



Redt orch

sport on search 2024

ranking the world's biggest sports  
properties based on search

Credit: @BarclaysWSL



**Chris Argyle-Robinson**  
Research & Strategy Director, Co-founder

## Dear friends and colleagues

Welcome to SportOnSearch 2024, the only report ranking 55 of the world's biggest sports properties based on search in 2023 compared to their previous 4-year average.

It's our continued belief that search is a simple – although obviously not the only – indicator of interest in (and subsequently brand health of) a sports property.

A quick reminder of how results are calculated:

For every sports property, we analyse Google Trends (web search, YouTube search) from 2023 and compare with each property's previous 4-year average.

Ultimately, we want this report to provide insights that help you make the right decisions to improve the brand health of your sport.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Argyle-Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Credit: @EuroLeagueWomen

# what can SportOnSearch do for you?

Search levels are a good indicator of the brand health of a sports property.

Let's be clear here: what do we mean by brand?

A brand is the sum of everything associated with a product – other than the product itself.

**SportOnSearch** provides insights into the brand health of your sport, and benchmarks this against other properties.

## stronger brands



can charge more



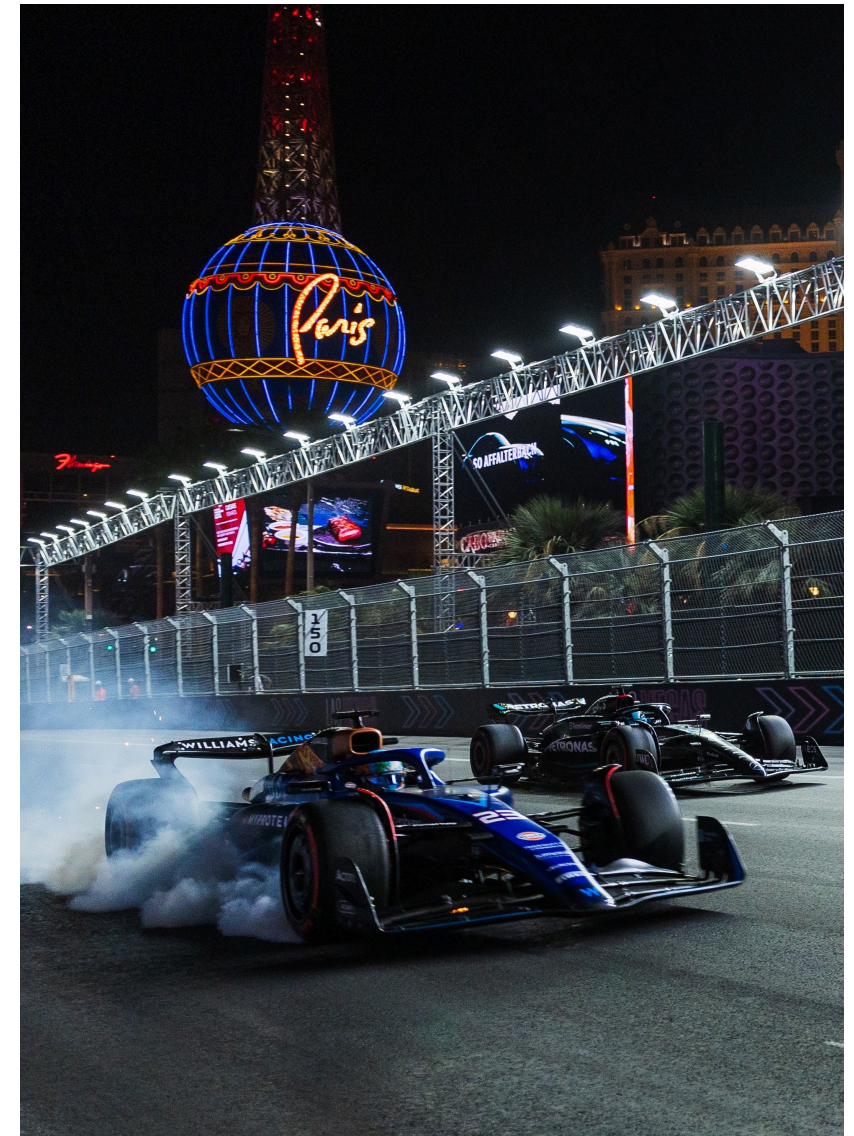
have more influence



grow faster



stay relevant/front-of-mind  
in the eyes of fans



# the unstoppable rise of women's sport

every women's sport property measured achieved increase in search

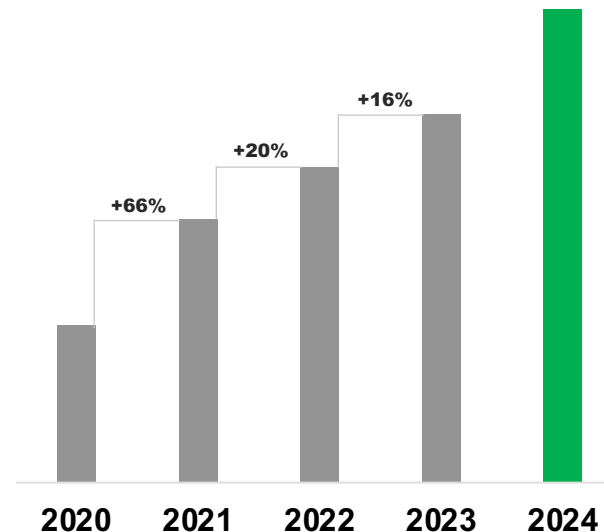
The rise in popularity of women's sport is a trend that shows no sign of slowing down, and it's not just women's football taking the spotlight.

While **Barclays Women's Super League** recorded a 258% increase in search in 2023 compared to its previous 4-year average – more than any other sports property – 6 of the top 10 properties that saw the biggest increase in search were women's sport:

Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL), EuroLeague Women, UEFA Women's Champions League, Women's Six Nations Championship, WNBA, National Women's Soccer League (NWSL).

Increased visibility, media coverage and financial investments have helped to create superstar athletes that are not only inspiring a new young generation but are also helping to break down existing societal bias.

consistent growth in women's sports properties



average search interest year-on-year

Search around women's sports properties has increased year-on-year with a greater increase predicted for 2024





## sports properties

ranking the world's biggest sports properties based on search



## ranking the world's biggest sports properties by increase in search

rank 2023	property	rank change	sport	2023 search*
1	Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL)	-	football	+258%
2	Major League Soccer (MLS)	+25	football	+87%
3	Diamond League	+6	athletics	+85%
4	EuroLeague Women	+2	basketball	+76%
5	UEFA Women's Champions League	new entry	football	+70%
6	Women's Six Nations Championship	new entry	rugby	+59%
7	EuroLeague	+12	basketball	+56%
8	The Hundred	new entry	cricket	+55%
9	WNBA	+10	basketball	+54%
10	National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)	+7	football	+50%
11	ONE Championship	+11	combat sport	+50%
12	ATP Tour	new entry	tennis	+42%
13	Premier League	-1	football	+39%
14	National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA)	new entry	American football & basketball	+37%
15	WTA Tour	new entry	tennis	+27%
16	Bundesliga	+1	football	+26%
17	Wimbledon	-7	tennis	+25%
18	Indian Premier League	+1	cricket	+25%
19	WWE	+27	combat sport	+21%
20	LPGA Tour	new entry	golf	+19%
21	Major League Baseball (MLB)	+6	baseball	+18%
22	MotoGP	+24	motorsport	+17%
23	National Basketball Association (NBA)	+1	basketball	+16%
24	UEFA Europa League	-4	football	+16%
25	National Football League (NFL)	+7	American football	+16%
26	Ligue 1	-12	football	+15%
27	Serie A	-12	football	+15%
28	Formula 1	-11	motorsport	+13%

rank 2023	property	rank change	sport	2023 search*
29	UEFA Champions League	-3	football	+13%
30	National Hockey League (NHL)	+1	ice hockey	+11%
31	Vuelta a Espana	+9	cycling	+9%
32	K League 1	new entry	football	+9%
33	World Surf League (WSL)	+14	surfing	+8%
34	World Rally Championship (WRC)	-3	motorsport	+7%
35	US Open - Tennis	+1	tennis	+7%
36	Big Bash League	-4	cricket	+6%
37	LaLiga	-16	football	+6%
38	Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)	-5	combat sport	+5%
39	Indycar	new entry	motorsport	+4%
40	Six Nations Championship	+7	rugby	+4%
41	PGA European Tour	-1	golf	+2%
42	PGA Tour	-9	golf	+1%
43	Tour de France	+5	cycling	-1%
44	LIV Golf	new entry	golf	-4%
45	NASCAR	-1	motorsport	-4%
46	Open Championship	-8	golf	-6%
47	US Open - Golf	-7	golf	-7%
48	Masters Tournament	-20	golf	-8%
49	Formula E	-3	motorsport	-16%
50	Giro d'Italia	-8	cycling	-18%
51	X Games	new entry	urban sports	-25%
52	CrossFit Games	-3	fitness	-25%
53	French Open	-25	tennis	-27%
54	Bellator Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)	-2	combat sport	-31%
55	Australian Open	-6	tennis	-37%

\*source: Google Trends (web and YouTube search) in 2023 compared to each sports property's previous 4-year average

# the 6 top-performing sports properties

the 6 sports properties with the biggest increase in search

**+258%**

## Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL)



The FIFA Women's World Cup propelled players into the global spotlight and resulted in growing interest in domestic leagues. Proportional search interest in **BWSL surged in World Cup debutant countries** like Zambia and Ireland.

Jamaica also featured in the top 10 BWSL search regions after a stunning World Cup run grabbed the attention of the nation, and an incredible 22/23 BWSL season for Khadija "Bunny" Shaw saw her reach star status.

**+87%**

## Major League Soccer (MLS)



It's no surprise that search interest increased when one of the world's biggest superstars arrived to join the MLS! **'Inter Miami'** and **'Lionel Messi'** were ranked in the top 10 MLS-related search topics.

Another driver of interest was July's All-Star game with search terms relating to **'MLS All-Star Game'** and **'Arsenal'** featuring in the top 10 MLS-related search topics.

**+85%**

## Diamond League



The Athletics-based Diamond League had a bumper year in which 7 world records were shattered and 12 new champions were crowned. **Flagship stars like Neeraj Chopra**, ranked 7th in Diamond League-related Google searches, captivated audiences and ignited growth in key markets.

**+76%**

## EuroLeague Women



Unprecedented **digital growth** helped Basketball's EuroLeague Women achieve its most successful season ever.

Record numbers across social channels, including **over 120 million impressions/ 48 million video views**, crushed last season's metrics. Search was particularly high in Turkey and Spain, with top teams Fenerbahce and Valencia among the most searched topics.

**+70%**

## UEFA Women's Champions League



The UEFA Women's Champions League enjoyed fantastic growth after rights holder DAZN **made all games free to air** during the 2022–2023 campaign, causing a surge in interest between March and May. Growth in the competition was also driven by interest in its biggest teams, with 6 clubs (including Barcelona, Arsenal, Chelsea) among the teams which had most search interest.

**+59%**

## Women's Six Nations Championship



The Women's Six Nations Championship's search soared, driven by the previous years' Rugby World Cup and a TikTok sponsorship that enhanced its online profile. **England's final day Grand Slam deciding win over France**, which achieved a record crowd for women's rugby, made **April 29 a highly searched topic**. The BBC's continued coverage and investment since 2021 also boosted exposure, placing both BBC and BBC Sport among top searches.

# the top risers

sports properties which have risen the most in the rankings

WWE	+27	combat sport
MLS	+25	football
MotoGP	+24	motorsport
World Surf League	+14	surfing
EuroLeague	+12	basketball



source: Google Trends (web and YouTube search) in 2023 compared to each sports property's previous 4-year average



The 'Bloodline', storyline helped spark a **21%** interest surge in 2023, while **Roman Reigns** was WWE's 5th most searched Google term, cementing his importance to the brand.



Messi magic boosts MLS: '**Lionel Messi**' and '**Inter Miami**' were both in the top 5 MLS Google searches, helping drive the league up 25 spots.



MotoGP stars **Marc Márquez** and **Francesco Bagnaia** fuelled search in Spain and Italy, ranking high among Google searches individually and pushing their nations to the top of regional search.



Related search topics around World Surf League included big names linked with the property. **Bethany Hamilton** ranked highly in the year she boycotted the league due to transgender participation rules. Former WSL CEO **Eric Logan** featured in the top 10 after leaving abruptly half-way through the season.



EuroLeague  
Basketball

EuroLeague climbed the ranks by 12 spots, sparked by European success in the Basketball World Cup and a blockbuster League final weekend. Particular interest in the league's standings during the season, as well as for Serbian team **Partizan**, contributed to its **56%** growth.



# sports ranked by search

sports properties grouped by sport



**ATHLETICS**



**+85%**



**BASKETBALL**



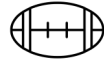
**+48%**



**FOOTBALL**



**+32%**



**RUGBY**



**+32%**



**CRICKET**



**+28%**



**AMERICAN FOOTBALL**



**+26%**



**BASEBALL**



**+18%**



**COMBAT SPORTS**



**+11%**



**ICE HOCKEY**



**+11%**



**TENNIS**



**+7%**



**ACTION SPORTS**



**+8%**



**MOTORSPORT**



**+4%**



**CYCLING**



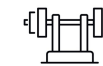
**-3%**



**GOLF**



**-1%**



**FITNESS**



**-25%**

# sport spotlight

why the changes in search and what can we learn from them?



## football flying high

Football achieved remarkable search success in 2023.

The emergence of developing markets, particularly in MLS (+87%) and BWSL (+258%) proved the increasingly diverse fan interest in the sport.

Strengthened broadcasting deals laid the foundation for sustained growth; successfully leveraging the appeal of iconic athletes such as Lionel Messi played a pivotal role.

This is highlighted by the **\$2.5b broadcasting deal** between the MLS and Apple entering its second year, with prospective partners circling around the **BWSL** too. Lionel Messi's **equity deal** with Inter Miami and Apple has shown how it's possible to incentivise the biggest stars to help boost a property's profile.

## global influence of basketball

Basketball expanded its global reach in 2023, aided by European success in the FIBA World Cup, Victor Wembanyama's NBA transition, and the continued growth of the women's game.

Search data showed a significant **+48%** increase in basketball searches compared to its previous 4-year average. EuroLeague Women and EuroLeague experienced a remarkable rise in search (**+76%** and **+56%** respectively); WNBA also saw substantial growth (**+54%**).

Lebron James breaking the all-time NBA points record pushed him into the top 20 search terms for NBA. The emergence of Victor Wembanyama raised the profile of European basketball and made him a prominent search topic.

## a mixed year for motorsport

Motorsports showed mixed results in 2023. MotoGP jumped 9 spots (**+17%** increase in search) and Formula 1 (F1) gained **+13%**, but Formula E saw a steep decline, with a **-16%** drop in search.

MotoGP and F1 benefitted from the appeal of their star racers, such as Marc Márquez, and Max Verstappen, who appeared high in searches. F1 also received a boost in search with the introduction of a **Las Vegas Grand Prix** which appeared twice in the top 10 search topics.

Formula E struggled to utilise their highest-profile racers: none of them appeared in the top search queries.

# takeaways



Credit: @IPL

## be consistent

Once you've built a strong brand for your property it's important to be consistent. How? By maintaining distinctive brand assets (DBAs) that help to create shortcuts in fans' minds that make your brand more memorable and impactful.

Wimbledon is a shining example of this. It has maintained consistent DBAs, e.g., its iconic colour scheme. Similarly, the UEFA Champions League boasts strong DBAs that it's maintained since its inaugural year in 1992: the instantly recognisable logo and the goosebump-inducing anthem. These elements have become synonymous with football excellence.

However, brand consistency doesn't mean stagnation. As seen in the UEFA Women's Champions League format changes, adapting to evolving circumstances and the needs of fans/sponsors can be necessary. But it's crucial to tread carefully so as not to lose the identity of the brand you've worked so hard to build along the way.

## leverage influencers

Leveraging influencers, particularly for events with short durations, involves collaborating with individuals who have not only a strong following but who also share a genuine passion for the sport. This is an era where authenticity is key!

Using influencers can create a more relatable, engaging experience for fans by providing personalised content and unique insights into the event. They help reach niche audiences and expand the demographic reach of events such as the UEFA Women's Champions League or the IPL.

These influencers could be the athletes competing in the event/tournament, but you should also consider a more diverse mix of stakeholders. This includes those from non-sports fields, helping your campaign to resonate not only with 'heavy' fans but also with 'light' and 'new' fans.

## converting interest to fandom

The accessibility of a sport is a key component to converting search into an increasing fan base.

Having a strong brand and a large following can drive paid viewership. To attract new fans, you want to be as easy as possible to consume. Removing barriers, like paywalls, can be a strong strategic move, as seen in the 2023/24 UEFA Women's Champions League. DAZN's decision to offer free access to matches recognised that, at a certain stage of brand-building, maximising viewership and exposure takes precedence over immediate sales.

Social media can also be a key tactic to get your sport in front of new fans. Sharing highlights, compelling storylines, and athlete personalities online can create strong and even viral content that builds mental availability (the likelihood of your brand being thought of in relevant situations). This online buzz boosts the likelihood of viewers tuning in to experience the excitement first-hand, as UK viewers did during the [World Darts Championship following 16-year-old Luke Littler's incredible journey](#).

# takeaways



## leverage emerging markets

Leagues like the MLS and Diamond League have shown impressive growth. This suggests that **investing in emerging or less traditionally popular sports markets can yield significant returns** in brand health.

In essence, while the growth potential in emerging sports markets is vast, success depends largely on understanding and **integrating into the local culture/community**.

Properties that manage to create a strong local presence, coupled with a tailored digital strategy, are more likely to see sustained growth/engagement in these markets.



## emphasise women's sports

The significant growth of leagues like BWSL, WNBA and EuroLeague Women underscores an increasing interest in women's sports and presents **an opportunity for properties to promote inclusivity/diversity**.

Beyond representation, this involves showcasing the skill/competitiveness of female athletes, challenging stereotypes and engaging in community outreach to inspire young women. Digital campaigns/online content tailored to women's sports can further build a dedicated fan base.

Emphasising women's sports not only taps into a growing market but also promotes gender equality, thus **making a substantial social impact through sport**.



## athletes key to driving growth

Across many of the properties that recorded growth in search in 2023, we found athlete names repeatedly appearing in the top related search topics. This shows it's often the people/personalities that drive people's interest in a sport.

We have seen a trend in recent years of **fans supporting individual athletes over teams**. You just have to look at the Messi effect in the MLS and the fact that Inter Miami's Instagram followers shot up by 5.8million following the announcement of his signing.

What can you take from this? Not everyone can bring a global superstar to their sports property, but you can create your own stars. **Let your athletes shine** to give their personalities a platform, whether through telling their stories on your own channels, through the media, or helping them do so on their own channels.



# spotlight on women's sport

a Redtorch 'She Moves The Game' initiative



# spotlight on women's sports properties

all women's sports properties recorded search growth in 2023



**Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL)**



**+258%**



**EuroLeague Women**



**+76%**



**UEFA Women's Champions League**



**+70%**



**Women's Six Nations Championship**



**+59%**



**Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)**



**+54%**



**National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)**



**+50%**



**Women's Tennis Association (WTA)**



**+27%**



**Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA)**



**+19%**



# spotlight on women's sports properties

what has fuelled the increase in search?



A record-breaking FIFA Women's World Cup was bolstered by the introduction of many first-time appearances from nations which included **Haiti, Ireland, Vietnam** and **Zambia** (all ranked highly for women's football search).



The recent growth in women's basketball has been driven by the emergence of new talents. **Angel Reese, Alexis Morris** and **Caitlin Clark** are among the highest-rising WNBA search queries; **Emma Meesseman's** standout performance made her one of the most searched terms for EuroLeague Women.



Search soared for women's golf (LPGA). The 4 most searched nations spanned 4 continents, with **New Zealand** in the lead thanks to **Lydia Ko's** success. Bringing the tour to **Thailand** put the country in 2nd place – with the Thai LPGA event being the 11th most searched-for term.



The WTA benefitted from Polish World No.1 **Iga Swiatek's** popularity (ranked 8th in Google searches). **Poland** and 3 fellow Eastern European nations, (Romania, Latvia, Estonia) dominated the top 5 most searched countries.



# women's sport outlook



## women's football will continue to grow

Accessibility is crucial for the continued growth of women's football post-World Cup.

Globally, broadcasting of domestic matches is on the rise, making it easier for fans to engage. The NWSL's new \$240m rights agreements with Amazon, CBS, ESPN and Scripps from 2024–2027 will broadcast 118 matches.

In Europe, DAZN has made Women's Champions League matches free for the entire 2023-24 season.

In the UK, with the BWSL's current Sky deal ending, new bidders like TNT could increase not only revenue, but the number of games broadcast. Additionally, lifting the 3pm Saturday blackout may allow for more live BWSL games.



## interest in women's basketball will grow worldwide

The global interest in Women's basketball is rising, with notable search growth in Lithuania, Serbia, Greece and Spain in 2023.

Ensuring the visibility of star athletes could further boost EuroLeague Women/WNBA in 2024.

WNBA-related search terms including Alexis Morris and Angel Reese are on the rise, with college sensation Caitlin Clark set to be one of the most searched terms should she join the WNBA in 2024.

Emma Meesseman's EuroLeague performances, and WNBA players competing in Europe off-season, are also enhancing the sport's transatlantic appeal.



## potential dip after major events

Women's sports properties must navigate and understand the possibility of post-event slow-down of search following major events.

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup spiked searches for women's football. Although growth in women's football is predicted to continue, we feel the percentage growth of search for the BWSL in 2024 could be lower than the astronomical 258% recorded in 2023.

Similarly, the Olympics could give a huge boost to many sports properties in 2024 as female athlete profiles are raised, but how long will this last?

Short-term search interest around a major event must be supported by a consistent and constant strategy that builds both mental and physical availability – there needs to be the facilities available for fans to participate as well as watch.





## methodology

### why Google data?

Google has over 90% of the search engine market share and almost 4b users worldwide. We used Google Trends data to best reflect the searches people make each day.

### how does it work?

- Each sports property was measured individually by all relevant search topics during a 5-year period (2023 compared to each property's previous 4-year) across web/YouTube searches.
- An 80% weighting was applied to web searches, and 20% applied to YouTube searches, to represent distribution of search behaviours across both platforms.
- An annual index score was calculated by averaging each weekly index score. 2023 was then compared against the previous 4-year period (2019–2022).
- The percentages illustrate direction of change.

### why compare against the previous 4-year average?

Comparing the annual index against the previous 4-year period gives a stronger comparison point for growth over a long period of time than comparing year-on-year. It also allows us to reduce the effects of anomalies such as the pandemic disruption of 2020/2021.

### which sports were ranked?

Due to the success of our 2022 report, **18 new properties** were included in 2023 – bringing the total to **55**.

# key contributors

this report has been compiled by experts from the Redtorch research & performance lab, communications suite and creative studio



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# how we can help you

**Redtorch is a bespoke and fully independent research, content & creative agency working to make sport more relevant.**

We believe strong brand health is critical for a sport to grow faster, stay relevant and charge more. We therefore provide clients with everything they'd want from a specialist agency:

Innovative thinking, the best people and unmatched flexibility.

Ultimately, we're driven by our fundamental mission to create partnerships that ensure sport changes the world and improves people's lives.

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