipment suppliers and media companies. Let success attract the money, not the other way around.



Talking Point 4

# CRICKET'S BREAKTHROUGH

Oman's cricket journey illustrates how strategic sports investment generates both sporting success and economic returns. The country's progression from relative obscurity to co-hosting the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 demonstrates how emerging nations can use sports to accelerate international recognition. The hosting of six T20 World Cup matches exposed Oman to 167 million unique viewers while generating 112 billion viewing minutes of international exposure.<sup>10</sup> This remarkable media reach translates into destination marketing value worth tens of millions through traditional advertising channels.





Footnotes

10 ICC T20 World Cup 2021 Broadcast Report

11 Crain Currency, Cricket is the 2nd-most-popular sport in world. Private equity wants in

12 Anderson Economic Group, Cricket comes home to U.S. Economic impact of a single 2024 Cricket World Cup match in New York to exceed \$78 million

13 Oman Cricket Development Report, 2024

## Legends & Legacy

The 2023 Legends League Cricket Masters, organized by Delhi-based Absolute Legends Sports in Doha, Qatar included three teams that featured recently retired international stars including Aaron Finch (World Giants), Gautam Gambhir (India Maharajas) and Shahid Afridi (Asian Lions). The series reached a TV-OTT audience of 262 million and generated US\$90.7 million.

But cricket’s economic impact extends across event hosting, generating US\$3.8 billion worldwide in 2025 making it the second-largest revenue generator in global sports after football.<sup>11</sup> While individual events demonstrate substantial local impact – a single 2024 Cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan on Long Island in New York generated over US\$7.5 million in economic activity for the city.<sup>12</sup>



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) stands as the world’s wealthiest cricket board with an estimated value of US\$2.25 billion, fueled by cricket’s immense popularity in India and the phenomenal success of the Indian Premier League. The IPL serves as the BCCI’s financial powerhouse, generating revenue through sponsorships, ticket sales and broadcasting rights that recently commanded a staggering US\$6.2 billion for the 2023–27 cycle.



## Grassroots Growth

Oman Cricket’s infrastructure development follows international best practices. The construction of two international-standard grounds in Al Amerat combined with grassroots programs targeting schoolchildren creates clear pathways from youth participation to elite competition. The organization has introduced over 700 Omani children aged 8–12 to organized cricket over four semesters, showing how early engagement can build lasting interest in the sport.<sup>13</sup> The sport’s strategic value extends into soft power – cricket serves as a bridge between Oman and the large South Asian expatriate communities, fostering cultural understanding and stronger international ties.



Talking Point 5







The Tour of Oman's establishment as a UCI Pro Series fixture since 2022 shows how cycling leverages Oman's geographical diversity. The event's growth is clear in its 14th edition in February 2025 which brought together 18 international teams from France, Spain, Belgium, Australia, the Netherlands, UAE and Kazakhstan.

# RAL ADVANTAGE

This international participation reflects the race structure. The six-day event features diverse stages across Oman. The 2025 route included the Muscat Classic covering 171km from Al Mouj Muscat through Seeb's coastal roads and villages, followed by five main stages totaling over 891km - routes highlighting iconic landmarks from Oman Across the Ages Museum in Manah, Rustaq Fort to Jabal Akhdar's dramatic mountain finish.



Talking Point 5 - Cycling's Natural Advantage

Pedal Power



Bicycle tourism delivers compelling economic benefits, with cyclists staying longer and spending up to 40% more than typical motorized tourists, according to the Outdoor Industry Association. The impact is substantial - in the US alone, bicycle tourism generates US\$83 billion in trip-related sales and US\$97 billion in retail spending, while supporting 848,000 jobs. Communities that embrace cycling see widespread economic gains as cyclists stop more frequently at shops, cafes and markets compared to drivers, creating sustained activity along popular routes and boosting multiple sectors throughout cycling-friendly areas.

Oman's Offer

Building on these global success stories, Oman has similar natural advantages plus some additional benefits that could set it apart. The country's winter climate is particularly attractive when European destinations face challenging weather, drawing cyclists seeking quality training opportunities during Europe's off-season. Meanwhile, Oman's varied terrain offers something for every type of cyclist - coastal routes with stunning sea views, challenging mountain climbs and unique desert landscapes for adventure cycling that competitors simply can't match.

Health on Wheels

The health benefits provide measurable economic value too. A narrative review published in *Frontiers in Sports & Active Living* found that participation in cycling is associated with lower risk of mortality from any cause and reduced incidence of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.<sup>14</sup>

The World Health Organization's Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) quantifies these benefits - studies using this methodology show that dedicated cycling infrastructure can reduce mortality risk by 18% while delivering economic benefits that outweigh construction costs by at least two-fold. Communities with higher cycling rates experience lower healthcare costs, benefiting residents and employers. Healthier employees take fewer sick days and show improved productivity, making workplace cycling programs attractive investments.

**Dedicated cycling infrastructure can reduce mortality risk by 18% while delivering economic benefits that outweigh construction costs by at least two-fold.**

- Streets with dedicated cycle lanes in **New York City** saw a larger rise in retail sales compared to the surrounding area
- A study of businesses in **Portland, Oregon** found people walking and cycling spent more in a month than drivers
- People who walk and cycle in **San Francisco** visit shops more often and spend more in a month than drivers
- In **Los Angeles** sales tax revenue rose by two thirds after cycle lanes were built - 14% higher than unimproved areas



Footnotes  
14 Frontiers in Sports & Active Living, Benefits, risks, barriers and facilitators to cycling: a narrative review

## La Fuga

Italy illustrates the economic potential of cycle tourism. In 2024, an estimated 33 million visitors - roughly 50% of all tourists to Italy - chose to incorporate cycling into their Italian experiences. This shows the activity has evolved from a recreational add-on into a travel motivator that influences destination choices.

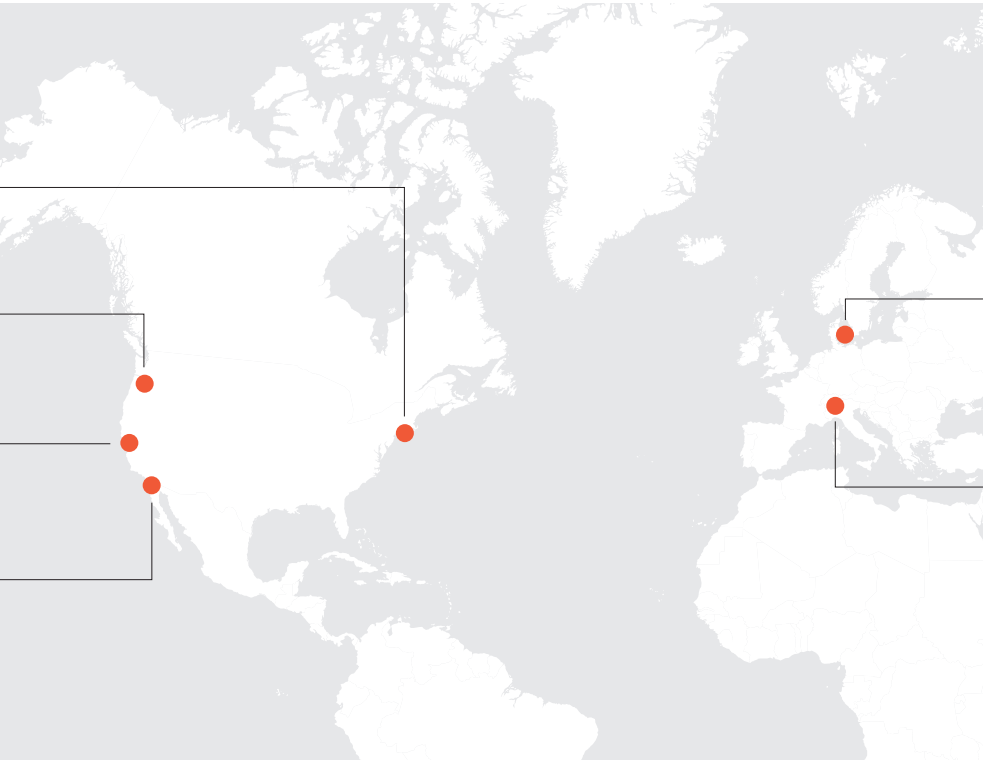
The scope of this change becomes clearer when examining dedicated enthusiasts. The 9 million tourists who visit Italy specifically to cycle have more than doubled since pre-pandemic levels, indicating strong demand for these experiences. These committed travellers tend to stay longer, spend more and venture into areas that typical tourists might not discover.

Italy's success reflects a global trend creating opportunities for destinations of every size. Mallorca provides an example of how smaller markets can capitalize on this trend. The Balearic island welcomes over 150,000 bike tourists each year who contribute US\$158 million to the local economy. Mallorca's approach combines varied terrain with specialized infrastructure and comprehensive bike-friendly services - creating a model that destinations worldwide are adapting to their own landscapes.

## Bike Trails



The beauty of cycling tourism lies in its adaptability to different environments and scales. Boulder, Colorado proves this perfectly with its extensive bike trails and welcoming atmosphere that draw thousands of cycling enthusiasts yearly. Local businesses thrive as visitors spend on food, accommodation and gear creating a virtuous cycle of economic activity that benefits the entire community. Even rural regions can capitalize on this trend. Trails like the Great Allegheny Passage - stretching from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Cumberland, Maryland - help small towns flourish as cyclists stop for meals, shopping or overnight stays during multi-day journeys. This shows how cycling tourism can breathe new life into communities that might otherwise struggle to attract visitors.



People who cycle to shops and supermarkets in **Copenhagen** spend more each year than people who drive. Two thirds of shopping trips and half the total revenue comes from customers on foot and cycle

For every square metre of parking space in **Bern** customers who cycled generated US\$8,577 compared to US\$7,559 from car drivers



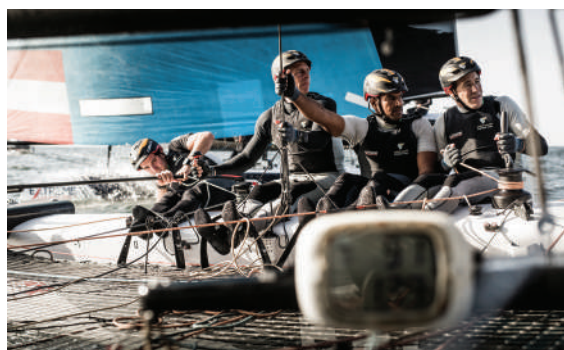
*Talking Point 6*

# SAILING

## HERITAGE

**The global sailing industry is experiencing unprecedented growth with the yacht/sailboat market projected to grow at 5.1% CAGR by 2028.<sup>15</sup>**

The yacht charter market shows even stronger growth potential with projections ranging from US\$11 billion by 2030 at 5.5% CAGR to US\$18.3 billion by 2034 at 8.11% CAGR.<sup>16</sup> Within this expanding market, Oman has developed a maritime sports strategy that leverages historical seafaring traditions for economic diversification, prioritizing infrastructure development over short-term event hosting to create sustainable competitive advantages.





Footnotes

- 15 Polaris Market Research, Yacht Market Share, Size, Trends, Industry Analysis Report
- 16 Precedence Research, Yacht Charter Market Size, Share & Trends 2024 - 2034
- 17 Oman Sail, <https://omansail.com/events-mussanah-race-week-2024>
- 18 Al Mouj Marina, Al Mouj Marina gets prestigious 'Five Gold Anchor' status from TYHA
- 19 Arabian Stories, Asian Sailing Federation selects Oman Sail's Mussanah Sailing School as a High-Performance Centre

Marina Excellence

Oman Sail took a smart approach by building solid foundations before chasing high-profile competitions. At the heart of their strategy sits Al Mussanah Marina, which runs 54 wet berths year-round with comprehensive support services - everything from boat cleaning and arrival assistance to fuel dock facilities.<sup>17</sup> The marina does double duty as both one of Oman Sail's three sailing schools and the home base for the National Sailing Teams. This infrastructure-first philosophy pays dividends, allowing consistent operations while many other venues struggle with seasonal limitations.

Meanwhile, Al Mouj Marina has carved out its place in the luxury market. The facility handles yachts ranging from 8 to 65 meters across 165 berths and in 2017 earned the Five Gold Anchor accreditation from the Yacht Harbour Association - a recognition that puts it among the world's premium marina destinations.<sup>18</sup>



Championship Waters

When the Asian Sailing Federation (ASAF) designated Mussanah as a Category A High-Performance Centre, it was recognizing something special - a world-class facility that seamlessly combines marina services, accommodation, media capabilities and direct water access.<sup>19</sup> What really sets it apart is Oman's year-round sailing weather which allows training programs to run without interruption. This consistency has become a magnet for Olympic-winning national sailing teams and creates steady revenue that flows well beyond the buzz of major competitions.

The Mussanah Sailing School proves this versatility works. It has successfully hosted an impressive lineup of major events, from the 2021 Asian Windsurfing Championships; 2021 49er & 49er FX Asian Championships; 2021 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 World Championships; 2021 ILCA 6 World Championships; 2021 Youth Sailing World Championships and the 2022 Arab Sailing Championships. A particular milestone was the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships - marking the first exclusively para world sailing event ever held in Oman.

But the impact goes deeper than individual events. The facility has become part of a broader marine industry ecosystem that's reshaping Oman's tourism landscape. Sailing enthusiasts tend to be higher-spending visitors who stay longer than typical tourists, delivering better economic returns per person.





*Talking Point 7*

**Marathons represent one of sport's most powerful economic engines, bringing together athletic competition, tourism and community development in a way few other events can match.**

The numbers tell a compelling story - recent data from the Association of International Marathons & Distance Races (AIMS) and the 2024 Sports Tourism Global Market Report show that the world's 50 largest marathons generate a combined economic impact of around US\$5.2 billion annually.<sup>20</sup> To put this in perspective, individual events deliver remarkable returns for their host cities. The 2024 Chicago Marathon alone contributed US\$547 million to the city's economy while the Boston Marathon consistently generates over US\$200 million in direct spending during race week. These figures reveal how marathons have become major economic drivers that often outperform other sporting events when it comes to visitor spending per capita.



Footnotes  
20 EnduranceBiz, ASICS Los Angeles Marathon ranked among world's top 10 marathon brands  
21 Sports ETA, Sports ETA Unveils 2024 State of the Industry for the \$114 Billion Economic Impact from Spectator Sports Tourism

## Muscat’s Marathon Journey

This global trend has found fertile ground in Oman where the Muscat Marathon showcases the country’s expanding sports tourism potential. The event’s transformation has been nothing short of remarkable - developing from just 135 participants in 2012 to over 13,000 runners from 60 countries in 2025. A key turning point came in 2018 when the event earned certification from AIMS, boosting its international reputation and attracting both elite runners and global media attention.

The economic impact has grown alongside participation numbers. According to MoHT, hotel occupancy rates during marathon week have increased by 18% while direct tourism revenue linked to the event has more than doubled since 2019. This evolution demonstrates how strategic investment in sports tourism can transform a destination’s profile while generating sustained economic benefits.

## Show Me the Money

What makes marathons particularly valuable from an economic standpoint is how they create ripple effects that extend far beyond registration fees. Recent research by Sports ETA (2024) reveals the spending power of marathon tourism - participants typically stay 2.5 nights and bring an average of 1.6 supporters with them.<sup>21</sup> This creates cascading demand for accommodation, dining and local attractions throughout the host city.

The spending patterns are impressive too. The average international marathon visitor spends US\$1,450 during their stay - more than double what typical leisure tourists contribute. When you add it all up, marathon-related tourism can inject up to US\$125 million into a host city’s economy per event. The breakdown shows just how comprehensive this economic impact is - 42% goes to accommodation, 27% to dining and the remainder to retail and entertainment. These patterns align perfectly with World Travel & Tourism Council findings that identify sports tourists as among the highest-spending visitor segments globally.

### Current World Records

The men’s marathon world record stands at 2:00:35 - set by Kenya’s Kelvin Kiptum at the 2023 Chicago Marathon, while Ruth Chepng’etich of Kenya holds the women’s record at 2:09:56, also set in Chicago in 2024 - making the Windy City officially the world’s fastest marathon course for both men and women

### How Far

The modern marathon distance of 26.2 miles (42.195km) was established at the 1908 London Olympics when Queen Alexandra requested a route extension so her children could watch the race from Windsor Castle, though it wasn’t standardized until 1924

### Age Is Just a Number

While 100-year-old Fauja Singh completed the 2011 Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 8:25:16 as the oldest finisher and 3-year-old Budhia Singh holds the record as the youngest to complete the distance, these extremes showcase the marathon’s universal appeal across all ages and abilities

### The Fastest Route

First run in 1897, the Boston Marathon is the world’s oldest annual marathon and maintains the fastest median finish time in the US at 3:44

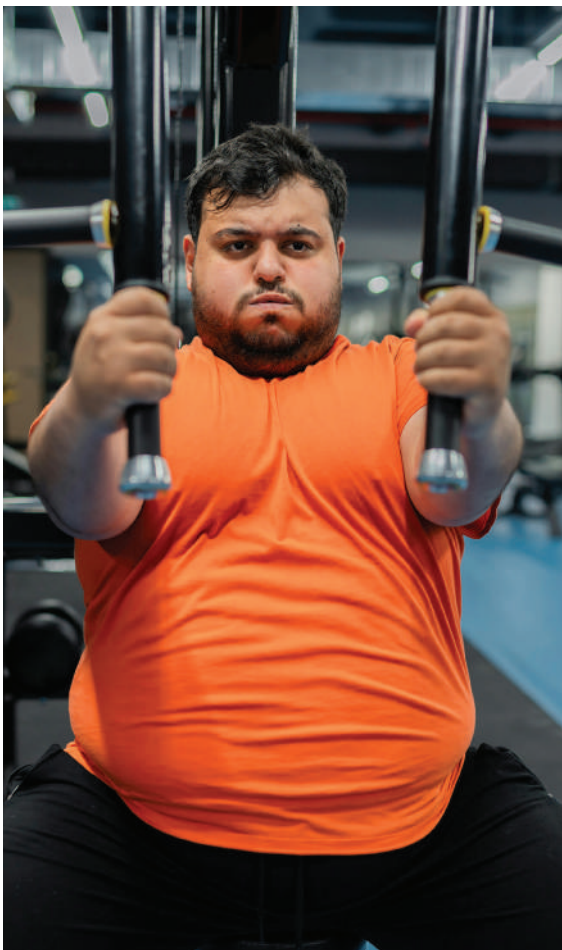
### Modern Marathon

800+ marathons are now organized worldwide annually with major events like New York attracting over 50,000 participants from around the globe, transforming what began as a small Central Park loop in 1970 into a massive international phenomenon



Talking Point 8

**The economic case for sports development extends into measurable public health benefits that reduce healthcare costs and increase productivity. Physical inactivity represents a massive global health burden with almost 500 million people projected to develop heart disease, obesity, diabetes or other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) attributable to inactivity between 2020 and 2030, costing US\$27 billion annually.<sup>22</sup>**



**HEALTH  
& SOCIAL  
DIVIDEND**

The prevention potential through sports participation is substantial. Regular physical activity reduces coronary heart disease risk by 35%, type 2 diabetes by 40% and certain cancers by 20-30%.<sup>23</sup> These health improvements translate directly into economic benefits – UK research indicates active lifestyles save US\$681 million annually on reduced GP visits and US\$984 million on reduced mental health services. By 2030, the cost of treating new cases of preventable NCDs will reach nearly US\$300 billion if current inactivity trends continue.





Footnotes

22 World Heart Federation, More People, More Active, More Often for Heart Health – Taking Action on Physical Activity

23 Ibid

24 Ningning Liu, Qikang Zhong, The impact of sports participation on individuals' subjective well-being: the mediating role of class identity and health

25 EU, Mapping Sport & Social Cohesion in Europe: An Exploratory Study

26 US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.wallbusinessschools.com/sports-management/salary/>



## Community Champions

Mental health benefits complement these physical improvements. Adults participating in sports report higher psychological well-being, including increased self-esteem and life satisfaction, alongside lower depression, anxiety and stress levels.<sup>24</sup> These outcomes contribute to workforce productivity while reducing healthcare system burden across multiple service areas.

**<50%**  
of countries have national  
physical activity policies

Despite these proven benefits, global policy implementation remains inadequate. Less than 50% of countries have national physical activity policies, with fewer than 40% operational. Only 30% of countries maintain national physical activity guidelines for all age groups while just over 40% have road design standards making walking and cycling safer. This policy gap represents a major missed opportunity for health system savings and economic development.

Sports participation creates additional value through community cohesion and social integration. Research demonstrates community sports programs enhance social cohesion by fostering social networks, creating shared identities and facilitating positive interactions across diverse groups.<sup>25</sup> For Oman, with diverse populations including expatriate communities from countries worldwide, sports offer neutral spaces where people from different backgrounds unite around common interests.

The employment dimension extends benefits past direct health outcomes. Sports economy development creates diverse opportunities extending far wider than athletes and coaches. International projections indicate coaching and scouting jobs will grow 8.8% by 2031, PR specialists 6.2%, sports marketing managers 8.2% and facilities managers 5.3%.<sup>26</sup>





*Talking Point 9*

# DIGITAL SPORTS

# AND TECHNOLOGY

The eSports sector represents perhaps the most dramatic shift reshaping today's sports landscape. The global eSports market reached US\$4.1 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow at 9% annually through 2032.<sup>27</sup>

This isn't just about gaming anymore - it's about genuine sporting entertainment that commands massive audiences. The 2024 League of Legends World Championship drew 6.9 million peak viewers, easily surpassing many traditional sporting events and proving that digital competition now rivals established sports for mainstream attention.<sup>28</sup>

What makes this growth particularly interesting is how quickly entire economies are being built around eSports. South Korea serves as the perfect case study for this transformation. Their eSports industry now contributes around US\$5.6 billion annually while directly employing over 28,000 people across game development, event management, broadcasting and professional competition. This comprehensive ecosystem shows how countries can turn gaming into genuine economic engines that create diverse career pathways for their citizens.



Footnotes  
27 Stellar Market Research, Esports Market - Industry Analysis & Forecast (2025-2032) Trends, Drivers, Statistics, Segmentation by Game Genre, Platform & Revenue Model  
28 SportsPro, 2024 League of Legends World Championship becomes most-watched esports tournament ever

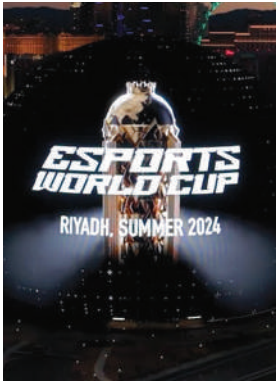
## eSports Revolution

Recognizing these opportunities, governments worldwide are now treating eSports as a strategic priority rather than just entertainment. Saudi Arabia’s US\$38 billion investment commitment perfectly illustrates this move – they’re aiming to create 39,000 local jobs by 2030 spanning everything from game development to event management. The success of the 2024 Esports World Cup in Riyadh demonstrated how major tournaments can accelerate entire ecosystem development while positioning nations as regional eSports powerhouses.

For Oman, this digital sports revolution presents particularly attractive strategic opportunities. Unlike traditional sports that require expensive stadiums and infrastructure, eSports demands minimal physical investment while offering maximum reach potential. Even better, it plays directly to Oman’s demographic strengths – with 61.5% of citizens under 30 and over 95% smartphone penetration among adults, the country has exactly the young, digitally connected population that drives eSports growth. Sabco Sports’ planned launch of the country’s first dedicated sports app signals early recognition of where this convergence is heading.

The real excitement lies in how sports and technology are merging to create entirely new economic opportunities. Performance analytics platforms are generating fresh revenue streams while revolutionizing training strategies across all sports. Fan engagement technologies are transforming spectator experiences while creating valuable data monetization opportunities. Meanwhile, sports streaming platforms and virtual reality training systems represent billion-dollar markets where forward-thinking countries like Oman could establish competitive advantages through smart, early positioning in this rapidly evolving landscape.

**eSports plays directly to Oman’s demographic strengths - with 61.5% of citizens under 30 and over 95% smartphone penetration among adults**



### US\$1.06 billion

Projected eSports sponsorship and advertising revenue for 2025, showing rapid commercial growth

### US\$982.8 million

eSports sponsorship revenue in 2024, nearly tripling from US\$339.3 million in 2017

### 31%

Of young adults aged 18-29 now interested in eSports, up from 27% in 2021, showing growing mainstream appeal



IOC creates first-ever Olympic eSports event to be hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2027



Chess enters Esports as Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana join Team Liquid for Esports World Cup 2025, marking mind sports crossover into competitive gaming





*Talking Point 10*

# SUSTAINABLE SPORTS LEADERSHIP



**The sports industry is changing fast. Fans now expect more from their favourite teams and events than just entertainment. A recent survey shows 79% of sports fans want organizations to invest more in sustainability while 75% expect teams to prioritize environmental responsibility in their operations and communities. This isn't just about doing good - it's about good business. Nearly three-quarters of millennials will pay extra for sustainable products and experiences.**



Sports organizations are listening because the numbers make sense. The Olympics plan to be climate positive from 2030 onwards, creating more carbon savings than emissions while cutting operational costs by 15-20% through efficiency improvements. Development of a 100% sustainable fuel, slashing the use of single-use plastics and reviewing travel and freight logistics – these are just some of the things Formula 1 as a sport is working on as part of its commitment to be Net Zero Carbon by 2030. AMG Petronas top the F1 environmental league table with plans for a 100% reduction in their scope 1 and 2 emissions and a 50% reduction in scope 3 by 2026. By 2030 they are aiming for a 75% reduction in scope 3 emissions and 25% carbon removal. They're also investing in Sustainable Aviation Fuel to reduce the scope 3 emissions of transporting their race team. UEFA's strategy targets 50% emission cuts by 2030 across all competitions. Football's carbon footprint is large, but the sport also has the potential to influence climate action. With its unmatched global reach, football can be a powerful force for sustainability.



## Carbon Champions

The sustainable sports market reached US\$26.2 billion in 2024 and is expected to grow at 7.9% annually through 2032. Beyond the impressive growth figures, the economics are compelling - sustainable stadiums command 23% higher naming rights fees while running 18% cheaper through energy savings. Green building certifications boost sports facility values by 10-15% and reduce insurance costs by up to 8% making sustainability a smart business decision rather than just an environmental one.



## Atlanta Falcons

Leading venues worldwide are demonstrating these benefits through innovative programs. Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium stands out as a prime example, becoming the first LEED Platinum stadium in the US when it opened in 2017. But the real achievement came later when they pushed beyond initial green standards to achieve zero-waste status across their massive 185,800m2 footprint.

This transformation required extensive coordination - educating employees and fans while building vendor partnerships throughout their operations. The results speak for themselves - over 95% fan compliance in proper waste sorting and 91% of the facility's 1.8 million kilos of annual waste diverted from landfills. After investing approximately US\$1 million in retrofitting and waste management systems, the stadium now generates US\$400,000 in annual returns while maintaining operational costs of just 13 cents per guest.

## Global Momentum

Atlanta's success reflects a broader international movement toward sustainable sports infrastructure. Australia's Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) took a different but equally ambitious approach becoming the first major Australian stadium to operate on 100% renewable power through a partnership with EnergyAustralia.



Within just two months of switching MCG had cut greenhouse emissions by nearly 1,000 tonnes - equivalent to removing 214 cars from roads for a year - while saving US\$750,000 annually.

Meanwhile, Qatar's US\$6.5 billion investment to build and renovate eight stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup - part of a much larger US\$220 billion infrastructure spend - continues attracting tourists today, proving how major events can create lasting environmental and economic legacies. It's also important to mention that sport is also considered a priority sector for Qatar's economic diversification under the second National Development Strategy (2018-22). The Aspire Academy, for example, has supported development of sports including soccer-18 of 26-man World Cup squad came from the Academy.



## *Talking Point 10 - Sustainable Sports Leadership*



### **Forest Green Rovers**

For a complete picture of what's possible, Forest Green Rovers Football Club in Gloucestershire, England demonstrates hardcore sustainability in action. Their approach cuts operational costs by 25% annually through smart innovations – the world's first organic football pitch eliminates US\$50,000 in yearly pesticide expenses while solar panels generate US\$180,000 in annual revenue by selling excess energy back to the grid. Combined with EV charging, water recycling and plant-based catering, they've reduced total operating expenses by 30% while earning millions in global media coverage.

**Forest Green Rovers Football Club  
cut operational costs by 25%  
annually through smart innovations**





## Make It Work

The key to replicating these successes lies in smart infrastructure investments that serve elite competition, community access and financial sustainability simultaneously. New financing models are making this easier – green bonds, public-private partnerships and sustainability-linked naming rights now fund about 40% of major sports infrastructure projects worldwide. Green bonds typically offer 0.5-1% lower interest rates than conventional financing, making the economics even more attractive. The Paris 2024 Olympics perfectly demonstrates this approach in action. The Games issued US\$5 billion in green bonds to fund low-carbon venue construction, energy-efficient lighting and public transportation upgrades. This innovative financing model helped make Paris 2024 the most sustainable Olympic Games ever, showing how major sporting events can leverage green finance to achieve both environmental goals and cost savings at unprecedented scale.



## Way Forward

Success requires coordination between government agencies, private companies, sports organizations and community groups. International experience shows that dedicated sports economy commissions help facilitate this collaboration effectively. For Oman, the opportunity is clear. Consumer demand drives market growth, financial benefits reward early movers and the country’s natural advantages position it well for sustainable sports leadership. The question isn’t whether to pursue this path but how quickly to move while competitive advantages remain available.

### US\$26.2 billion

Global sustainable sports market value in 2024, growing 7.9% annually

### 23%

Higher naming rights fees commanded by sustainable stadiums vs conventional venues

### US\$750,000

Annual savings achieved by Melbourne Cricket Ground through 100% renewable energy

### 91%

Of Atlanta Mercedes-Benz Stadium’s 1.8 million kilos of waste diverted from landfills

### US\$180,000

Annual revenue generated by Forest Green Rovers solar panels selling energy back to grid





& Finally


# BONUS TRACK

Sport speaks a language everyone understands. Whether you're cheering from the Bobby Moore Stand at West Ham's London Stadium, lacing up your boots or debating that questionable penalty decision with friends, it connects us across every culture and continent.

## Championship Table

Football holds the crown as the world's most watched sport in 2025 with 49% of consumers across 18 markets tuning in, easily outpacing basketball at 40% engagement. Volleyball and tennis each draw nearly one-third of sports fans globally. This dominance runs deeper than just viewership - football also leads among active players. The sport's global reach becomes even clearer when you look at team loyalty. Eight of the world's 10 most popular sports teams are football clubs with Manchester United and Real Madrid leading the pack at 13% of global sports fandom each. Liverpool follows closely at 12% while Manchester City and Barcelona both claim 11%, demonstrating how club loyalty clearly spans continents and cultures.

### Global Sports Fandom

				
13%	13%	12%	11%	11%

Sports ignite passion, fuel rivalries and bring communities together in ways few other things can. But there's more to the story than pure emotion - understanding which sports capture global attention and how fans choose to engage reveals the business opportunities that drive the modern sports economy. Here's what the data tells us about where the action really is.





49%



Football is the world’s most popular sport in 2025 with 49% of consumers across 18 markets tuning in

33%



Volleyball and tennis each draw nearly one-third of sports fans globally

91%



91% of viewers prefer watching sport at home

75%



In the Philippines 75% of the engagement in sports goes to basketball

58%



Canada stays true to its hockey roots - culture shapes sporting preferences

32%



Badminton tops the participation charts globally at 32%

Stadium to Sofa

How people consume sports has gone digital. More than half of sports viewers now catch events on TV or through online streaming. But here’s the twist - attention spans are also morphing. Nearly half of fans prefer watching highlights over full matches, showing how quick-hit content is changing the game for modern audiences. While stadiums get all the marketing hype only 20% actually attend live events. Instead, 91% prefer watching from home, often making it a social experience with 45% watching alongside friends and 38% with their partners. This creates fresh opportunities for brands to connect with fans in more personal settings.

Home Advantage

Regional preferences often trump football’s global appeal. Basketball owns the Philippines with 75% engagement while America sticks to its big three - American football, basketball and baseball. Canada stays true to its hockey roots at 58%, reminding us that local culture shapes sporting preferences. There’s also an interesting gap between what people watch versus what they actually play. Badminton tops the participation charts globally at 32% with football trailing at 28%. This split between spectators and participants means brands need different playbooks for reaching viewers versus players in today’s fast-moving sports economy.



Tejarah Talks are held at Civil Aviation Authority



**THANK YOU**  
TO OUR PANELISTS & ALL  
THOSE WHO ATTENDED

- 1. Oman Sail's, Joe Rafferty
- 2. Prepping for the game
- 3. Cricket aficionado, H.E Pankaj Khimji
- 4. Q&A
- 5. Ali Al Ajmi, GM, Sabco Sports





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