

Sports Education Forum Tbilisi

2ND EDITION

APRIL 17- 18, 2026

RADISSON BLU IVERIA HOTEL

Main organizer



Co-organizer



With the support of:



INTRODUCTION

Following the remarkable success of its first edition, which brought together leading voices from the world of sports, academia, and business, the Sports Education Forum returns to Tbilisi in 2026 with renewed ambition and vision.

Sports are deeply embedded in the fabric of Georgian life — from the national pride inspired by wrestling triumphs and the passion for rugby, to the rapidly growing football culture. As the heart of the nation, Tbilisi stands as a dynamic hub where sport, culture, and community intersect, nurturing talent and hosting international competitions that unite people across generations.

Building on this spirit, the Sports Education Forum 2026 will once again serve as a landmark event dedicated to advancing sports education and driving innovation in sports management. With the goal of positioning Georgia as a regional leader in sports business and academic excellence, the Forum will gather global experts, regional leaders, government representatives, and industry professionals to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and shape the future of sports education and management — promoting innovation, healthier lifestyles, and sustainable growth across the global sports landscape.

ORGANIZERS & CO-ORGANIZER

MAIN ORGANIZER

Johan Cruyff Institute

A globally recognised leader in sport management education, inspired by Johan Cruyff's vision of bridging sport and academics. Johan Cruyff Institute has trained thousands of professionals worldwide and continues to shape the future of the sports industry.

CO-ORGANIZER

JBS Academy Georgia

A specialised education and training institution in sport management and sport business programmes. Based in Georgia, it prepares students and professionals for global careers by combining academic knowledge with practical, industry-focused learning.

WHO IS THIS FORUM FOR?

The Forum is designed to welcome a wide range of stakeholders from across the sports ecosystem, creating a unique space for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and networking. It is especially relevant for:

- Sports federations, clubs, and leagues
- Educational institutions and training providers
- Government bodies and policy makers
- Corporate sponsors and investors
- Students and young professionals
- Media and communication partners
- Small and medium enterprises related to sports and healthy lifestyle

WHAT MAKES THIS FORUM TRULY DISTINCTIVE?

Its action-oriented and integrative approach:

- Establishing Georgia as a knowledge and networking hub for sports education and management.
- Facilitating cross-sector collaboration that bridges education, business, and policy.
- Generating new business and partnership opportunities that fuel the growth of the sports ecosystem.
- Strengthening the professionalization of sport through education-driven innovation.
- Laying the foundation for an annual global event that positions Georgia at the center of the sports education map.

The 2026 edition will also mark the first major collaboration involving the Johan Cruyff Institute in the region, connecting global expertise with local ambition. Through a combination of strategic discussions, practical workshops, and a dedicated track on monetization strategies, the Forum will go beyond performance alone — bridging education and sports business to empower a new generation of leaders shaping the future of sport.

RADISSON BLU IVERIA HOTEL

The hotel is situated in a central location, overlooking the Mtkvari River and providing easy access to key landmarks such as Freedom Square, the Old Town, and cultural attractions like the Tbilisi Opera House and Narikala Fortress. It's also close to Tbilisi's business district, making it ideal for corporate travelers.

PROGRAM

DAY 1 FORUM (PLENARY & PANEL SESSIONS)

Audience: 300–500 participants

Format: Keynotes, panels, networking

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	REGISTRATION & WELCOME COFFEE
9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	OPENING CEREMONY & WELCOME REMARKS
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS HOW BIG DATA IS TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL SPORT
10:45 AM – 11:15 AM	Working Coffee Break
11:15 AM – 12:15 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION 1 DIGITAL FAN ENGAGEMENT & MONETIZATION IN THE AI ERA
12:15 PM – 13:15 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION 2 SPORTS MARKETING IN THE SPORTAINMENT ERA. Blending sports, entertainment, and digital platforms for global audiences
13:15 PM – 14:30 PM	Networking Lunch
14:30 PM – 15:15 PM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS THE SOCIAL POWER OF SPORT. Sport as a driver of social impact, inclusion, and community development
15:15 PM – 16:15 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION 3 MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORT. Athlete wellbeing, performance, and sustainable careers
16:15 PM – 16:30 PM	Networking Coffee Break
16:30 PM – 17:15 PM	VIP & KEYNOTE SHOWCASE FOOTBALL LEGENDS IN CONVERSATION: LEADERSHIP ON AND OFF THE PITCH. Featuring Edwin van der Sar and Jaap Stam (TBC)
17:15 PM – 17:45 PM	CLOSING REFLECTIONS
18:00 PM – 20:00 PM	Networking Dinner

DAY 2 CERTIFICATE WORKSHOPS & TRAININGS

Audience: Smaller groups (15–40 participants per session).

Format: Hands-on learning with international trainers.

9:00 AM – 16:00 PM	WORKSHOPS (A & B, IN PARALLEL)
	WORKSHOP A DIGITAL FAN ENGAGEMENT & MONETIZATION IN THE AI ERA <ul style="list-style-type: none">Designing fan journeys using AI and digital toolsIntegrating sports marketing, sponsorship, and sportainment strategiesCase studies from leading clubs, leagues, and brandsPractical exercise: building an integrated fan engagement and monetization plan
	WORKSHOP B MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORT <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mental wellbeing as a key factor in performance and long-term athlete developmentManaging pressure, transitions, and life after elite sportThe role of clubs, federations, and leaders in supporting mental healthPractical exercise: designing a mental health support framework in sport organizations
13:00 PM – 14:00 PM	Lunch
14:00 PM – 16:00 PM	AFTERNOON CONTINUATION & CERTIFICATES DISTRIBUTION

PROPOSED VIP GUESTS



EDWIN VAN DER SAR

Is a Dutch football executive and former professional player who played as a goalkeeper. Widely regarded as one of the greatest goalkeepers of all time, he was most recently the chief executive of Ajax, with whom he began his senior playing career in the early 1990s; he is considered to be a member of the club's golden generation and was part of the Ajax team that won the UEFA Champions League in 1995. He played 130 times for the Netherlands national team, and was the nation's most-capped player until 2017. He is also the founder of the Edwin van der Sar Foundation and an ambassador for the Hersenstichting.



JAAP STAM

is a Dutch former professional footballer and current coach, widely regarded as one of the best defenders of his generation. As a centre-back, he played for top European clubs including PSV Eindhoven, Manchester United, Lazio, AC Milan and Ajax, and was a key figure in Manchester United's historic 1999 treble (Premier League, FA Cup and UEFA Champions League). He earned 67 caps for the Netherlands national team, representing his country at the 1998 FIFA World Cup and multiple UEFA European Championships. After retiring in 2007, Stam moved into coaching and management, leading teams such as Reading, Feyenoord and FC Cincinnati, and continues his involvement in football at the managerial level.

PROPOSED GUEST SPEAKERS



LUCAS SPINELLI

Managing Director ASEAN at SAS

Luca Spinelli is an experienced leader in technology, consulting, and private equity, driving commercial transformation and sales excellence across ASEAN, META, and Europe. At **SAS**, he leads regional operations and strategy, partnering with enterprise clients, governments, and financial institutions to scale analytics, SaaS, and digital transformation programs. He previously accelerated global growth at **Clariba** and began his career at **Accenture**. Beyond corporate leadership, he co-founded and advises ventures in private equity, agritech, and sports tech, with a focus on sustainable, data-driven growth and team empowerment.



RAÚL PELÁEZ

Director of Sports Data at Kynisca

Founder at Ailite Sports SL. Soccer coach and multimedia computer engineer. Specialist in soccer analytics, disruptive innovation and knowledge management. Raúl is a Technology and Innovation Consultant for **FIFA**. Previously, he served as Head of Technology, Innovation and Sports Analytics at **FC Barcelona**, and Head of Knowledge Management and Sports Analytics at **RCD Espanyol**. Raúl holds a degree in Multimedia, Computer Science and Telecommunications, and a Master's degree in Strategic Information and Knowledge Management for Organizations from the UOC.



GEOFF WILSON

Sport England, Advisory Panel

Member EFL, UEFA & FIBA Consultant

Geoff runs his own consultancy business, with a focus primarily on sport. Previously **Head of Marketing and Communications at the Irish FA**, he was responsible for public relations, commercial programmes, brand development and communication with fans. Geoff has worked on numerous league and club strategies in countries such as Wales, Malawi, Vietnam, Myanmar, Anguilla, Guam etc. Geoff has been on several Boards including chair of Netball Northern Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland. In addition, Geoff consults with **many sports tech companies** in the CRM, eSports, wearable and fan engagement space.

PROPOSED GUEST SPEAKERS



JEROEN VAN IERSEL

Marketing, Communications & Media at Formula 1 Heineken Dutch Grand Prix

Jeroen van Iersel is a marketing and communications professional with broad expertise in partnerships, media, social media, product management, and project management. Known for his entrepreneurial mindset and collaborative approach, he combines creativity and analytical skills to deliver results-oriented solutions. His specialties include brand positioning, developing and implementing commercial concepts, sponsorship propositions, product development, innovation projects, and customer journey optimization. At the Formula 1 Heineken Dutch Grand Prix, he plays a key role in connecting technology and commerce to create impactful experiences.



ARNAUD AMOUROUX

Arnaud Amouroux is an international relations and peacebuilding expert with extensive experience at the United Nations, where he works on political affairs, conflict prevention, and sustainable development. His work strongly focuses on the social impact of sport as a tool for dialogue, inclusion, youth empowerment, and peacebuilding. Arnaud regularly collaborates with academic institutions and international organizations, including the Johan Cruyff Institute, exploring how sport can contribute to social cohesion and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



CAROLE THATE

Carole Thate is a Dutch former field hockey player who earned 168 international caps for the Netherlands and won bronze medals at the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games. She captained the national team for several years and played midfield for top Dutch clubs. After retiring from sport, Carole served as Managing Director of the Johan Cruyff Foundation and now leads The World of Johan Cruyff, continuing to champion the social impact of sport.




LUKAS DORDA

Associate Academic Director at Johan Cruyff Institute

Lukas is a seasoned multilingual executive with over 15 years of international experience in the sports industry. He brings deep expertise in Sports Marketing, Fan Engagement, and Sponsorship, having led impactful collaborations with top-tier sports organizations, global brands, and governing bodies across Europe. Lukas holds Master's degrees in Cultural Studies, Sports Management, Digital Marketing, and Football Business from the **Johan Cruyff Institute**, where he currently serves as Director of Online Programs. His ongoing PhD research on Fan Engagement reflects his commitment to connecting academic insights with real-world practice, strengthening his expertise in the dynamic field of sports business.


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Johan Cruyff Institute is a member of the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), the European Association for Sport Management (EASM), the Catalan Sports Cluster (INDESCAT) and the initiative for higher education institutions, supported by the United Nations (PRME).

PRME Principles for Responsible
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