

Renewed IBM and AELTC partnership set to take on the future, launching with a digital recreation of The Championships.

The partnership renewal means IBM and Wimbledon will be able to seize new opportunities, with the next phase of their long term partnership centring on driving value from innovation with digital transformation, AI and cloud capabilities.

London, 25th June 2020 - IBM and the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) recently put pen to paper on a new long term contract. It was a natural development for a partnership that has successfully spanned 30 years, however looking to the future, the new partnership has been structured in such a way that it is sure to break new ground. Due to the global pandemic the new model was put to the test almost immediately as IBM and the AELTC had to conceive and deliver a digital recreation of The Championships in just eight weeks. This includes an enhanced digital experience for fans to explore unique content around 'The Greatest Championships' and tailor the way they watch iconic matches.

IBM and Wimbledon - The Greatest Championships

While The Championships might look different this year, the expectations about quality still apply. See how IBM are teaming with Wimbledon to bring fans an unforgettable experience in 2020.

Right time for a new approach

Prior to the global pandemic, the future for the sports industry looked strong, with opportunities to be seized by those with the right vision and capabilities. There was an ever-increasing focus on sport as a form of entertainment, new competition formats were developing, and women's sport, in which tennis plays a significant role, was gaining increasing focus. These new opportunities were attracting investment but also increasing expectations. Delivering on those expectations required progressive sports businesses to accelerate their digital transformations and utilise technology in ever more complex and innovative ways. [You can read more about the IBM industry point of view here.](#)

A new industry leading partnership model

IBM's experience and understanding of the sports industry spans decades. Its capabilities in digital transformation, data platforms, cloud and artificial intelligence (AI) are all world-leading and many sports businesses at the forefront of sport benefit from IBM's expertise.

In order to harness these capabilities and support Wimbledon in maintaining its position at the forefront of *its* sport, IBM and the AELTC have agreed a new model for the next phase of their award-winning partnership.

The AELTC will invest in IBM's capabilities in business and technology consulting, digital delivery and IBM Cloud and AI in order to deliver the foundational elements of the digital backbone of The Championships. To continue to stay at the forefront of world sport, the AELTC understands the need to both grow overall audience size and attract a higher percentage to its owned digital properties. This means being able to move swiftly to the next phase of their digital evolution, delivering compelling digital experiences to all their guests (fans, players, media and more) at scale. When your platforms must scale 55,000% during an event for a global audience of 20 million, you need to make sure they are delivered right first time.

Leveraging its research capabilities (IBM invests \$6 billion annually in R&D), industry expertise and technology solutions – AI with IBM Watson, data platforms and cloud – IBM will enable Wimbledon to extend its leadership position in the world of sport. As part of the new model, IBM have established a dedicated workstream, staffed by IBM and AELTC experts.

This hybrid model brings several benefits:

- Effectively bringing innovation in house under a “one team” approach using the collective industry expertise of both parties
- A continuous stream of innovations from a dedicated year-round focus.
- A single integrated delivery team that ensures the continued progression of Wimbledon's digital transformation while integrating new innovations in an assured, flexible and scalable manner using the IBM Cloud, data and AI capabilities

The cancellation of The Championships 2020 due to the pandemic provided the opportunity to put the new partnership model – and its relentless focus on innovation – to the test. In a very short time, the combined team turned around a technically challenging digital experience that met the premium levels of quality demanded by a club whose stated mission is to be the best tennis tournament in the world.

How IBM is supporting ‘The Greatest Championships 2020,’ a digital recreation of The Championships

According to a recent YouGov survey of 2000 UK adults commissioned by IBM, Wimbledon is the second most watched live sports event on TV in the UK, with 60% having watched live action, just behind the Olympics (62%) and just ahead of the FIFA World Cup (59%). This summer, despite Wimbledon being cancelled as a live event, the AELTC still wanted to give these fans of The Championships something to celebrate.

By recreating a live event in digital form, fans will have the opportunity to revisit old matches or discover ones they may not have seen before. The same survey (commissioned by IBM) uncovered a real appetite for re-watching “classic” sports matches and events, with 1 in 5 interested in doing so, of which the vast majority

(89%) believe new technology can play a part in making them more engaging. Specifically, 62% want remastered picture quality, 40% value modern statistics and 42% would like access to additional archive content.

So, for 2020, Wimbledon will be celebrated through 'The Greatest Championships', an engaging digital experience for fans missing the sport they love. By providing a positive connection to happier times for millions of sports fans around the world, the AELTC can continue to promote the Wimbledon brand and build its reputation.

This digital recreation of The Championships will be brought to life via:

- The Greatest Championships, a round-by-round compilation of some of Wimbledon's greatest matches, to engage fans and prompt debate.
- A digital experience to add value to fans above and beyond video on demand by providing highlights, interviews, statistics and supporting stories.
- The remastering of large volumes of old video content to enhance the quality and match modern expectations across multiple platforms.
- More data richness, including modern match statistics, and advanced search capabilities so fans can search for specific moments in archive footage, including individual shot types and moments of peak excitement.

Having been on a digital transformation journey with IBM for a number of years and adopted open, hybrid cloud platforms as the foundations of its IT infrastructure, the AELTC could focus on the work to imagine new experiences, safe in the knowledge their core technology was flexible enough to support it. Already accustomed to working with IBM in agile and remote ways, this completely new digital recreation of The Championships was conceived and delivered in just eight weeks.

IBM and the AELTC have put together an agreement that may well be the future for sports technology partnerships. Even before COVID-19 struck, there were exciting plans in place to leverage the new investment model and the full range of IBM's capabilities for future Championships. In the "new normal", the potential opportunities have only increased.

You can find out more about details about the work and solutions behind The Greatest Championships at ibm.com/Wimbledon

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,069 UK adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th and 8th June 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

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