



In collaboration with:



Weekly #SportPositive Twitter Chat

Tuesday, April 7th

The Role of Athletes in the Fight Against Climate Change

Please note we have just taken salient points that were added in the discussion, and have not given attribution. This document is to give a flavour of the Twitter Chat, it is not a transcription. If you wish to see who wrote points that resonate with you, to pick up a discussion, search #SportPositive on Twitter and you will be able to see the original tweets.

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Q1 - Athletes are involved on other environmental issues (plastic ocean waste, clean air), which is incredible. Why don't we hear more talking about climate change?

Climate change may be perceived as a political lightning rod that athletes want to avoid ensuring they do not lose endorsement deals in their short window of time (i.e., their active playing career) to generate the most \$\$\$. Athletes may be unsure of the specific context, talking points or proper medium that will resonate w/ target audiences or garner the attention they seek/want to handle. Athletes and their individual brand should promote aspects that impact their sport, training, and performance. They can also partner with similar non-profits or environmental causes to draw awareness among their fans/followers.

EcoAthletes (<http://ecoathletes.org>), a non-profit to inspire, coach and deploy athletes to talk climate change has been launched today.

Reasons; in no particular order, include 1. It's science, 2. it's political, 3. it will affect my grandkids generation, 4. I don't want to be criticized for having a lavish, carbon-intense lifestyle. Some combo of the above

It's so hard to bring attention to things we can't see! This global crisis of COVID-19 has brought this "invisible enemy" to light

Athletes are also incredibly focused on maximizing the brief window of time they have to earn. They may want to engage, but require support and turnkey opportunities to manage that effort.

Could be a lot of reasons, all articulated by Green Sports Blog article this morning: <https://greensportsblog.com/ecoathletes-nonprofit-launches-to-inspire-coach-deploy-athletes-to-talk-climate-change/> Our question though, is if you compare the athlete population to the general population, would you see roughly the same number of people in both talking about climate change? We guess yes.

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: It was important for me to ensure, I knew exactly what I talk about when it comes to climate change. That meant two years in research expeditions, training courses to ensure I tailor the message for my audience.

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: I think it's very difficult for athletes to talk about climate change without getting into political controversy

Not sure that the issue is the climate change is a "big" issue or an untouchable political controversy. Could be as simple as that most people don't understand the gravity of the situation so it's not a priority for them

Additional question posed about whether it is easier to engage athletes post-career?

Easier for them when career is over, but not impossible while active and perhaps more visible. Just key to be mindful of the many pressures/demands on them while active - training, travel, competition and they do have family! So design engagement with that in mind

Some relevance may not be pertinent anymore - profiles may change in retirement but there may be more time to dedicate to the cause and organize others like the NHL has done with alumni player

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: Not at all, it's imperative that we engage on the subject as it happens. An example would be the marathon that was moved to Sapporo as it was cooler than the capital

Not necessarily, will likely depend on each athlete's individual circumstances.

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: In terms of feeling the impact I think single-use plastics, air pollution are more tangibly felt by athletes in their day to day, whereas the connection between climate change & sport is not immediately felt and so escapes the focus.

Champions for Earth is active in exactly this space

Q2: With often unavoidably larger footprints, what can athletes do to have a credible voice for the environment/climate change movement?

Acknowledge the footprint – explain why it’s there. Perhaps climate change makes it more difficult to train and more travel is necessary - say why climate action is important – give examples of offsetting and projects you support to offset

Agreed. Also worth mentioning that much of the footprint for athletes and teams is Scope 3 emissions

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: I believe that athletes must be active for climate change and impose high environmental standards on organizers.

Speak out via media on the minimization actions you, the athlete, are taking, and invite your fans to join. Same w/ offsetting. Letting fans know this is the right, even cool thing to do is very important

Acknowledge the issues in sport, then offer up measures taken. 'I can't do much about travel, but I have suggested changes to the tour to mitigate that, and I address my own travel in these ways...'

More to the point of offsets there are some really cool companies out there now that are helping with kelp forests off the CA coast for the water-based athlete. Also fan/spectator travel ... an athlete talking about how they offset - especially an Olympic athlete with smaller if not no salary - can encourage fans to offset through a marketing campaign

Agree. Plus some great projects involving cookstoves in sub-Saharan Africa that improve air quality, reduce CO2 and improve health

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: You have to walk the talk otherwise you'll lose credibility instantly. Know what your carbon footprint is and compensate your unavoidable emissions.

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: Athletes must be part of this change. Clubs and organizations must set an example to bring fans and sponsors with them

Q3 - How would you like to see athletes leverage their unique power and reach to be more vocal on climate change to their fans, but also within their own club/team/organisation?

The data we have show that the model works for sport leagues, clubs, and athletes. It can help understand how to best reach your target audience with a message that will resound within them. The important aspects would be to have messages that extend the fringes of your followers that can draw in more people – reassess and deliver new messages to the new fringes – and repeat. Messages that explain HOW climate change impacts your training,

performance, your sport, and the world in which you interact with on a daily basis is authentic and will serve as a strong platform.

Add on: Messages can also be crafted through the model to target specific audiences - fans, political/voting messages, politicians, community members, etc.

Each athlete who decides to Act on Climate will do so in the way that makes him/her most comfortable. For some it'll be in a light fashion, talking to media about how their kids bug them to drive an EV rather than a gas guzzler.

Use your influence to champion good practices within the organization. Pro Tip: Join the AEG 1EARTH Ambassadors Program! Applications go out on Earth Day: April 22!

Love this question because there are so many creative solutions! We'd love to see athletes actively volunteering in their communities to advocate for climate action. It's amazing how much a simple social media post can make a difference too!

There are great examples of athletes driving change within clubs/to fans, but what about asking for a climate change rider in sponsor contracts?

Simone Manuel added a diversity/inclusion rider to her contract w/TYR Sport a couple of years ago: : <https://forbes.com/sites/alanaglass/2018/07/30/simone-manuel-rewrites-athlete-activism-with-tyr-sport-inclusion-rider/>

Great point! Why not combine projects that have other worthy benefits, like public health and social equity? Doesn't always have to be just about climate change

For others, it will mean only taking endorsement deals for companies that have a climate-friendly ethos/DNA.

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: Sport has the power to change social norms, now athletes can have the same power to change the environmental norms of sport competitions.

Athletes are most influential when they personally demonstrate an action - and then challenge fans to follow suit. 'I hear, I forget, I see I remember. I do, I understand.'

It will soon happen to see athletes and players associations voicing concern and even refraining from competition due to adverse effects of climate change. We saw a bit of that emerge in the Australian Open

Clubs, athletes and climate-friendly sponsors (think solar, vegan food cos, etc) should promote climate in their messaging

Perception is everything when it comes to talking about who has "climate-friendly ethos/DNA"

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: Athletes should share the challenges they encounter and observe with their fans. The challenge is I've observed with organisations/clubs is that comply on paper but not in practice. I'm yet to find a way forward with organisations

Q4 - It's not all on the athletes. How can sport and supporting organisations help athletes, as major figureheads for sport as a whole, to engage on climate change?

Teams can speak to the same talking points as the NHL - explain HOW climate change impacts the current status and future of your sport - this serves as a strong platform. The NHL uses a business case, but also hits on how the FUTURE of the sport is in peril due to climate change if youngsters cannot play it on frozen ponds, rivers, lakes, etc. NHL uses a comprehensive touchpoint communication approach to go into the multifaceted way climate change impacts their sport and how they are addressing it. More can be done, but an excellent example

The leagues all claim to be green. Put their \$\$ where their mouths are. When the next media deal is up, say to network A "we'll take slightly less \$\$" but u will run climate-themed PSAs during every game. Why not?

|| Or simply add the request in - many sport properties can leverage the demand for association with them to incorporate specific aspects like this into corp partnerships. PSAs in media contracts, offsets with air travel and energy partners, etc

||| Companies like Learfield are making strides but "clients" and sport properties need to push for more like CU Green Stampede has done

Many leagues/teams provide PR training and community relations training to rookie pros. Players' Associations also provide orientation as do the IOC/NOCs for Olympians. Incorporate climate issue training at these existing opps

I wonder how effective the NHL green messaging and how much is climate-specific? Are there data about awareness of NHL Green? I think they need to have more green/climate messaging on NHL Network and NBCSN broadcasts. When there are games of course.

Recognize the leagues'/governing bodies' leadership potential. Again, NHL is a great example. Have CSR initiatives and make sure those principles are embedded throughout the sport experience

By engaging the athletes in the club's green projects, as we have done at Section Paloise (image)



I think it's incumbent upon us, the green sports movement - i.e. the Green Sports Alliance, SandSI, UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action etc., to press teams, leagues, governing bodies, sports media, to do more specifically on climate action

Q5 - Many athletes are supporting coronavirus-related relief efforts and putting out public service announcements, are there any lessons to be learned to more effectively engage them on climate change?

No one will fault someone for supporting the fight against coronavirus. Climate change may make those more willing to step up especially as we see impacts of climate change accelerating and requiring immediate action.

Athletes addressing coronavirus can address sustainability and climate change at the same time! Now is the perfect time to highlight the benefits of food waste reduction, locally manufactured products, plant based diets, and energy savings at home

It has really hammered home to us (even more) how crucial sport is at a community level in a crisis. Both operationally and as leaders. We have seen athletes step up financially, calling fans to lift their spirits, recording bedtime stories and more.

|| Other than the \$\$\$ - the cost is minimal & the impact larger - good ROI for goodwill and brands (not that its the main motivation here) but seeing the enviro ROI specific to climate change and their impact will be interesting to determine & track

Not sure this is a lesson but EcoAthletes believes some athletes will use this unexpected coronavirus sports hiatus to get engaged on COVID-19 and climate change

Coronavirus is a global crisis that is showing that with significant behavioral change by the public - and activism from athletes, the curve can be flattened, results can improve. Climate change has a similar playbook.

|| Question will be how much government intervention is necessary to get the necessary behavioral change for climate action

Lots of curves that need flattening!

I'm convinced that once athletes see that climate crisis impacts them and their kids, once they see the solutions exist now to make a dent in the problems, they'll lead their fans to Act on Climate

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: There are relief efforts, messages of support when climate disasters occur. We need to be more proactive and be aware that the climate crisis we have will continue if we don't change our ways... The awareness & reversal efforts shouldn't stop

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVE: I think an important part of the story is that athletes are told to not be political in their social media messaging- so response to an issue that is non-partisan is very easy. Climate change is misconstrued as a political issue, making it hard for athletes to respond

Thank You!

If you contributed to the #SportPositive Twitter Chat on March 31st, thank you for being a part of it! If you didn't, I hope you find this document useful, and mark your diaries now to join us next week, **Tuesday, April 14th at 4-5pm UTC.**

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