



SPRINGBOARD 2 PROJECT

Project Output 3: Case Study Collection

Women in Sports Tech

101243471

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Introduction

About Springboard 2

Springboard 2: Women in Sports Tech is a 24-month project funded under the Erasmus+ Sport Programme (Project No. 101243471). The project aims to support women athletes and women sports professionals aged 24–35 in transitioning from competitive sport to entrepreneurship and leadership roles within the Sports Tech industry. Building upon the findings of the previous Springboard 1 project, Springboard 2 focuses specifically on the gender dimension, targeting three critical areas: empowering women athletes through tailored educational programmes; building supportive communities through mentorship and networking; and bridging the gender gap by promoting inclusive policies and practices within Sports Tech organisations.

The project is carried out by a consortium of six European organisations across five countries: Norway, Netherlands, Türkiye, Sweden, and Spain.

Purpose of This Collection

This document constitutes Deliverable D2.3 — Case Study Collection: European Women Leaders in Sports Tech — produced under Work Package 2: Comprehensive Barrier Assessment and Content Adaptation. The collection presents ten in-depth case studies of women who hold leadership positions at the intersection of sport and technology across Europe. It is designed to serve multiple purposes within and beyond the Springboard 2 project:

- A source of inspiration for women athletes considering a Sports Tech career.
- An educational resource showing real pathways, decisions, setbacks, and breakthroughs.
- A strategic asset for the project’s training (WP3) and mentorship (WP4) activities.
- A documented contribution to the European evidence base on women in Sports Tech.

Methodology

The case studies were developed through semi-structured interviews conducted by five project partners between April and May 2026. Each partner identified and interviewed two women leaders from their country, following the T2.3 Interview Kit prepared by Collective Innovation AS (COLIN). The interviews followed a structured, modular question set organised in six thematic blocks: Background and Entry Point; Career Pathway and Turning Points; Challenges, Barriers and Gender; Mentorship, Networks and Community; Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy; and Advice and Forward Look. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were conducted in the interviewee’s preferred language, with transcripts and notes submitted in English. COLIN subsequently wrote, edited, and formatted all ten case studies to ensure a consistent voice and quality across the collection, whilst preserving each leader’s individual story and perspective. A full description of the methodology is provided in the Annex.

Connection to the D2.1 Barrier Assessment

The D2.1 Barrier Assessment Report, completed in April 2026, identified the key barriers facing women athletes interested in Sports Tech careers through a mixed-methods research approach combining surveys, interviews, and an expert focus group across the five partner countries. The barrier assessment found that limited visibility of role models, lack of mentorship, confidence gaps, structural gender biases, and the challenge of balancing sport and career transitions were among the most significant obstacles. These case studies were designed to respond directly to those findings — particularly the finding that making successful female role models visible and relatable is one of the most powerful interventions available. Each profile in this collection is intended not only as a portrait of individual achievement but as evidence that the barriers identified in D2.1 are real, recognised, and navigable.

How to Use This Collection



This collection is structured for flexible use. It can be read sequentially as a complete publication, or individual case studies can be used as standalone teaching materials in WP3 workshops and WP4 mentorship sessions. The Cross-Case Analysis chapter provides a thematic synthesis for readers seeking patterns across all ten profiles. The Conclusions and Recommendations chapter connects the case study findings to the project's subsequent work packages. The collection is published under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence and will be translated into all partner languages for dissemination across the Erasmus+ network.

Case Studies

The following ten case studies present European women leaders in Sports Tech from five countries. They are organised by partner country, with two profiles per country. Each case study follows the six-block interview structure, presenting the leader's responses in detail across all thematic areas.

Spain

Interviews conducted by: Global Sports Innovation Center (GSIC)

Iris Córdoba

Iris Córdoba is the co-founder and General Manager of the Global Sports Innovation Center powered by Microsoft (GSIC), a pioneering platform launched in 2015 to accelerate digital transformation in the sports industry. With a background in law and public administration and over a decade of competitive field hockey in Argentina, she has built one of Europe's most influential Sports Tech ecosystems whilst championing the visibility of women in leadership across the sector.

Full Name	Iris Córdoba
Current Role	General Manager & Co-founder
Organisation	Global Sports Innovation Center powered by Microsoft (GSIC)
Country	Spain (originally from Argentina)
Sub-sector	Sports Innovation Platforms, Digital Transformation, Ecosystem Building
Career Stage	Senior Executive / Entrepreneur
Sports Background	Field Hockey — 10+ years competitive, former team captain (Argentina)

“Do not wait until you feel completely ready. Use your athlete mindset — discipline, resilience, and continuous improvement — as a competitive advantage.”

— Iris Córdoba, General Manager & Co-founder, GSIC

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Iris Córdoba is the General Manager and co-founder of the Global Sports Innovation Center (GSIC) powered by Microsoft, founded in 2015. Originally from Latin America and currently based in Spain, she works at the intersection of sports innovation, digital transformation, technology adoption, and the development of new business models for the sports industry. GSIC operates as a global membership-based platform connecting sports rights holders, federations, technology providers, startups, and academic institutions across multiple continents.

Sports background

Iris practised field hockey in Argentina for more than ten years, competing at club and regional levels. While she did not pursue a top-elite competitive trajectory, she served as her team's captain — a

formative experience that shaped her later approach to leadership and collaborative achievement. Sport, she explains, taught her discipline, resilience, teamwork, and the importance of working towards a shared purpose: values she considers fundamental to her professional identity today.

Moment of transition into technology and sport

There was no single defining moment. Her transition was gradual. With formal training in law and public administration, she observed how technology was reshaping every major industry. Sport, with its uniquely powerful combination of entertainment value and social impact, presented an ideal canvas on which to apply digital tools — for engagement, for new business models, and for the modernisation of an industry that, in her view, had only just begun its digital journey.

Transferable skills from sport

Two qualities translate directly: resilience and adaptability. Sport teaches how to deal with failure and continue regardless. The second is a particular conception of leadership: leadership is not about being the best individual performer, but about creating the environment in which others can succeed. She applies this daily at GSIC, where the operational reality involves coordinating an international, distributed team across many time zones and cultures.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Key career steps and major turning points

Her career has not been linear. She began in law and public administration in Argentina and Spain, before moving into international and cross-sector roles. A pivotal decision was to step outside traditional career paths and focus on global ecosystems and networking, ultimately leading to the founding of GSIC. She describes her professional movement as a series of deliberate choices to operate at the edges between sectors rather than within established silos.

People or projects that opened unexpected doors

Many people played pivotal roles. From early mentors who placed trust in her during university to those who supported the creation of GSIC, the consistent thread has been trust — both extended to her and earned through delivery. Hiring decisions, partnership decisions, and the willingness of senior figures to back early-stage ideas have been the primary mechanism through which opportunities opened.

Linear path or pivots

Her path was decidedly non-linear. Major changes — including moves between countries — were driven by curiosity, the desire to learn from different cultures, and an ambition to create greater impact beyond comfort zones. She views these pivots not as deviations from a plan but as the plan itself: a career structured around continuous exposure to new contexts.

A project of particular pride

Personally, she is most proud of her children. Professionally, two achievements stand out: receiving a scholarship early in her career that enabled her to study abroad, and contributing to the consolidation of GSIC as a globally recognised innovation platform in sports — a process that took years of sustained relationship-building, content development, and institutional positioning.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

The most persistent challenge has been navigating uncertainty whilst building and scaling projects in a fast-changing technological environment. Leading digital transformation initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic — when the sports industry experienced a sudden collapse of physical events and a forced acceleration into digital formats — was a particularly intense period. On a personal level, balancing family

life with an executive role has required strong organisation, clear boundaries, and reliable support structures.

Gender-specific barriers

Yes. As a woman, she has experienced the need to publicly demonstrate her competence more often than her male peers in equivalent roles. The specific example she gives concerns investment conversations and external representation of the organisation: there is an expectation — sometimes spoken, often implicit — that a woman in her position must justify her presence in ways that are not asked of men. This is not about whether she has the answers; it is about how often she must demonstrate that she does.

How she navigated those moments

Through preparation, confidence, and the setting of firm boundaries. Over time, she made a conscious shift from justifying her position to owning it. Building alliances and support networks proved critical — particularly other women in senior positions across the sports industry, with whom she has developed informal but durable mutual-support arrangements.

Bias or discrimination in funding, hiring, leadership opportunities or visibility

Rather than direct discrimination — which she does not report having experienced — she identifies systemic bias as the more pervasive issue. Her response has been to actively promote the visibility and credibility of women in leadership roles by recommending and supporting qualified female professionals at every opportunity, and by ensuring that GSIC events, panels, and partnerships intentionally include female voices.

Structural barriers for women coming up behind her

There remain barriers related to access to networks and to decision-making circles. While the situation has improved markedly over the last decade, the gap in women's representation in Sports Tech leadership positions persists. The informal networks through which the most influential opportunities still flow remain disproportionately male.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Role of mentors and sponsors

Mentorship has been a continuous thread, but predominantly through informal rather than formal channels. From her father to early managers and current professional relationships, the most impactful mentoring has been grounded in trust, shared experience, and continuous learning. The relationships work best when honesty is mutual and the mentor is genuinely engaged in the mentee's growth rather than performing the role.

Difficulty finding mentors and compensation strategies

Yes. She compensated for the absence of formal mentorship by engaging in professional associations and communities, where peer relationships frequently evolved into informal mentoring opportunities. This experience informs her view that organised networks — when designed to enable genuine connection rather than transactional networking — can substitute effectively for traditional one-to-one mentorship.

Importance of networks and recommendations for women starting out

Networks are critical. She recommends GSIC's own mentoring programmes and attendance at major industry events that include intentional initiatives for women. The most useful networks are those that combine genuine industry depth with explicit programmes for visibility and connection.

Mentoring others

Yes. She mentors both individuals and organisations. Her approach is grounded in honesty, empathy, trust, and alignment with the real challenges of the mentee — rather than the application of generic

advice. She has found that women in particular benefit from mentoring relationships that explicitly acknowledge the specific obstacles they face.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

A key innovation, product or initiative

The first Open Innovation programme with Real Sociedad in 2016 remains a defining initiative. The challenge concerned a stadium renovation project and how innovation could be applied to it. GSIC launched a global startup call and developed pilot solutions — including technologies to improve fan experience and to address counterfeit merchandise. The model created has since been adapted across multiple sporting organisations.

Funding, team-building, scaling and what was hardest

GSIC operates through a membership-and-services model. The most significant ongoing challenge has been talent — building and maintaining a team aligned with the organisation's vision and capable of operating internationally across complex stakeholder networks.

Meaning of leadership and evolution of style

Leadership means enabling others to succeed. Her style has become more collaborative, more patient, and more focused on listening over time. She has moved from a position of direct delivery towards one of orchestration — building the conditions under which her team and partners can each operate at their best.

Approach to diversity and inclusion in teams

Diversity must be intentional. At GSIC, the aim is gender balance and inclusive working practices. Performance is evaluated independently of personal circumstances, and accommodations are made to enable team members with caring responsibilities to remain fully engaged.

Advice and Forward Look

Single most important piece of advice to a 25-year-old woman athlete considering Sports Tech

Do not wait until you feel completely ready. Use your athlete mindset — discipline, resilience, and continuous improvement — as a competitive advantage. Readiness is not a precondition; it emerges through action.

Skills to start building today

Understanding the business side of sport; digital skills; and — critically — communication and storytelling abilities. The ability to articulate a value proposition, to translate technical complexity into human meaning, and to build narrative around data has become as important as any technical skill.

Myths to dismantle

Two. First, that leadership must be aggressive or dominant — this is a profoundly outdated and gendered conception that excludes effective collaborative leaders. Second, that one needs a technical background to lead in technology — a misconception that deters many capable women from even considering Sports Tech as a viable path.

Sources of hope for the next 5–10 years

The hope is that gender will no longer need to be a topic of discussion — that equality will be fully integrated into how the industry operates. We are not there yet, but the trajectory is clear and the next generation of leaders carries the conversation forward with greater fluency.

Final reflection

Barriers exist, but they do not define you. She started GSIC without speaking English — a constraint that could have stopped the project before it began, but instead became an opportunity to grow. Persistence and continuous learning are the two qualities she returns to most often when reflecting on what made the difference.

Özgül Dalkılıç

Özgül Dalkılıç is the founder and CEO of Wear Tech Club, a deep-tech startup developing AI-powered smart textiles and wearable systems at the intersection of sports performance and preventive health. Combining a competitive basketball background with extensive entrepreneurial experience, she has built one of Türkiye's most internationally visible Sports Tech ventures and has become a recognised voice on the integration of body data, textile innovation, and digital health.

Full Name	Özgül Dalkılıç
Current Role	Founder & CEO
Organisation	Wear Tech Club
Country	Türkiye
Sub-sector	Smart Textiles, Wearable Technology, AI for Sports Performance & Preventive Health
Career Stage	Founder / Deep-tech Entrepreneur
Sports Background	Basketball — 7 years competitive (secondary school & university); tennis, fitness training, long-distance running

“Do not underestimate the value of your sports background. The discipline, resilience, and performance mindset you have developed are extremely valuable and transferable.”

— Özgül Dalkılıç, Founder & CEO, Wear Tech Club

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Özgül Dalkılıç is the founder and CEO of Wear Tech Club, a smart textile and wearable technology company. Wear Tech Club develops AI-powered systems focused on sports performance whilst also contributing to preventive health. The company's work integrates sports science, body-derived data, textile innovation, and digital health into a single product architecture. The ambition is to transform garments themselves into intelligent interfaces that can interact with the human body and generate meaningful insights for the user.

Sports background

Sport has always been central to her life. She played basketball competitively for seven years during secondary school and university. After her competitive years she continued with tennis, fitness training, and long-distance running. These experiences shaped her discipline, her resilience, and her ability to work

effectively in teams. They also developed a strong mental capacity for managing pressure and setbacks — a capacity that has proved essential in her professional journey as a deep-tech entrepreneur.

Moment of transition into technology and sport

The transition was gradual. While exercising, she noticed that the wearable technologies available on the market were not fully integrated into users' daily routines and were often uncomfortable or limited in their actual utility. This observation led her to think about how clothing itself could become intelligent — offering real-time feedback and personalised recommendations without requiring the user to attach, charge, or manage a separate device. That idea became the foundation of Wear Tech Club.

Transferable skills from sport

The most important transferable qualities are discipline, persistence, teamwork, and mental resilience. Beyond these, sport provided a practical understanding of the human body, of performance cycles, and of how recovery, intensity, and adaptation interact. This understanding has been invaluable when designing products that must work in real-world athletic conditions and respond to genuine user needs — not merely to laboratory ideals.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Key career steps and major turning points

The biggest turning point was the founding of Wear Tech Club itself. From the initial concept, the development of the company's first system architecture marked the formal transition from idea to execution. Another major step was gaining international visibility through industry events, partnerships, and awards, which validated the company's work and helped position it in the market.

People or projects that opened unexpected doors

Yes. An early connection with a professional from the sports manufacturing sector in Türkiye proved decisive in understanding the textile industry at a deeper level — the supply chains, the production constraints, the realistic timelines. Participation in international ecosystems such as ISPO and GSIC opened additional doors and helped Wear Tech Club move from being seen as a promising startup to a serious player in Sports Tech.

Linear path or pivots

The path has not been linear. The company has gone through several pivots in both product development and market positioning. These changes were driven by pilot results, by direct user feedback, and by technical learnings along the way. She regards each pivot as a contribution to the eventual product-market fit rather than as a setback.

A project of particular pride

She is most proud of having built a system, not merely a product. Wear Tech Club has combined smart textiles, sensors, AI, and user experience into a single integrated solution. Seeing users actively benefit from the system and provide feedback on its real-world impact has been the most meaningful achievement of the journey so far.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

Entrepreneurship in deep tech is inherently challenging. Developing hardware (rather than software), navigating regulatory frameworks (particularly when health data is involved), managing health data responsibly, and competing with large global brands are all significant challenges in their own right. Funding has been particularly difficult, especially for hardware-based startups where the capital intensity and longer commercialisation timelines are not always well understood by software-oriented investors.

Gender-specific barriers

Yes, often in subtle ways. In technical environments, she has felt the need to prove her credibility more quickly and more frequently than her male peers. This expectation is not always explicit but becomes visible in how trust is built — in who is invited to which conversations, in how questions are posed, and in whose technical assessments are accepted at face value.

How she navigated those moments

She focused on building confidence over time by delivering results and staying consistent. She also learned to prioritise the right environments and partners — choosing where to spend her energy carefully — and to focus on substance rather than on perception. She does not engage with environments where credibility must be re-earned at every interaction.

Bias or discrimination in funding, hiring, leadership opportunities or visibility

Bias tends to appear indirectly: in the type of questions asked, in assumptions about leadership, in the way technical depth is challenged. Access to funding is one of the most visible manifestations. Her approach has been to stay focused on the work, to strengthen the value proposition, and to respond with results rather than reacting emotionally to the bias itself.

Structural barriers for women coming up behind her

There are still relatively few women in Sports Tech in Türkiye, particularly in leadership roles. Investment ecosystems also tend to favour profiles similar to existing ones — which remain predominantly male — creating a structural barrier that slows down diversity. The challenge is compounded by age: young women entrepreneurs face both gender and age-based assumptions about their seriousness or capacity.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Role of mentors and sponsors

Mentorship has been extremely important. The most impactful mentors were those who were honest, strategic, and willing to challenge her thinking. They helped her move beyond immediate operational problems and think long-term. Their ability to combine genuine support with critical feedback made these relationships especially valuable.

Difficulty finding mentors and compensation strategies

The main challenge was not finding mentors as such, but finding the right ones. She learned not to wait for a perfect mentor but instead to learn from a variety of people with different experiences — building a more complete and balanced perspective from multiple partial views.

Importance of networks and recommendations for women starting out

Networks have been essential for visibility, credibility, and opportunity. Being part of ecosystems such as GSIC and participating in industry events helped Wear Tech Club gain recognition. She recommends joining specialised networks and maintaining a continuous presence over time — networking is a long game, not a transaction.

Mentoring others

Yes. She supports other women whenever she can. Her approach focuses on sharing real experiences, including the failures and the hard moments — not just the highlights. She believes practical guidance, honest advice, and confidence-building are more valuable than pure inspiration.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

Funding, team-building, scaling and what was hardest

Scaling Wear Tech Club involved both technical and organisational challenges. One of the hardest aspects was raising funding for a hardware-based, deep-tech solution, as many investors prefer software with its faster iteration cycles and lower capital intensity. Building a multidisciplinary team was equally challenging: engineers, designers, and sports experts needed to work together, often speaking different professional languages, around a shared product vision.

Meaning of leadership and evolution of style

Leadership means creating clarity, building trust, and aligning the team towards a shared vision. Her style has evolved significantly. Initially she was deeply involved in every detail; over time she learned that empowering the team and delegating responsibilities is essential for sustainable growth — and that micromanagement undermines the very expertise that makes a deep-tech team possible.

Approach to diversity and inclusion in teams

Diversity is key to innovation. Wear Tech Club brings together people from different disciplines specifically to reduce blind spots and improve decision-making. Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone can contribute and collaborate openly — not merely the formal presence of diverse identities, but the substantive condition of being heard.

Advice and Forward Look

Single most important piece of advice to a 25-year-old woman athlete considering Sports Tech

Do not underestimate the value of your sports background. The discipline, resilience, and performance mindset you have developed are extremely valuable and transferable. Athletes consistently undervalue their own skills relative to the market — the very capacities they take for granted are precisely what the sector needs.

Skills to start building today

Communication, strategic thinking, confidence, and the ability to ask better questions. Understanding both the user and the market is essential. Technical skills can be acquired; the meta-skills of judgement and communication are harder to develop later.

Myths to dismantle

Two persistent myths require challenge. First: that Sports Tech is only for engineers. In reality it is a multidisciplinary field requiring designers, sports scientists, business strategists, marketers, and clinicians as much as engineers. Second: that women need to adapt to existing structures. They do not. They can redefine them — and indeed, the industry's continued growth depends on women bringing different perspectives to its design.

Sources of hope for the next 5–10 years

The growth of AI, data, and health technologies is creating new opportunities. More women are entering the ecosystem as founders, leaders, and innovators. The trajectory is encouraging, even if the absolute numbers remain low.

Final reflection

Sports Tech is the future and it is not a closed space. Women have the opportunity to play a key role in shaping it. It is important to take the initiative — and to be part of the transformation rather than waiting for an invitation that may not arrive.

Türkiye

Interviews conducted by: Guler Legacy / SG Sports Accelerator

Yasemin Uluk

Yasemin Uluk is the co-founder and business developer of UniqueGenie, a Sports Tech venture focused on genetic analysis solutions for athletes. Combining a molecular biology and genetics academic background with years of competitive sports experience, she has built a company that integrates biotechnology and artificial intelligence to improve athletic performance, reduce injury risk, and deliver personalised sports insights at scale.

Full Name	Yasemin Uluk
Current Role	Co-Founder & Business Developer
Organisation	UniqueGenie
Country	Türkiye
Sub-sector	Sports Genetics, Personalised Performance Analytics, AI-driven Performance Insights
Career Stage	Co-founder / Biotech-Sports Tech Entrepreneur
Sports Background	Tennis (since age 8, league competition); basketball at university level

“A good athlete already knows how to build a team, make decisions under pressure, and keep going through difficulty — those skills transfer directly into Sports Tech.”

— Yasemin Uluk, Co-Founder, UniqueGenie

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Yasemin Uluk is the co-founder and business developer of UniqueGenie. The company focuses on the application of genetic analysis to athletic performance, injury-risk profiling, and personalised training recommendations. Its work sits at the intersection of biotechnology, sports science, and artificial intelligence.

Sports background

Sport has been part of her life since childhood. She began playing tennis at the age of eight, competed in Turkish league competitions during secondary school, and trained intensively throughout her youth. At university she continued to play in tennis and basketball teams whilst maintaining a demanding academic schedule in molecular biology and genetics.

Moment of transition into technology and sport

Whilst studying Molecular Biology and Genetics at university, she began exploring the intersection of life sciences and sport performance — a niche field with limited domestic precedent at the time. Early exposure to entrepreneurship within her family environment encouraged her to consider company-

building rather than a traditional academic or corporate path. After completing internships intended to test her interest, she decided to establish her own venture.

Transferable skills from sport

The connection between sport and entrepreneurship is, in her view, natural. The qualities developed through sport — not giving up, being competitive, managing time, representing oneself in different environments — prepare a founder for the realities of startup life in ways that academic training cannot replicate.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Key career steps and major turning points

The early turning point was the customer discovery phase before the company was formally established. Working directly with sports clubs and receiving early market validation motivated the team to formalise the company structure rather than treating the project as an experiment. Securing investment was a second milestone — enabling the team to expand, accelerate product development, and pursue international validation.

People or projects that opened unexpected doors

Direct engagement with the sports club customer segment was the catalyst. Working with sports clubs revealed both genuine demand and the limits of the original product hypothesis, leading to several pivots in the business model.

Linear path or pivots

The path has been non-linear. The company originally focused on selling physical genetic testing kits directly to athletes and clubs. Over time it shifted towards providing genetic analysis services and is now exploring integration with wearable technologies and AI-driven performance applications. Adapting the business model became essential for long-term sustainability — the team learned that the product was less the test itself than the actionable insight it generated.

A project of particular pride

She is proud of the company's ability to evolve. Many startups fail because they refuse to change their original hypothesis; UniqueGenie's willingness to pivot — based on data and feedback rather than ego — is one of the things she identifies as having mattered most.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

Like many startups, UniqueGenie has faced internal and operational difficulties: co-founder conflicts, legal processes, periods of investment uncertainty, and the constant pressure of maintaining team motivation during unstable phases. She describes one of the hardest moments as navigating leadership during an internal communication breakdown — when uncertainty inside the founding team begins to ripple through the wider organisation.

Leadership under pressure: the 'war CEO' mindset

During the most difficult periods, she adopted what she describes as a 'war CEO' mindset — focusing entirely on keeping the company operational and protecting the team. The mindset is not sustainable as a permanent operating mode, but as a temporary discipline during crisis it allowed the company to continue when otherwise it might have stopped.

How leadership style changed

These experiences significantly changed her leadership approach. Over time she learned to become more assertive, to ask for support rather than absorbing every pressure alone, to negotiate more effectively, and to make difficult decisions with greater confidence.

Gender-specific barriers

While she did not personally experience direct discrimination from investors, she highlighted structural barriers that young women entrepreneurs may face within the broader ecosystem. Age and gender combine to affect how seriously women entrepreneurs are perceived — particularly in meetings with sports clubs or institutional actors where assumptions about authority are tightly bound to demographic expectations.

Negative experiences with institutions

She described negative experiences during interactions with public institutions, including dismissive attitudes and inappropriate comments questioning why a woman would pursue entrepreneurship instead of conforming to traditional expectations. Her response has been persistence and adaptability rather than discouragement, but she does not minimise the cumulative cost of such interactions.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Role of mentors

Mentorship played a significant role in her entrepreneurial development. She credits startup accelerators, individual mentors, and entrepreneurial communities with helping her continue during difficult moments — particularly the periods when external validation was thin and internal pressure was high.

Pandemic and access

Programmes focused on Sports Tech and entrepreneurship became especially valuable during the pandemic period, when online access reduced geographical barriers and enabled startups outside Istanbul to participate more equally. This was an unexpected positive consequence of an otherwise difficult period.

Mentoring others

Yes. She now mentors women entrepreneurs herself, particularly in biotechnology and startup development programmes. Her approach focuses on sharing real experiences transparently — including the difficult ones — so that younger founders can prepare for challenges before encountering them directly.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

Innovation and product vision

UniqueGenie combines existing genetic testing methods with Sports Tech applications and AI-supported analysis tools. The company focuses on athlete performance optimisation, personalised training recommendations, injury risk reduction, and predictive analysis. The next stage of development involves integrating these services into wearable technologies and scalable digital platforms — moving from a lab-based service to an integrated digital product.

Advice and Forward Look

Single most important piece of advice

Choose the right team and learn commercial skills alongside technical expertise. Many founders understand product development but underestimate the importance of sales, communication, and

presentation. Technical excellence without the ability to articulate value rarely converts into commercial success.

Core message

A good athlete already knows how to build a team, make decisions under pressure, and continue through difficulty. Those skills can transfer directly into Sports Tech — provided the athlete is willing to recognise them as professionally valuable rather than treating them as merely athletic.

Sources of hope

She hopes the Sports Tech ecosystem in Türkiye will continue to grow so that future generations can find meaningful career opportunities without necessarily needing to start companies themselves. The dominance of founder-only pathways into the sector is, in her view, a sign of immaturity in the ecosystem rather than a virtue.

Jessica Çarmıklı

Jessica Çarmıklı is a senior sports consultant, sports-tech startup advisor, and advisor to 2Zero Sports Venture Capital. A former professional footballer who played across five countries and the former General Manager of Fenerbahçe Women's Football, she has played a defining role in the development of women's football in Türkiye and is now focused on the intersection of athlete experience, technology, and entrepreneurship — including research and certifications in athlete mental health, neuroscience, and psychology.

Full Name	Jessica Çarmıklı
Current Role	Sports Consultant; Advisor to Sports-Tech Startups; Advisor to 2Zero Sports Venture Capital
Organisation	Independent (formerly General Manager, Fenerbahçe Women's Football)
Country	Türkiye (raised and educated in the United States)
Sub-sector	Women's Football, Sports Management, Sports-Tech Advisory, Venture Capital, Athlete Mental Health
Career Stage	Senior Executive / Advisor / Consultant
Sports Background	Professional football — played in USA, Spain, Italy, Russia, and Türkiye

“One of my biggest teachers has been sports.”

— Jessica Çarmıklı, Sports Consultant & VC Advisor

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Jessica Çarmıklı holds a portfolio of roles: she runs an independent sports consultancy, advises sports-tech startups, serves as advisor to 2Zero Sports Venture Capital, and is undertaking research and certifications in athlete mental health, neuroscience, psychology, and mental coaching. She is a former General Manager of Fenerbahçe Women's Football and a former executive and player with Beşiktaş

Women's Football. She sees a major opportunity in connecting athlete experience with technology and entrepreneurship.

Sports background

Jessica grew up and played sports in the United States. She earned a university scholarship through sport and went on to play professionally in the USA, Spain, Italy, Russia, and Türkiye. Throughout her playing career she simultaneously developed experience in sports management, sponsorship, media, and marketing — a parallel professional track that distinguished her from peers who treated their playing years and their post-playing careers as sequential rather than overlapping.

Moment of transition into Sports Tech

There was no single defining moment. The transition evolved naturally through a sequence of sports management roles, sponsorship work, consulting, startup advisory work, and exposure to venture capital. Her pathway reflects a gradual evolution from athlete to sports executive and then into sports innovation and technology — driven by curiosity and opportunity rather than by a single decisive pivot.

Transferable skills from sport

Sport became her primary teacher in leadership and personal development. The most important transferable skills are mental toughness, teamwork, communication, leadership under pressure, adaptability, and persistence. Startup environments resemble elite sport because the conditions constantly change; success depends on bringing people along rather than succeeding individually; effective communication is a critical transfer skill; athletes learn that there are multiple paths to a single goal; and athletes continue pursuing objectives even when the original plan fails.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Career timeline

Early career: youth sports in the United States; university scholarship; professional football career across five countries. Sports management entry: roles in marketing, sponsorship, media relations, and sports management. Beşiktaş: combined executive responsibilities with professional playing; led sponsorship and commercial growth initiatives. Fenerbahçe: became General Manager, built women's football structures from the ground up, developed first and second teams. Consultancy: founded her independent sports consultancy. Federation consulting: advised the Turkish Football Federation on women's football sustainability and visibility. Sports Tech: startup advisor; venture capital advisor; sports innovation contributor.

People or projects that opened unexpected doors

The decisive opportunity was the transition into executive and management responsibilities whilst still an active athlete. This dual role created future leadership opportunities by demonstrating capacity beyond the playing role. Continuous education and parallel work experience prepared her for leadership positions when opportunities emerged — a deliberate strategy of being ready before the role appeared.

Linear path or pivots

Major pivot: moving from athlete to executive leadership. The reason was deliberate preparation for life beyond playing — taking courses, building business experience, and working alongside her playing career. A specific strategic decision was leaving Beşiktaş for Fenerbahçe: she wanted to strengthen the entire women's football ecosystem, believing that stronger major clubs would strengthen the league. The lesson she draws is that preparation creates the ability to act when opportunities arise.

Projects of particular pride

First: the women's match at Vodafone Arena — the first women's team to play there, attended by 33,000 spectators, becoming the highest-attended women's sporting event in Turkish history. Beyond the immediate metrics, the match created visible proof that women's football could attract major audiences.

Second: the 'Yakışır Sana' campaign, developed in response to public criticism that football was not suitable for women. Billboards, media visibility, and a strong public awareness campaign helped challenge stereotypes surrounding women in football. Long-term impact: players inspired by the Vodafone Arena match later joined professional clubs, and young athletes now aspire to leadership roles in women's football because of those experiences.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

First: growing women's football in an environment with limited interest and limited investment. Second: creating sustainable business models for women's sport. Third: navigating cultural differences between American and Turkish workplace cultures. Fourth: maintaining personal integrity in difficult organisational environments.

Gender-specific barriers

Credibility challenges: women often have to prove their expertise repeatedly. Gender stereotypes: the common assumptions that women know less about football and that women are less qualified for leadership. Lack of resources: women's teams often received inferior facilities, less field access, and lower investment. Workplace challenges: she references mobbing, exclusionary behaviour, and the unspoken pressures experienced by women in senior positions.

How she navigated those moments

Strategies that worked included persistence (staying focused on long-term outcomes), integrity (maintaining personal values despite pressure), vision (focusing on broader ecosystem growth rather than personal recognition), and finding allies — recognising the importance of support systems and the role of male allies in particular.

Bias or discrimination

She describes being underestimated because she was a woman; having her expertise questioned; and facing assumptions that women are less knowledgeable about football. Her response strategy: deliver results, build credibility through execution, focus on impact rather than confrontation.

Structural barriers for women in Sports Tech

Limited visibility: many women do not see pathways into sports leadership and sports technology. Cognitive biases: unconscious assumptions continue to influence decision-making. Lack of allyship: more active support from men is needed. Weak support systems: women often face challenges without formal structures to support them. Sustainability challenges: women's sports still struggle with marketing investment, sponsorship structures, revenue generation, and long-term planning.

Emerging Themes

Theme 1 — Athlete skills translate directly into business

Resilience, adaptability, leadership, teamwork, and communication are the five qualities most directly transferable from elite sport to business and innovation contexts.

Theme 2 — Long-term vision matters

She repeatedly emphasises ecosystem thinking rather than individual success. The size of the ambition matters: short-term wins for one team are less valuable than structural improvements to the league as a whole.

Theme 3 — Visibility creates opportunity

The Vodafone Arena example demonstrates how visibility changes aspirations for future generations. Young players who never saw women's football at scale now have a concrete reference point.

Theme 4 — Women need both opportunity and allies

Progress requires better exposure, better support systems, active allyship, and the reduction of unconscious bias — each insufficient on its own.

Theme 5 — Sustainable growth requires business thinking

Women's sport must be treated like a serious business: marketing, revenue generation, sponsorship, and strategic investment must be applied with the same rigour as in men's sport. Sentimentality is not a strategy.

Norway

Interviews conducted by: Igloo Innovation AS

Bente Svensson

Bente Svensson combines a rare profile: junior-national-team handball, football at one of Norway's pioneering women's clubs (Stabæk), basketball at the University of Manchester, a civil-engineering degree in computer technology, twenty-plus years as a senior partner at Accenture (where she built a 350-person Nordic practice), and current senior roles at Olympiatoppen and Frisk Asker ice hockey. She has also held operational roles with the United Nations and serves as Deputy Chair of the Board at BI Norwegian Business School.

Full Name	Bente Svensson
Current Role	Senior Advisor (Olympiatoppen); Deputy Chair of the Board (Frisk Asker Ice Hockey)
Organisation	Olympiatoppen Norway / Frisk Asker Ice Hockey / BI Norwegian Business School (board)
Country	Norway
Sub-sector	Elite Sport Performance, Arena & Destination Technology, Business-Sport Integration, AI in Performance
Career Stage	Senior Executive / Board Director / Former Accenture Partner
Sports Background	Handball (junior national team), football (Stabæk), tennis, basketball (University of Manchester), athletics

“The most fun is when things are impossible, but it is extremely important for a lot of people, and at the same time you can make it happen together with people who are good and want to try.”

— Bente Svensson, Senior Advisor, Olympiatoppen

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

The majority of Bente's time today is with Olympiatoppen in Norway, where she works on the development of arenas and the cultivation of understanding and inspiration around team development for top-level performance. This is done in collaboration with both business actors and elite sport stakeholders — Olympiatoppen itself, national federations, and national teams. Heavy-tech actors have begun to collaborate with elite sport to refine technology around training and performance development, with women included on both the business side and the elite sport side. She is also Deputy Chair of the Board of Frisk Asker ice hockey, where technology is an integral part of the toolbox: equipment, safety, sensors, statistics, and AI-driven data analysis. She is also engaged in the development of Varner Arena, one of the more modern arenas in Norway, where technology spans ice management, event production, lighting, and AI-driven destination marketing.

Sports background



She played handball at junior national team level; football at Stabæk during a period when Stabæk was one of Norway's pioneering teams for women's football; tennis; basketball at the University of Manchester; and athletics at school and at ordinary competition level. She describes herself as 'a bit of an omnivore within sport and activity at a reasonably high level.'

Moment of transition into technology and sport

She has never thought of her interest in technology as a deliberate transition — it has always been part of her. She describes herself as 'a bit nerdy,' someone who likes to dig into things, test them, and understand them. As a handball player she would spend hours exploring the different ways of spinning the ball; with tennis rackets she would test stringing, grip, and response. Her interest has always been application-based — utility, optimisation of training and outcome — rather than purely engineering-theoretical. The decision to study computer technology in Manchester crystallised this orientation. A package in the mail from Norwegian industry, financing studies abroad with the message 'Do you want to help change the world with information technology?', was the catalyst.

Transferable skills from sport

The most important transfer was the understanding that you have to work for things. You have to work to get better. You also have to understand what you are doing well enough to apply it: in handball, hitting a specific point in the goal that the goalkeeper will not save in 90% of cases. That thoroughness — the willingness to go deeply into detail rather than skimming the surface — is what she has carried into every subsequent context. When she studied in England, despite no advantage in English over her peers, she spent her first three or four months translating every single word in everything she read to build proper professional English.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Key career steps and major turning points

First: the decision to go to England and study computer technology. Without this, the entire trajectory would have been different. Second: joining Arthur Andersen (later Accenture) directly after a recruitment meeting in Manchester. The decision was unusual — Norsk Data offered higher starting salary and others advised against Andersen — but she chose the international scale and the explicit message about changing the world. Inside Accenture she followed an opportunistic career path: taking roles in projects where she did not know the industry and had not done the role before, learning and developing constantly. The environment supported this. Third: becoming a partner and building entirely new service areas in the Nordics — eventually responsible for 350 employees in a new business within an existing global business (intrapreneurship in her language). Fourth: leaving Accenture (early retirement from the partner role) to focus on what she was developing with Jarle Aambø at Olympiatoppen — a culture-building project across all sectors of Norwegian society to develop the capacity to perform at the highest level.

Linear or non-linear

Absolutely non-linear. But everything was dependent on what came before. Her goal was never to reach a specific destination — she was looking to do exciting projects, to learn, to develop.

Projects of particular pride

What she built in Accenture (the 350-person service area in the Nordics, a quarter-billion in turnover, in a domain that did not exist beforehand). What she has achieved at Olympiatoppen — developing arenas, meeting places, and processes for development and performance at the highest level (something she says has 'not very many other similar types of positions or reaches' in international elite sport environments). And what is currently in development at Frisk Asker and the surrounding ecosystem — including the new Varner Arena and its role in developing Asker as a regional destination.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

On barriers in general

Many people have said to her, 'But Bente, it is so easy for you.' Her response is that what looks easy is the result of extremely hard work and the deliberate involvement of many people. The comments she received as a schoolgirl, repeated through life, forced her to reflect on whether things were actually easy — and the conclusion was that the fact that something is demanding has never been allowed to become a barrier. Barriers, in her conception, are there to sharpen all senses.

Concrete example: the partner promotion process at Accenture

She gives a vivid example. The first time she was assessed for promotion, her contemporary colleagues believed she would be promoted one year ahead of schedule because they considered her significantly better than others. She was not promoted. The lesson — like in elite sport — is that you cannot assume that being good as a fourteen-year-old means you will end up on the national team. Later, when she was not admitted to partnership at the time she expected, she challenged the decision directly. The feedback was that she 'just had to wait until it was her turn.' Her response: 'I do not accept waiting my turn. I will not walk around waiting my turn.'

Gender-specific reflections

She has personally never experienced or processed barriers as gender-related. She studied and worked in male-dominated environments her whole life. In secondary school, a guidance counsellor saw her application to upper secondary school — all five subjects on the science track — and broadly suggested she put in 'something like English,' adding that science was 'quite difficult.' She remembers thinking, 'He would not have said that to a boy.' She asked whether he had looked at her grades. He had not. She thanked him for the advice and proceeded.

Masculinity and femininity in mixed environments

What she has observed is that many boys take much more space — masculine, extroverted space-taking. If boys are too many or too extroverted, many girls back away. In the work she did at Accenture on women and leadership globally, one of the things she heard was: 'I do not want such a life as I think you as partners live.' Asked what life they thought partners lived, the answers revealed many assumptions that did not correspond to reality. Travelling around to talk about what days actually looked like — content, freedom, responsibility — was a deliberate response. She believes you need both masculine and feminine qualities mixed differently for different projects, and that selecting teams only of one gender produces 'poor dynamics in relation to achieving good processes.'

Structural barriers for young women in Sports Tech

First: many do not know what Sports Tech is or what it means for them. Second: the current generation, particularly young women, is experiencing significant insecurity — public-health data confirm this. Insecurity about themselves, about what they can do, about what they can contribute. The remedy is exposure: creating environments where they can build self-confidence through real engagement, ideally building on the self-confidence elite sport should have given them.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

On role models — a non-standard view

She has a particular and considered view: 'You never find one role model.' What she did herself was to pick qualities from many — perhaps twenty or thirty people she knew well, each of whom was excellent at something specific. 'Karsten had this bit. Solveig had this bit.' She used the collection to develop and reflect. She does not believe that women specifically need female role models — there is nothing wrong with female role models, but male ones are equally valid. The key is to focus on traits, skills, or elements rather than on the person as a whole. She compares the approach to 'a tapas menu.'

On mentorship

In some periods she has been closer to specific individuals; in others not. She has always asked: 'Who can I talk to about this?' She has also shown up when others needed someone to talk to. She has served as a formal mentor for many over the years, but found that the person you need to consult at a given moment is not necessarily a permanent mentor, not necessarily a boss, not necessarily someone who has done the same work. It can be someone much younger or less experienced, but whose perspective sharpens your own. She has used books, online searches, decks of cards with questions, and Japanese war history as additional inputs.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

On women and innovation

Many women are very engaged with development — solving problems together with people, working on 'how can we do it.' At the Gründerhus in her network, when problems are presented through structured, slightly guided workshop processes, women are at least as eager as men to contribute ideas, suggest connections, and explore solutions. The framing matters. The reason women may appear less engaged with technology is that 'technology' is often presented in ways that feel alien — emphasising mathematics, PhDs in numerical analysis, algorithm development. An athlete who comes into Sports Tech without that background can feel completely alienated if technology is presented as exclusively that domain. Many women are more concerned with solving problems for people than with the 'nerdy technology elements' — but this does not reflect a lack of interest in innovation; it reflects a different point of entry into it.

Building diverse and inclusive teams

Mixed teams, with attention to both masculine and feminine qualities, and to the appropriate mix for the task at hand. Single-gender teams produce poor dynamics for good processes.

Advice and Forward Look

Most important advice

Her recommendation is not generic advice but a structural proposal. Rather than telling a 25-year-old athlete which company to join, she would design a programme: connect her directly to several Sports Tech environments via short placements (perhaps three to four months across five different organisations during a year), supported by a mentor or facilitator who holds the developmental arc together. The athlete gets exposed, reflects on what she contributes and where she falls short, and the receiving environments get help in how to use her capabilities. The approach acknowledges that many people coming out of elite sport do not yet know which of their skills they can deploy professionally — and that no amount of self-reflection in isolation can replace structured exposure in real work environments.

Skills to start building

Self-confidence built through real engagement; consequence-thinking; the willingness to operate in environments before you feel fully prepared. The frontal-lobe developmental difference between many young women and many young men (women's earlier development of consequence-thinking) means twenty-five-year-old women often hold back where twenty-five-year-old men charge in. If you have ten women, three or four will, on conversation, decide that participation is interesting; the others may need a little more time and a familiar peer or two in the room.

Myths to dismantle

Two. First, the myth that Sports Tech is 'a boys' boys thing.' Second, the myth that it is 'not future-oriented' — that it is only startup and founder business, economically uncertain, combined with very, very much work all the time, in a life phase where many women want room for family. These myths must

be dismantled — and they are best dismantled through practical experience rather than sales presentations.

Sources of hope

Public health is the most powerful long-term driver. Elite sport develops technology of need and immediate performance, but it is fully possible to translate that technology into the public-health perspective. For many women, the realisation that they can help develop something that, over time, can be extremely important for public health is both motivating and aligned with their values. That is sustainability.

Elin Årseth

Elin Årseth is the founder and CEO of Løpeglad, a Sports Tech application that combines mindfulness, psychomotor movement learning, original music, and human voice into a service that makes recreational sport — particularly running — accessible to people who are otherwise excluded by performance-oriented technology. At 54, with three decades of experience as athlete, physiotherapist, holistic-health entrepreneur (Sportsjentene), and now tech founder, she brings a distinct content-first perspective to Sports Tech.

Full Name	Elin Årseth
Current Role	Founder & CEO
Organisation	Løpeglad
Country	Norway
Sub-sector	Sports Tech App, Recreational Sport, Mindfulness & Movement Learning, Health Innovation
Career Stage	Founder / Late-career Entrepreneur (54)
Sports Background	Cross-country skiing (junior talent), football (Stabæk era), ultra-running (adult)

“Being an elite athlete is very similar to being a founder — you must be able to rest when you can, keep your eyes on the ball, and not get distracted.”

— Elin Årseth, Founder & CEO, Løpeglad

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Elin Årseth is the founder and CEO of Løpeglad. The company has two owners — Elin and her son Lars Erik, who composes the original music; Elin is the main owner and operationally runs the company. They work with one regular technology supplier (introduced through her network) and have engaged a UX designer in earlier stages. The team is small. The product brings together everything she has developed over the previous fifteen years of work on mindfulness, psychomotor movement, and what she calls 'mastery before performance' — delivered through a simple app architecture as a distribution channel.

Sports background



She has been an active athlete since the age of four. She grew up in Risør, on the Norwegian south coast, where she started cross-country skiing at eleven and quickly became a 'child star' — winning everything regionally at twelve. Around fifteen, when the family moved to Skien, she continued skiing but found the transition from natural talent to structured intensive training difficult — partly, in retrospect, because the training at that time was not adapted to her specific needs as an athlete. The experience of being held back not by lack of capacity but by inadequately individualised training is foundational to her product philosophy. She also played football and swam, but cross-country skiing and football were her main sports.

Moment of transition into technology

When she started Sportsjentene in 2014 and began to scale — running multiple groups and seeing significant demand — she realised that scaling required technology. As she puts it: 'If you are going to scale, you have to go into technology to get enough people to pay for your service.' In 2016 she started exploring this and approached someone she had identified as a potential mentor. A male tech entrepreneur she pitched to said 'this is cool, you need money and I am in' — and she had an investor without having asked for one. That journey, which she now calls 'my master's thesis in developing technology the way one should not do it,' was a multi-year education in how to develop, manage developers, and recover from missteps.

Transferable skills from sport

Two specific things. First: technique. Knowing cross-country skiing technique made it possible to return to the sport as an adult and find joy in it — and the realisation that technique creates accessibility for adults underpins what she now offers through Løpeglad. Second: ultra-running. After founding the company, she took up ultra-running explicitly to train her courage and 'see what I am made of.' Sport and entrepreneurship have run on parallel tracks — using each to train the other.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Major decisions and turning points

The decisive turning point was 2004. She was working at a hospital, training in traditional physiotherapy. A combination of personal events — including a divorce — converged with the recognition that she had to make a fundamental choice. She resigned from the permanent hospital position before she had something else, and committed to a holistic approach to health and movement. She describes this as a major transformation that 'released talents I did not know I had in me.' Within six months she had received national project assignments in work rehabilitation across Norway — and an income substantially higher than she had previously earned. That was the start of what she now recognises as being a founder, though she did not use the word at the time.

On the first technology venture (Clame)

She is candid about the first app journey (Clame). The team included an investor and two rounds of Innovation Norway funding. But the wrong people were involved internally, and she did not yet know what she did not know — the most difficult part of being a non-technical founder in technology development. When everyone else disappeared, she stood alone. The company was closed down in 2022 — without bankruptcy, because she had managed development costs carefully — but the experience cost her financially and emotionally. The lesson: 'If you are going to turn around and close down a company, you really have to include in the calculation how it is financially and who you will have with you.' She also takes pride in standing through it: 'Yes, I am proud of the times I am brave.'

On Løpeglad — content first, technology after

When she started Løpeglad after closing Clame, she reversed the approach. In Clame, the team had built the technology first and tried to add content afterwards — which she now sees as a structural error. Løpeglad started from the opposite end: the actual content (fifteen years of developed methodology)

came first, and the technology was built around it. She insisted that the technology remain simple. When her tech supplier proposed including GPS in the new app, Elin refused: 'When we release the new app, we are not going to have one more factor in the technology that can interfere with bugs.' She knew that simplicity was a strategic advantage.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

She is direct: 'one will not succeed if one does not run into some proper blunders.' The hardest period was the Clame journey. She experienced the powerlessness of not knowing which questions to ask — because 'you do not know what you do not know.' Standing alone when others left, taking responsibility for closing down a company, navigating accounts and obligations: each of these required something she calls courage rather than competence. Courage, she says, is the value she places most highly in herself and in others.

On gender — a complex reflection

For many years she did not think about gender at all. She did what she did because she was a founder, creating value because she had values. She believes this naïveté can come partly from sport — that women who have mastered sport often have a position from their teenage years and 'never felt I had to' prove gender-based legitimacy. She played football with the boys in the street and was always included. But when the venture grew and required investors, she started to wonder. She is candid that some of this may be her own gap — she is not interested in finance and Excel sheets, and acknowledges the need for that skill to demonstrate professionalism. But: 'It was not difficult to get money from Innovation Norway when I had a male investor by my side. But when I started alone, they have not even wanted to talk to me.'

On the masculine/feminine balance

She found resonance in the framing of masculinity and femininity as energies independent of biological sex. She describes her own energy as 'a strong femininity force' — value-driven, long-term, what she calls 'founding by infiltrating society.' She believes the way to succeed in masculine financial environments without becoming masculine yourself is to build complementary teams: bring in someone — male or female — who can represent the company in those contexts. She also observes that the hard-core 'into the rocket' masculinity-driven 2016-era startups have largely gone bankrupt: 'there is too little sustainability in that masculinity energy.'

On structural barriers

She is less oriented in general Sports Tech than in her specific niche (what she calls 'warm technology' — execution for people through analogue voice and original music). But she identifies a societal trend toward complementary teams, toward feminine values, toward sustainability — and believes the conditions will improve for women coming after her. 'It will probably take some time. Because it is a culture that has to change. But I have great faith.'

Negative experiences with public-sector and traditional incubators

She applied to StartupLab — the prominent Norwegian incubator — and was not accepted (the assessment was that the technology was not within their definition of health). She applied to public health grant programmes and was 'met with aggression' — she calls the resistance facing a commercial innovator in health 'God forbid one tries.' Two years before the interview, after a series of such rejections, she decided in August: 'OK Elin, then you damn well have to do everything yourself, forget money, focus on organic growth.' Eighteen months later, the company is growing.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

On mentorship

She is largely self-directed. She has had a series of relationships with people who provided value for specific periods rather than long-term mentors. She was at Proventia (a Porsgrunn incubator focused on health technology) for about a year, where one of the men 'understood that these are quite good numbers for being an organic app only' — without that single recognition, she might not have got the place. She acknowledges that for younger women looking for mentors, the answer is simply 'show up' — be present at networks, events, and meetings even when nothing specific is on offer.

Specific networks and people

She names Petter Nygaard at Igloo Innovation as decisive: at Startup Extreme she mentioned she needed a developer; later Petter introduced her to Monica, who has built the core technology of Løpeglad. She names this as 'absolutely decisive for where I am today.' She thanks him in the interview for being 'generous and sharing your network.'

On mentoring others

She mentors informally rather than formally — through networks where she shares knowledge with people starting their own ventures. 'For me it feels natural just to share.'

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

On the women–innovation relationship

She agrees emphatically that women's interest in innovation is at least as strong as men's. The distinction is between innovation interest and hardcore tech culture. When you start with content and build the technology around it, she says, women excel — particularly in products driven by human meaning, voice, music, and lived experience. 'It is not always as cool as these big startup pitches, but with AI now the large SaaS-companies are getting eaten up, and genuine content is going to be extremely important. People want people.'

On the financing model

She made an explicit decision: 'I must have paying customers from day one, so that I do not need an investor.' The goal was to avoid the trap that destroyed the 2016-era startups — bringing in money before knowing what you are making. She wanted forced learning. 'If you have too much money at the start, you lose innovation power, you become lazy. You start leaning back. Now I have forced myself year after year to constantly know what the customer wants.' She is willing to 'live a little poor' to maintain proximity to the work.

On building teams

She does not build teams strategically from the start; she lets the early team form through what is available, knowing some will leave as the company grows. Now, further in the journey, she can be more deliberate — choosing complementary capabilities consciously. 'Now I can do much more, and I understand more.'

Advice and Forward Look

Most important advice

Show up. Just be present at networks, at events, with people. The mentors and partners you need will appear, but not if you wait at home.

On her own pride

What governs her pride is her own courage — standing through the troughs, working with herself through morning dialogue, allowing herself to become 'completely broke' for a period when it was worth it. 'Yes, that is what you are getting at, I think. At least for me personally — courage, courage, courage.'



Netherlands

Interviews conducted by: Orange Sports Forum

Inge Stoter

Inge Stoter is the Director of Innovation Lab Thialf in the Netherlands, where her work focuses on the intersection of sport, science, technology, and innovation within elite sports performance. A competitive speed skater and a former researcher who created her own PhD opportunity around a skating-related research question, she has helped establish both the Sport Science Institute and Innovation Lab Thialf from the ground up.

Full Name	Inge Stoter
Current Role	Director, Innovation Lab
Organisation	Innovation Lab Thialf
Country	Netherlands
Sub-sector	Sports Science, Performance Technology, Innovation Management in Elite Sport
Career Stage	Senior Innovation Director / Former Researcher
Sports Background	Speed skating — competitive at strong regional level

“The world of entrepreneurship may still feel like a men's game at times, but as a woman you also have a unique advantage: people remember you. If you build the right relationships, opportunities follow.”

— Inge Stoter, Director, Innovation Lab Thialf

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Inge Stoter is Director of the Innovation Lab at Innovation Lab Thialf in the Netherlands. Her work focuses on the intersection of sport, science, technology, and innovation, particularly within elite sports performance. The Innovation Lab develops and applies new technologies, measurement methods, and scientific insights to improve athlete performance and create impact in sport.

Sports background and impact on career

Inge was a competitive speed skater. Although she did not reach the highest elite level, she competed at a strong regional level and remained deeply involved in the sport throughout her academic and professional career. Her passion for skating strongly influenced her career choices — she specifically wanted her PhD research to focus on speed skating, and actively created her own PhD opportunity around a skating-related research question. Her sporting background also gave her access to coaches, networks, and a deep understanding of the realities of elite sport, which continue to support her professional work today.

Moment of transition



The attraction came gradually through her studies in Human Movement Sciences. She became fascinated by understanding how the human body works and how performance can be improved. Technology became essential because it enables measurement, testing, and the generation of new insights that would otherwise be impossible. Her curiosity about performance and movement was the primary driver.

What specifically attracted her

The fact that many aspects of performance remain difficult to measure fascinated her. She is driven by unanswered questions about movement, technique, and performance and sees technology as a tool to uncover knowledge that is still unavailable.

Pivotal early experience

A six-month research internship in Canada was highly influential. There she worked on fatigue measurement in speed skating using electrical stimulation techniques and was exposed to highly applied research environments, including collaborations with industry and product testing. This experience convinced her that scientific research could have a meaningful impact on sport and inspired her to pursue a PhD.

Transferable qualities

Curiosity, resilience, passion for improvement, and the desire to understand performance are still central to her work. She also values building trust, long-term relationships, and maintaining credibility through expertise — qualities deeply formed by her years in sport.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Career timeline

Studied Human Movement Sciences; conducted a research internship in Canada; decided to pursue a PhD focused on speed skating; helped establish the Sport Science Institute from scratch; combined institute development with her PhD research; later founded and developed the Innovation Lab Thialf; transitioned from science into entrepreneurship and innovation management.

Major decisions and turning points

The most important turning points were: choosing to focus her academic career on speed skating; the internship in Canada; accepting responsibility for creating the Sport Science Institute; transitioning from academia into innovation and entrepreneurship through Innovation Lab Thialf.

Pivot trigger

Her path was not entirely linear. She moved from academia and research into entrepreneurship and innovation leadership. This pivot was triggered by the opportunity to establish Innovation Lab Thialf and the desire to create real-world impact beyond scientific publications.

A project of particular pride

She is particularly proud of helping establish both the Sport Science Institute and Innovation Lab Thialf from the ground up. Building these organisations required creating partnerships, earning trust, securing resources, and demonstrating value within a complex sports ecosystem.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

The biggest challenge was positioning a small innovation organisation alongside powerful stakeholders such as Thialf, the Dutch Olympic Committee, and national federations whilst having limited formal authority and resources. She often carried responsibility without having direct control over people, resources, or budgets. This required constant negotiation of roles, responsibilities, and influence.

Gender-specific barriers

Yes. She noticed that men often project authority more naturally and can advance through confidence and decisiveness. She felt she had to build her position through expertise, reliability, and proven results, which generally takes longer.

Concrete example

During networking events, she experienced situations where male colleagues or contacts crossed personal boundaries or approached conversations with intentions unrelated to business. This created challenges that male colleagues generally do not face.

How she navigated those moments

She learned to establish clear boundaries, confront inappropriate behaviour directly, and avoid situations that could become uncomfortable. Building confidence to address these situations openly was important. Professionally, she relied on expertise, content knowledge, reliability, and trust-building rather than aggressive self-promotion. She focused on delivering quality work consistently over time.

Bias in funding, hiring, leadership or visibility

She does not describe direct discrimination in funding or hiring. However, she recognises that women often hold themselves back by feeling they must prove competence before promoting themselves, whereas men are often more comfortable projecting confidence before all evidence is available. She responded by focusing on credibility, expertise, preparation, and long-term trust-building.

Structural barriers

She identifies five: male-dominated entrepreneurial networks; women's lower tendency to self-promote; funding and business-development challenges; the overlap between career-building years and motherhood; and limited time and energy during family formation years. She considers the combination of entrepreneurship and motherhood the most significant — women often need to build businesses during the same period when many start families.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Role of mentors

When she transitioned into entrepreneurship, she deliberately surrounded herself with entrepreneurs, coaches, and mentors who could guide her. The relationships were impactful because they were built on trust, openness, and the ability to discuss challenges honestly. These mentors provided guidance, perspective, and support during difficult situations.

Finding mentors

Not significantly difficult, because she proactively built her own network and sought support through professional organisations and entrepreneurial communities.

Importance of networks

Extremely important. She considers network-building essential for career development and entrepreneurship. Her entrepreneurial network significantly accelerated her learning curve.

Specific networks

She specifically mentions joining Young Management, a network linked to young business leaders and family businesses, which helped her transition into entrepreneurship.

Mentoring others

Yes. She currently mentors younger women and enjoys helping them navigate career decisions and professional development.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

Key innovation

The establishment of Innovation Lab Thialf is the clearest example. The initiative was designed to bridge science, technology, and elite sport and to generate practical impact through innovation. The challenge was translating scientific knowledge into practical sports innovation — building partnerships, creating organisational structures, establishing credibility, and connecting researchers with practitioners.

What was hardest

Establishing legitimacy and influence while operating as a small organisation among much larger stakeholders. Growth required building trust and proving value repeatedly. Managing responsibility without formal authority — and continuously defending the organisation's role and position within the sports ecosystem — was the most demanding aspect.

Meaning of leadership

Leadership means connecting people, building trust, providing expertise, creating value, and delivering reliable results rather than simply directing others. Over time, she has become more comfortable setting boundaries, clarifying responsibilities, and asserting her position whilst still leading through expertise and trust.

Diversity and inclusion

She values complementary strengths and sees particular value in mixed male-female teams. She believes women often excel in understanding practical needs and impact, whilst balanced teams combine technical, commercial, and relational strengths.

Advice and Forward Look

Most important advice

Build and actively use your network. Do not try to do everything alone. Seek mentors, coaches, and supporters who can help you navigate the transition.

Skills to develop

Networking; entrepreneurship; relationship-building; self-confidence; boundary-setting; business awareness; communication skills. Be proactive in asking for help, connecting with people, and leveraging professional networks instead of trying to solve challenges independently.

Myths to dismantle

She challenges the idea of a fixed 'glass ceiling.' She believes women can succeed in Sports Tech, but often need different strategies than men. The system may be male-dominated, but women also possess unique advantages — including being more memorable in male-dominated environments. If they build strong relationships and networks, opportunities can emerge quickly.

Sources of hope

She sees increasing numbers of female researchers, greater gender balance in science, and growing recognition of the value of diverse teams. She is particularly optimistic about stronger male-female collaborations that combine complementary strengths.

Final reflection

Do not feel pressured to participate in a constant career race. Women's careers often develop differently from men's, with periods of acceleration, pause, and reinvention. Taking time for family or making non-linear career choices does not prevent long-term success. Focus on impact, surround yourself with good people, and recognise that there are many paths to leadership and achievement.

Merit Clocquet

Merit Clocquet is Sport Innovation Officer at Sportinnovator and brings a unique combination of mechanical engineering, ten years of public-sector entrepreneurship policy at the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, and current responsibility for the national Sports Tech innovation platform. Her perspective sits at the intersection of policy, ecosystem-building, and operational entrepreneurship support — a profile underrepresented in most case study collections of women in Sports Tech.

Full Name	Merit Clocquet
Current Role	Sport Innovation Officer / Managing Director
Organisation	Sportinnovator
Country	Netherlands
Sub-sector	Innovation Ecosystems, Entrepreneurship Support, Public-Private Collaboration in Sport
Career Stage	Senior Innovation Officer / Former Government Innovation Lead
Sports Background	Recreational athlete — multiple disciplines

“Women in SportsTech are just as capable as men. The difference is not in talent, but in whether people are encouraged and motivated to take that step.”

— Merit Clocquet, Sport Innovation Officer, Sportinnovator

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Merit Clocquet is Sport Innovation Officer (and during the interview referred to herself as Managing Director) at Sportinnovator. She works at the intersection of sport, innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology, helping stimulate innovation within the Dutch sports sector. Her focus is primarily on innovation ecosystems, entrepreneurship support, public-private collaboration, and the development of innovations that create both societal and economic impact in sport.

Sports background

Sport has always been an important part of her life, mainly as a recreational athlete. She did not come from a professional sports background and did not study sport academically. Sport taught her goal setting, perseverance, dealing with setbacks, continuous improvement, teamwork, and celebrating success. These competencies strongly influence her professional approach.

Moment of transition

Technology was already part of her career through her Mechanical Engineering degree at Delft University of Technology and innovation-focused work at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Moving into sport happened later when the opportunity at Sportinnovator crossed her path and she saw the possibility of combining innovation, entrepreneurship, and sport.

What attracted her to Sports Tech

She was intrigued by Sportinnovator's national innovation approach, which resembled the Dutch Top Sector model she knew from government. The opportunity to combine economic impact, innovation, and societal impact within sport motivated her to make the transition.

Transferable skills from sport

Goal orientation, resilience, persistence, teamwork, learning through repetition, handling setbacks, and focusing on long-term results. Her experience in team environments taught her how to collaborate effectively with diverse stakeholders and work toward shared objectives.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Career timeline

She studied Mechanical Engineering at Delft University of Technology, became involved in innovation and entrepreneurship programmes such as YES!Delft, worked for more than ten years at the Ministry of Economic Affairs (particularly in entrepreneurship policy), and later moved to Sportinnovator.

Biggest turning point

Moving from national government policy into the sports sector and applying her innovation and entrepreneurship expertise to sport.

Roles that opened unexpected doors

Her role within the Ministry of Economic Affairs exposed her to innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship programmes, creating the foundation for her later work in Sports Tech.

Linear or non-linear

Her path was not completely linear. Whilst innovation and entrepreneurship remained consistent themes, moving into sport represented a significant sector change.

Accomplishment of particular pride

She appears most proud of helping build and strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship within Dutch sport through Sportinnovator, whilst bringing an economic and entrepreneurial perspective into a sector traditionally focused on social impact.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest professional challenges

Connecting different stakeholders, aligning interests, creating impact through collaboration, and stimulating innovation across sectors.

Challenges as a woman in sport and technology

She acknowledges that 'Women in SportsTech' remains an important topic because both sport and technology are traditionally male-dominated environments. She recognises structural barriers facing women in entrepreneurship and technology, particularly around visibility, confidence, and encouragement.

Concrete examples

Whilst no specific personal example was given during the interview, she frequently referred to female entrepreneurship challenges she encountered during her work at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and at Sportinnovator.

How she navigated barriers

By focusing on expertise, building networks, creating partnerships, and consistently contributing value through her work. She relied on professional competence, persistence, and collaboration rather than focusing on the barriers themselves.

Discrimination in funding, hiring, leadership or visibility

She discussed broader patterns of underrepresentation and unequal opportunities for women, although she did not highlight a specific personal discrimination case. She responded by actively supporting entrepreneurship programmes, female innovators, and initiatives that increase opportunities for women.

Structural barriers

A lack of visible role models; insufficient encouragement; limited access to networks; lower representation in leadership positions; and fewer women entering technology-related careers. The most important structural challenge: getting more women to see Sports Tech as a realistic and attractive career option and ensuring they receive encouragement early in their careers.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Mentors and sponsors

Although specific mentors were not named, her career clearly benefited from innovation ecosystems, professional networks, and exposure to experienced professionals. The relationships that worked best were grounded in shared goals, mutual trust, openness, and a willingness to exchange knowledge.

Difficulty finding mentors

The interview does not suggest significant struggles, although she recognises that many women in Sports Tech face challenges finding relatable mentors.

Importance of networks

Extremely important. Much of her career has focused on building connections between government, industry, innovation ecosystems, and sports organisations.

Recommended networks

Innovation ecosystems, entrepreneurship networks, sports innovation communities, accelerator programmes, and Women in Tech or Women in SportsTech networks.

Mentoring others

Indirectly, yes. Through her work she supports entrepreneurs, innovators, and women entering Sports Tech by creating opportunities and sharing expertise.

Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy

Key initiative

A major initiative is her contribution to the development of Sportinnovator as a national platform that connects innovation, sport, entrepreneurship, and public policy. The problem being solved is the fragmentation of sports innovation and the need for stronger collaboration between public, private, and knowledge-sector stakeholders.

Building teams and scaling

By bringing together multidisciplinary stakeholders around shared goals and creating a common innovation agenda. The hardest part was aligning diverse interests and balancing societal impact with economic impact.

Meaning of leadership

Creating connections, building coalitions, empowering others, and helping teams move toward shared objectives. Over time, her leadership style appears to have become more collaborative and ecosystem-oriented, focusing on facilitating others rather than directing from above.

Diversity and inclusion

By intentionally bringing together people from different disciplines, sectors, and backgrounds and ensuring multiple perspectives contribute to innovation.

Advice and Forward Look

Advice for a 25-year-old athlete

She should recognise that the skills developed through sport are highly valuable in technology and entrepreneurship. The most important advice: do not underestimate yourself. Sports Tech needs your perspective, experiences, and capabilities.

Skills to develop

Entrepreneurship; technology literacy; networking; communication; leadership; innovation management; business development.

Myths to dismantle

That technology is only for engineers; that sport and technology are separate worlds; that women are less suited for technical or entrepreneurial roles; and the idea that women are less capable of succeeding in Sports Tech.

Sources of hope

Growing awareness of diversity and inclusion; increasing attention for female entrepreneurship; more visible role models; and stronger support ecosystems for women.

Final reflection

Sports Tech benefits from diversity. Women should not wait until they feel fully qualified before stepping forward. Their perspectives, talents, and experiences are needed to shape the future of sport and technology.

Sweden

Interviews conducted by: JohnsenSkillz / SheSkillz Global

Alberte Lindberg

Alberte Lindberg is the Assistant Team Manager and Coach of the Swedish national sailing team. Born in Denmark, she competed for the Danish national team in the ILCA 6 class, reaching fourth in the world before completing legal studies and transitioning into elite coaching. Her case study illustrates how technology is integral to daily coaching even when the coach does not identify as a 'tech person' — and how the gender dynamics of elite international sport remain stark.

Full Name	Alberte Lindberg
Current Role	Assistant Team Manager & Coach
Organisation	Swedish National Sailing Team
Country	Sweden (born in Denmark)
Sub-sector	Elite Sport Coaching, Performance Analysis Technology (sensor-based and video)
Career Stage	Mid-Career Elite Coach
Sports Background	Sailing (ILCA 6) — Danish national team, 4th in the world

“Focus on being great at what you do. Let results show what you can do. Be proud of your work, do not back down if you are dismissed.”

— Alberte Lindberg, Assistant Team Manager & Coach, Swedish Sailing Team

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Alberte is from Denmark and works in Sweden for the Swedish national sailing team as Assistant Team Manager and Coach. She has been coaching for approximately eight years. Technology forms a substantial part of the daily coaching toolkit, even though she does not regard herself as a 'tech person.'

Technology used in daily work

The day-to-day primary tool is TrackMan — a radar system measuring what happens with the ball and the club (for the golf analogy; sailing equivalent uses different sensors). Sailing-specific tools include Sailviewer, an application that measures manoeuvres, pitch, heel, speed over ground, allowing systematic comparison across sailors and boats. During major regattas, the team uses trackers, video (both during training and competition), and drone footage. They use basic compass and wind measurement instruments as standard. In foiling classes, specialised colleagues conduct 3D printing and screen-based work, but this is not part of her own daily practice.

Gender composition of the technology team

Both women and men work in the federation's technology team.

Sports background



Alberte grew up in Denmark and competed for the Danish national team in sailing (ILCA 6 class). She was strong — fourth in the world at the end of her competitive career. Whilst competing she studied law in parallel. When she stopped competing, she initially went fully into law and coaching education, but missed the time on the water. After being in the library all day, biking to the water and coaching people was the natural release. The transition into coaching happened through this dual rhythm.

Moment of recognising technology was integral

She does not think it is easy to analyse without technology — it is a very handy tool that often catches what the eye does not catch. She describes herself as a late adopter rather than an early one: 'I hate using technology if it doesn't work — it just annoys me. So I'm not in the developing phase, and I would never be there.' But she has known forever that technology and sport go hand in hand. She was born in 1987 and stopped competing in 2012; since secondary school she has known how important technology was.

Transferable skills from sport

If you have walked the path yourself, it is easier to comprehend and understand the importance of information. Even if she sometimes wishes she could work without it, the specific tools — pitch, heel, manoeuvre measurement — make the work much easier than the manual alternatives.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Linear or non-linear path

She does not describe coaching as a clear or planned path. 'It was never a path for me. I slid into it. I had a good feeling for it. If something feels easy and natural, I think you just follow that.' Going to the gym was always more fun for her than cardio because she was better built for it; coaching followed a similar logic. The triggering element was the contrast between law-school days and water-based coaching days.

What triggers learning today

Learning new things about the people she works with daily is what triggers her most. Technology follows along — it is not the thing that pulls her forward, but it is part of the everyday environment.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Biggest challenge

Travelling days and getting life to add up. She has two children, four and six years old. The biggest issue is that she is not coaching in a fixed place like handball or badminton, where you go home after training. Asked how she solves it: 'I don't always.'

Barriers as a woman in a male-dominated field

Sailing coaching is very male-dominated. In Tokyo she was one of perhaps three female coaches out of 100-140 coaches. In Paris it was around the same. Some cultures are more focused on promoting women than others.

A specific incident

She gives a concrete example. At a coaches' meeting with 40 coaches present, she was the only one not asked for input. The leader simply skipped over her. She was in shock and did not confront it in the moment. Later, two male coaches said they hadn't even noticed and felt bad about it. One of them took action. Nothing really happened after that. Asked why she thought she had not been asked: 'Because I was a woman. I was in shock. I think in Denmark and Sweden we're used to being treated more equally, so it surprised me.'

Daily experience in Sweden today

Not really a daily difference. It is more older generations asking questions like 'why are you travelling so much, shouldn't you take care of the kids?' But in Swedish and Danish surroundings she does not feel that difference in daily work.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Mentors and sponsors

Her coach in Denmark was a female coach with children — and that had a major impact on her. Her sports manager knew her and supported her hiring. In sailing, the network is small, so people know who you are.

Leadership and Building Teams

What leadership means to her

Leading by example. Trust is the key element — if there is no trust, success is almost impossible. She tries to motivate people and find the small things that make a difference. After becoming a parent, she sees things in a bigger perspective — it is not the end of the world; there is family, life, everything.

Building diverse teams

She works with mixed teams. It is about understanding each other. In mixed teams, you also need to understand things like the menstrual cycle — which men often know nothing about. Once you understand that, it is just two people working together.

Advice and Forward Look

Advice for young women entering Sports Tech / sport

Focus on being great at what you do. Let results show what you can do. Be proud of your work, do not back down if you are dismissed. Come back again — maybe from a different angle — and get people to support you.

Hope for the next 5–10 years

Her hope is that by being there, she can show other women that it is possible. She also hopes federations learn from each other and that more women come into leadership.

Final advice

Be smart. Don't stand out in the wrong way. Find your path within the team and use your strengths.

Therese Larsson

Therese Larsson is the Head Coach of the Swedish national girls' golf team — a position she has held since 1 January 2026. A former tour professional, she has been involved in coaching with the previous national team head coach for six to seven years whilst also working at a club, and brings a clear philosophy on the relationship between human coaching judgment and the technology that supports it.

Full Name	Therese Larsson
Current Role	Head Coach, Girls National Golf Team
Organisation	Swedish Golf Federation

Country	Sweden
Sub-sector	Elite Sport Coaching, Performance Analysis Technology (Radar / 3D Motion / Video)
Career Stage	Newly Appointed Head Coach (Jan 2026)
Sports Background	Professional golf — former tour player; Swedish national high school graduate (RIG)

“The skills you need come from using the technology, not from waiting until you feel ready. Start with yourself or someone you trust. Learn by doing.”

— Therese Larsson, Head Coach, Swedish Girls National Golf Team

Background and Entry Point

Current role and area of work

Therese is Head Coach of the girls national golf team at the Swedish Golf Federation, a role she has held since 1 January 2026 (a relatively new appointment at the time of the interview). She was closely involved with the previous head coach for approximately six to seven years whilst also working at a golf club. She has been a coach for approximately eight years in total and has used technology since the beginning of her coaching career.

Technology used in daily work

The main day-to-day tool is TrackMan — a radar system that measures what happens with the golf ball and the golf club. This is the most common piece of technology in their daily coaching. Beyond that, she has been involved with the two Swedish national high schools (RIG), which use 3D motion measurements; she does not operate the 3D system herself but has been present during testing and went through it as a player. They also do extensive video work — filming golf swings, putting strokes, and similar.

Use of AI

Not really yet. She is working to improve. The organisation does offer AI education and some colleagues are very skilled, but it is not yet a significant part of her work.

Communication platforms with athletes

Several different platforms. Video-sharing apps (one used to be called Huddle, the name has changed). The Swedish Golf Federation has a website (swgt.se) where players can log statistics, record practice, and review results, plus a communication feature for post-tournament reflection. For players outside the national team, video-sharing apps and standard messaging like Messenger. Within the national team, the federation website is the primary channel.

Whether she thinks of herself as working in technology

A particularly important moment in the interview. Asked whether she had ever thought of herself as working in the technology industry, not just in sport: 'Actually, no, I hadn't until you asked that question. But now I probably will think about it more going forward.' She tries not to let technology take over because the human dimension of coaching is equally important; technology is used when it genuinely serves the players, not just because it is available. With TrackMan you get numbers for absolutely everything — if players were to look at all of them, they would likely be confused rather than helped. The real skill is knowing when to show the data and which numbers are actually useful for that player at that moment.

Future view of working in technology industry



Yes, absolutely. 'In the beginning I was also asking myself where the connection was, and then I thought, well, I'm using technology every day. We've even been involved in building a platform. I'm genuinely quite involved in technology, and I think in many roles in sport, we forget to notice that. We might think of sport tech as something separate, and that there aren't many women involved in it, but when you start to examine what you're actually doing, you are doing it every day.' She also notes that you couldn't do your job well if you weren't willing to develop and understand the technology — and the responsibility includes interpreting it for athletes.

Sports background

She played golf for many years and finished with a few years as a professional. Towards the end of her playing career she started to feel she wasn't enjoying it as much as she once had. She had not really pictured herself as a coach while still playing.

Career Pathway and Turning Points

Transition from player to coach

In Sweden there are two qualifications for teaching professionals: an assistant-level course and a higher-level education. She told herself and her family that she would try the one-week assistant course just to confirm that teaching wasn't for her. It had entirely the opposite effect. By the end of that week she was completely convinced — this was what she wanted to do.

Key person

A colleague who had been working with the national team for a long time noticed she was winding down her tournament golf and invited her on a trip with one of the national girls teams to a tournament in Europe. Working as his assistant coach was another moment that made it very clear: this is what she wanted to do.

Career progression

After completing the higher education she started working at a golf club and, after about two years, began contributing to the national team at junior level. She changed clubs but remained connected to the national programme. Then, while she was on maternity leave, the head coach for the women's professional team stepped down, which made the girls national team position available. She applied and was offered the job.

Balancing travel demands with motherhood

It was something she thought about a great deal before accepting the role. She was part of Project Q, run by the Swedish Olympic Committee, which brings together female coaches from different sports to work through exactly these questions. She has a very supportive husband who encouraged her. But she had anxiety for months leading up to the first trip — worried about the relationship with her daughter while away, whether it would work at all. She has now done about five trips, roughly one per month, and it is going better than expected. It is hard to leave, but when she is away the days are so long and her focus is entirely on the athletes. Between tournaments she works from home, which means she can be with her daughter during breaks and work while she sleeps. That flexibility makes a real difference. The strong support from the federation has been crucial — she knows that is not the case for everyone in similar roles.

When she first recognised technology was important

Before she even became a coach. The coaches she worked with as a player were already using TrackMan — it was part of her daily training. She also went through the 3D measurement process at around sixteen. So technology was embedded in her experience as an athlete from a very early age. When she became a coach, continuing with those tools felt entirely natural.

Challenges, Barriers and Gender

Gender-specific barriers

Yes — primarily in her interactions with players and members at golf clubs rather than with other coaches. Male, middle-aged club golfers questioned her more than they would have questioned a male colleague. She had to prove herself repeatedly in ways her male peers simply did not. She is grateful that she always had colleagues who believed in her and supported her — that made a significant difference. Within the national team environment it is very different — everyone is just a coach doing their job; gender isn't a topic. The challenges came more from the club setting.

A subtle but powerful dynamic — the TrackMan example

TrackMan once ran an education session exclusively for female coaches. Afterwards the trainer commented that he had never received such thoughtful and engaged questions. She thinks that in mixed settings there is sometimes a pressure, especially for women, to appear as though they already know everything. Creating a space where it felt safe to ask questions made a real difference to what came out of that session.

Mentorship and asking questions

Even in her one-on-one sessions with her mentor, it took her a while to ask the things she genuinely needed to know. 'I kept thinking: should I already know this? Will he think I'm not the right person for this job if I ask? But that was just the anxiety talking. Once we built trust, I could ask anything, and that's when the learning really accelerated.'

Bias in hiring, funding, or leadership

Honestly, no. In fact, sometimes she feels the opposite pull — and she doesn't think that's entirely healthy either. 'I don't want a job because I'm a female coach. I want it because I'm good at what I do, and being a woman should be incidental, not the reason.' She recognises that the environment is supportive of female coaches but sometimes feels a tension. Looking at her actual career path, she does not think that is how it played out — the coach who first brought her into the national programme did so because he saw something in her, not because of her gender.

Structural barriers for women in Swedish golf and Sports Tech

Female coaches in golf are genuinely wanted and often very popular at clubs. She thinks it is partly because many female coaches are good at meeting people where they are, while some male coaches tend to communicate as though they are always speaking to a professional player. The bigger structural challenge is the combination of irregular hours, evenings, weekends, long days, and family responsibilities. Clubs and organisations need to get better at listening to what coaches actually need and finding solutions that work for everyone. And then there is the confidence barrier — the feeling that you need to know everything before you start using a tool or stepping into a new role. That holds women back more than it should. The skills come from using the technology, not from waiting until you feel ready.

Mentorship, Networks and Community

Role of mentors and sponsors

Absolutely. The colleague who first invited her to work alongside him at the national team was the single most important person in her coaching career. He saw potential in her at a moment when she was figuring out what came next, and he created the opportunity that set everything in motion.

Project Q and formal mentorship

It was the Swedish Olympic Committee's Project Q programme that introduced her to more formal mentorship. Before that she had good conversations with people but not a structured mentor relationship. Through the programme she was matched with a mentor at one of the national high schools

— someone with deep technical expertise in golf mechanics and TrackMan — and separately with a physical and psychological coach. Both were excellent fits. She strongly advocates for mentorship as a form of professional development; it is often more useful than formal education because it is grounded in your actual daily work.

Importance of networks

Very important. She tells the athletes themselves to build networks, so she should take her own advice. She can be competent across a range of areas but she cannot be a true expert in everything: the mental side, the technical side, physical training, and so on. You need a network of specialists you can call on when something is beyond your depth. In the national team setup, a lot of that infrastructure is already in place. At club level it is harder, because the resources and connections aren't as readily available. Technology is no different — one of the most valuable relationships is with a professor who leads the 3D analysis work. Without him they simply wouldn't be operating at the level they are in that area.

Advice and Forward Look

Most important advice for a 25-year-old athlete

Start using it. It is easy to feel daunted by new technology when you are not used to it. Many of us tend to think we need to understand everything fully before we begin, but the skills come from using the tools, not from waiting until you feel ready. Start with yourself or someone you trust. Learn by doing. Ask questions when you get stuck, but don't wait for total confidence before you start.

Myths to dismantle

Yes — the idea that men are inherently better with technical tools than women. It simply isn't true. And ironically, for her, technology became a way of empowering herself. She knew that if she became genuinely good with TrackMan and confident in the technical aspects of swing analysis, she would have fewer people questioning her, and she could stand up for herself in far more situations. The technology gave her a foundation that made the pushback easier to handle. But women shouldn't have to earn their credibility that way. What also needs to change is that male colleagues need to stop assuming a gender hierarchy when it comes to technical knowledge. It should always be about what someone knows, what they've done, and what they're interested in — not about their gender.

Sources of hope for the next 5–10 years

She hopes the question itself disappears — that it becomes as natural to think of a woman working in sport technology as it is to think of anyone else doing it. Gender simply stops being part of the equation. And she hopes more women get to that point by embracing a learning-by-doing approach, rather than waiting until they feel they know enough to start.

Critical insight about technology design

The tools themselves need women involved in building them. If only men design training technology, it will inevitably be designed with male athletes primarily in mind. The athletes using these tools are both women and men, so the people building them need to reflect that. You cannot get the full picture with only one perspective in the room.

Cross-Case Analysis

This chapter presents a thematic synthesis of all ten case studies, organised around the key patterns that emerged across the interviews. The analysis draws on the structured interview data collected through the T2.3 Interview Kit's six thematic blocks (A–F) and identifies both common threads and meaningful differences across countries, sub-sectors, and career stages.

Table 1: Overview of the Ten Leaders

Leader	Country	Organisation	Sub-sector	Sport Background	Career Stage
Iris Córdoba	Spain	GSIC	Innovation Platforms	Field Hockey (10+ yrs)	Senior Executive
Özgül Dalkılıç	Türkiye	Wear Tech Club	Smart Textiles / AI	Basketball (7 yrs)	Founder / Deep-tech
Yasemin Uluk	Türkiye	UniqueGenie	Sports Genetics	Tennis (league); Basketball	Co-founder
Jessica Çarmıklı	Türkiye	Independent / 2Zero VC	Women's Football / VC	Professional Football (5 countries)	Senior Advisor
Bente Svensson	Norway	Olympiatoppen / Frisk Asker	Elite Performance / Arena Tech	Handball, Football, Tennis, Basketball, Athletics	Senior Executive / Board
Elin Årseth	Norway	Løpeglad	Health App / Mindfulness	Cross-country Skiing; Ultra-running	Founder (age 54)
Inge Stoter	Netherlands	Innovation Lab Thialf	Sports Science / Innovation	Speed Skating (regional)	Innovation Director
Merit Clocquet	Netherlands	Sportinnovator	Innovation Ecosystems / Policy	Recreational (multiple)	Senior Innovation Officer
Alberte Lindberg	Sweden	Swedish Sailing Team	Elite Coaching / Analytics	Sailing (4th in world, DEN)	Mid-career Coach
Therese Larsson	Sweden	Swedish Golf Federation	Elite Coaching / Performance Tech	Professional Golf	Head Coach (new)

1. Non-Linear Career Pathways

None of the ten leaders followed a linear career path. All described significant pivots, unexpected opportunities, and gradual realisations rather than a single decisive moment. Iris Córdoba moved from law to sports innovation; Merit Clocquet transitioned from government policy to sport; Elin Årseth evolved from physiotherapy to tech entrepreneurship; Jessica Çarmıklı moved from professional football across five countries to venture capital advisory. This finding reinforces the D2.1 Barrier Assessment conclusion that rigid career expectations can deter women from pursuing non-traditional pathways. Visibility of diverse routes into Sports Tech is essential for the next generation.

Table 2: Career Pivots and Triggers

Leader	From	To	Trigger
Iris Córdoba	Law / Public Admin	Sports Innovation Platform	Gradual: technology reshaping industries
Özgül Dalkılıç	Basketball / Sport	Deep-tech Smart Textiles	Observation: wearables too uncomfortable/limited
Yasemin Uluk	Molecular Biology Studies	Sports Genetics Startup	Academic curiosity + family entrepreneurship
Jessica Çarmıklı	Professional Football	Sports Management / VC	Deliberate dual-track: playing + management
Bente Svensson	Computer Eng. Student	Accenture → Olympiatoppen	Recruitment: 'change the world with IT'
Elin Årseth	Hospital Physiotherapy	Health-Tech App Founder	Personal transformation + resignation
Inge Stoter	Academia / PhD	Innovation Lab Director	Desire for real-world impact beyond papers
Merit Clocquet	Gov. Innovation Policy	Sports Innovation Platform	Opportunity: innovation + sport + entrepreneurship
Alberte Lindberg	Elite Sailing + Law	National Team Coach	Organic: 'slid into it, felt natural'
Therese Larsson	Professional Golf	National Team Head Coach	One-week course intended to confirm 'not for me'

2. Transferable Skills from Sport

Every leader identified a consistent cluster of skills developed through sport that proved directly transferable to their professional careers. The most frequently cited were discipline, resilience, teamwork, adaptability, communication, and the ability to perform under pressure. Yasemin Uluk and Jessica Çarmıklı articulated this most directly, whilst Bente Svensson connected elite sport preparation to the thoroughness and intentionality required in technology leadership. These findings support Springboard 2's core premise that athletic experience is a strategic asset for Sports Tech careers.

Table 3: Most Frequently Cited Transferable Skills

Skill	Cited By	Representative Quote / Insight
Discipline	All 10 leaders	Universal across all interviews; considered foundational
Resilience	All 10 leaders	Iris: 'Sport teaches you how to deal with failure and keep going'
Teamwork	9 of 10	Jessica: athletes learn there are multiple paths to a single goal
Performing under pressure	8 of 10	Yasemin: 'not giving up, being competitive, managing your time'
Adaptability	7 of 10	Özgül: pivoting product based on pilot results and user feedback
Leadership (non-positional)	6 of 10	Iris: 'leadership is about creating the environment for others to succeed'
Technical thoroughness	3 of 10	Bente: spending hours perfecting specific techniques; reading every word
Courage	2 of 10 (explicit)	Elin: 'courage, courage, courage — my value I place incredibly high'

3. Gender Barriers: Subtle, Structural, and Persistent

All ten leaders acknowledged gender-related barriers, though the nature and intensity varied significantly by country and context. The barriers described were rarely overt discrimination and more commonly structural and subtle: the need to prove credibility more frequently than male peers (Özgül Dalkılıç, Iris Córdoba); being overlooked in professional settings (Alberte Lindberg's coaches' meeting experience); assumptions about women's technical competence or leadership suitability (Therese Larsson's club experiences, Jessica Çarmıklı's interactions with sports institutions); and the persistent challenge of combining professional ambition with family responsibilities (Therese Larsson, Alberte Lindberg).

The Scandinavian leaders (Bente Svensson, Alberte Lindberg, Therese Larsson, Elin Årseth) generally reported less direct personal discrimination but acknowledged ongoing structural imbalances. Leaders from Türkiye and Spain described more visible challenges around investor perceptions, institutional attitudes, and cultural expectations. The Dutch leaders (Inge Stoter, Merit Clocquet) identified systemic patterns around self-promotion, networking access, and the overlap between career-building years and motherhood.

Table 4: Gender Barriers by Country Context

Country	Nature of Barriers	Most Cited Barrier	Coping Strategy
Spain	Systemic bias; need to publicly demonstrate competence	Justifying position in investment/representation settings	Preparation, confidence, boundary-setting, alliances
Türkiye	Age + gender compound effect; institutional dismissiveness; investor bias	Young women not taken seriously by sports clubs/institutions	Persistence, adaptability, results-focus, complementary teams
Norway	Subtle; insecurity, framing of tech as 'boys' thing'; funding access	Innovation/funding systems not designed for feminine energy/values	Team-building, self-direction, organic growth, courage
Netherlands	Self-promotion gap; motherhood-career overlap; male-dominated networks	Combining entrepreneurship with family formation	Expertise-building, long-term trust, proactive networking
Sweden	Club-level questioning; confidence barrier; work-life balance	Being questioned more than male peers; needing to 'know everything' first	Results-delivery, safe learning spaces, mentorship, technology mastery

4. The Confidence Gap and Safe Spaces

A recurring theme across interviews was the confidence barrier — the feeling that women need to know everything before starting, using a tool, or stepping into a new role. Therese Larsson's account of TrackMan's female-only education session is particularly instructive: in that session, participants asked significantly more thoughtful and engaged questions than the trainer had ever experienced in mixed sessions. The implication is clear: environments shape participation. Women do not lack curiosity or capability; they often lack environments where questioning is safe and valued rather than treated as evidence of inadequacy.

This insight has direct implications for Springboard 2's training design (WP3): creating psychologically safe learning environments may be as important as the content delivered. Several leaders made the same point from different angles: Bente Svensson argued that women need more 'process time' to discuss and reflect before committing; Elin Årseth noted that she had to learn to ask for help rather than absorbing every problem alone; Inge Stoter observed that women often hold themselves back by feeling they must prove competence before promoting themselves.

5. The Critical Role of Mentorship and Networks

Every leader credited mentorship and professional networks as important to their development, though access varied significantly and models ranged from highly formal to entirely ad hoc. Several noted the absence of formal mentorship structures early in their careers (Iris Córdoba, Elin Årseth), compensating through professional associations, accelerator programmes, and peer relationships. Therese Larsson's experience with the Swedish Olympic Committee's Project Q programme stands out as a model that combines mentorship with practical support for women coaches. Bente Svensson offered a distinctive 'tapas menu' metaphor: rather than seeking one perfect role model, she picked specific qualities from twenty to thirty people she knew well.

Table 5: Mentorship Models Across the Ten Leaders

Leader	Mentorship Type	Key Insight
Iris Córdoba	Informal; father, managers, peer networks	Compensated for formal gaps via professional associations
Özgül Dalkılıç	Multiple mentors with different strengths	Don't wait for the perfect mentor; learn from many
Yasemin Uluk	Accelerator-based; programme mentors	Pandemic enabled geographic access equality
Jessica Çarmıklı	Network-based; ally-based	Male allies critical for opening institutional doors
Bente Svensson	Eclectic: 'tapas menu' of 20–30 people	Pick specific traits, not whole persons; gender of mentor irrelevant
Elin Årseth	Self-directed; period-specific	Show up at events; the right person appears when you are present
Inge Stoter	Deliberate: surrounded self with entrepreneurs	Proactive network-building accelerated her learning curve
Merit Clocquet	Ecosystem-based; indirect	Network-building across government, industry, sport
Alberte Lindberg	Key individual: female coach with children	Seeing possibility modelled by someone in the same situation
Therese Larsson	Formal programme (Project Q) + individual mentors	Structured mentorship more useful than formal education

6. Technology as Empowerment

Multiple leaders described technology not as an end in itself but as a tool for empowerment and credibility. Therese Larsson explicitly stated that mastering TrackMan gave her a foundation that reduced the frequency and impact of pushback from male club members. Bente Svensson framed technology as a means of understanding and optimising performance. Elin Årseth described technology as the necessary vehicle for scaling impact beyond what in-person delivery could achieve. Özgül Dalkılıç built an entire company around the proposition that existing wearable technology was inadequate for real users.

This reframing — technology as empowerment rather than as a barrier — is a powerful narrative for Springboard 2's training communications (WP3) and dissemination activities (WP5). The message is not 'learn technology because you should' but 'master technology because it gives you power.'

7. The Need for Women in Technology Design

Therese Larsson's observation that tools designed exclusively by men will inevitably reflect male-centred assumptions highlights an important dimension of the gender gap in Sports Tech. This extends beyond representation in leadership to inclusion in the design and development process itself. Bente Svensson's observation that the way innovation is framed determines who participates reinforces this: if Sports Tech

is presented as ‘PhD-level algorithm development,’ it excludes women whose entry point is solving human problems rather than engineering challenges. Springboard 2’s curriculum should address not only how women can use existing technology but how they can contribute to shaping the next generation of tools and platforms.

8. Work-Life Balance: An Unresolved Structural Challenge

The combination of demanding professional roles with family responsibilities was raised by multiple leaders as one of the most persistent structural barriers. Alberte Lindberg’s candid ‘I don’t always’ solve it is perhaps the most honest answer in the collection. Therese Larsson described months of anxiety before her first trip away from her daughter. Inge Stoter identified the overlap between career-building years and motherhood as the single most significant structural barrier. Bente Svensson noted that many women at Accenture opted out of partnership tracks based on assumptions about the lifestyle required — assumptions that often did not match reality.

The policy implication is clear: structural solutions (flexible working arrangements, parental support, organisational culture change) are at least as important as individual resilience. The leaders who navigated this challenge most successfully did so with institutional support — not through individual heroism alone.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The ten case studies in this collection confirm and deepen the findings of the D2.1 Barrier Assessment Report. The barriers identified through survey and interview data — limited visibility of role models, the confidence gap, structural gender biases, insufficient mentorship, and the challenge of work-life balance — are all reflected in the lived experiences of these ten European women leaders in Sports Tech.

At the same time, these stories offer powerful evidence that the barriers are navigable. Every leader found pathways through or around the obstacles they encountered, drawing on skills forged in sport, supported by mentors and networks, and sustained by a clear sense of purpose. The diversity of their pathways — from law to innovation, from physiotherapy to app development, from professional football to venture capital — demonstrates that there is no single route into Sports Tech leadership.

Recommendations for WP3: Training and Skill Development

- Integrate these case studies as teaching material in WP3 workshops. Use them to illustrate non-linear career pathways, to normalise the experience of overcoming gender barriers, and to demonstrate the transferability of athletic skills.
- Create psychologically safe learning environments that encourage genuine questions and exploration. The TrackMan female-only session (Therese Larsson) provides a model: environments where women feel safe to ask questions produce qualitatively better learning outcomes.
- Frame technology as empowerment rather than as a skill deficit to be corrected. The message should be: mastering technology gives you power, credibility, and options.
- Include modules on commercial skills (sales, communication, presentation) alongside technical content. Multiple leaders (Yasemin Uluk, Özgül Dalkılıç, Merit Clocquet) identified this gap as a critical barrier for women entering Sports Tech.

Recommendations for WP4: Mentorship Programme

- Design mentorship matching with attention to the qualities identified by the leaders as most impactful: honesty, strategic challenge, and alignment with real-world situations. Avoid generic mentorship in favour of context-specific, practical guidance.
- Consider multiple mentorship models: formal one-to-one (Project Q model), eclectic multi-source (Bente Svensson's tapas model), ecosystem-based (network immersion), and peer-to-peer.
- Ensure mentees have access to networks beyond their immediate geography. The pandemic demonstrated that geographic barriers to mentorship can be effectively removed through digital access (Yasemin Uluk).
- Include male mentors explicitly. Bente Svensson's view — that the gender of the mentor is irrelevant; what matters is the specific quality being transferred — is supported by several other leaders.

Recommendations for WP5: Dissemination and Visibility

- Use these profiles and the leaders' own words to create visible, relatable role models across the Erasmus+ network. Prioritise reach among women athletes aged 24–35 who may not yet see Sports Tech as a realistic career option.
- Develop country-specific versions of the case studies (translations are already planned) with additional local contextualisation to maximise relevance.
- Create short-form digital content (video excerpts, social media profiles, podcast episodes) from the interview recordings to complement this written collection.

Recommendations for Policy and the Broader Ecosystem

- Advocate for structural changes within sports organisations and investment ecosystems that address the systemic biases described across these case studies — including more equitable access to networks, funding, and decision-making positions.
- Support organisations in developing flexible working arrangements that enable women (and men) to combine high-performance professional roles with family responsibilities. The evidence from these case studies is unambiguous: institutional support is decisive.
- Invest in programmes that provide structured exposure to Sports Tech environments (Bente Svensson’s placement model) rather than relying on self-directed entry. Women who lack existing networks need pathways that are created for them, not merely pointed at.
- Involve women in the design and development of sports technology products, not only in their use. As Therese Larsson observed: tools designed without women’s input will inevitably reflect male-centred assumptions.

About the Consortium

Springboard 2: Women in Sports Tech is carried out by a consortium of six European organisations across five countries. Each partner contributed specific expertise and resources to the T2.3 Case Study Collection:

Igloo Innovation AS (Norway)

Project Coordinator. Igloo Innovation manages overall project coordination, including progress monitoring, quality assurance, reporting to EACEA, and final submission of all deliverables. Igloo also contributed two interviews from the Norwegian Sports Tech ecosystem (Bente Svensson and Elin Årseth).

Collective Innovation AS (COLIN) (Norway)

WP2 Lead and Content Lead for D2.3. COLIN designed the T2.3 Interview Kit, coordinated the data collection process across all partners, and was responsible for the writing, editing, and formatting of this case study collection to ensure consistent quality and voice.

Orange Sports Forum (Netherlands)

D2.3 Compilation Lead. Orange Sports Forum led the compilation of the final deliverable and contributed two interviews from the Dutch Sports Tech ecosystem (Inge Stoter and Merit Clocquet).

Guler Legacy / SG Sports Accelerator (Türkiye)

Partner and WP3 Lead. Guler Legacy contributed two interviews from the Turkish Sports Tech ecosystem (Yasemin Uluk and Jessica Çarmıklı) and will lead WP3: Training and Skill Development.

JohnsenSkillz / SheSkillz Global (Sweden)

Partner. SheSkillz contributed two interviews from the Swedish and Scandinavian sports ecosystem (Alberte Lindberg and Therese Larsson), leveraging their global network for gender equality in sport.

Global Sports Innovation Center (GSIC) (Spain)

Partner. GSIC contributed two interviews from the Spanish and international Sports Tech ecosystem (Iris Córdoba and Özgül Dalkılıç).

Annex: Methodology

Interview Design

The interviews were conducted using the T2.3 Interview Kit prepared by Collective Innovation AS (COLIN) in April 2026. The kit provided a structured, modular question set organised in six thematic blocks:

- Block A — Background and Entry Point (mandatory): current role, sports background, moment of transition into technology and sport, transferable skills.
- Block B — Career Pathway and Turning Points (mandatory): key career steps, people who opened doors, linear vs. non-linear pathways, projects of pride.
- Block C — Challenges, Barriers and Gender (mandatory): biggest professional challenges, gender-specific barriers, concrete examples, bias and discrimination, structural barriers.
- Block D — Mentorship, Networks and Community (optional but encouraged): role of mentors, difficulty finding mentors, importance of networks, mentoring others.
- Block E — Innovation, Leadership and Business Strategy (optional, profile-dependent): key innovations, funding and scaling, leadership philosophy, diversity and inclusion.
- Block F — Advice and Forward Look (mandatory): advice for young athletes, skills to develop, myths to dismantle, sources of hope, final reflections.

Candidate Selection

Each partner identified two women leaders meeting all of the following criteria: based in the partner's country; active at the intersection of sport and technology; demonstrable leadership track record (founder, C-level, head of department, programme lead, or equivalent); willing and available for a 45–60 minute interview; willing to be featured in a public EU-funded report. Partners were encouraged to aim for diversity across their two candidates — for example, one founder/entrepreneur and one corporate or institutional leader, or different sub-sectors of Sports Tech, or different career stages.

Data Collection and Processing

Interviews were conducted between April and May 2026 in the interviewee's preferred language. All partners submitted transcripts or detailed notes in English to COLIN by 30 May 2026, along with audio recordings, signed consent forms, photographs, and profile sheets. COLIN subsequently wrote, edited, and formatted all ten case studies to ensure consistent voice and quality across the collection, whilst preserving each leader's individual story, perspective, and characteristic expressions.

Ethical Compliance

Every interviewee signed a consent form (Annex A of the Interview Kit) before the interview was conducted. Consent covered: voluntary participation; identification by name, role, and organisation in the published report; use of provided photographs; opportunity to review and approve the draft case study before publication; right to withdraw consent before final publication; audio recording for transcription purposes only; GDPR-compliant data processing. Recordings are stored on the project's secure shared drive and will be deleted after D2.3 submission.