

## Aileen McManamon, Founder and Managing Partner, 5T Sports Group

Spoke with Melina Diamantopoulou, Head of Production at Climate Action about **all things sport & sustainability**



**Melina:** Could you tell us about and what are the latest sustainable initiatives your organisation has put in place?

**Aileen:** Within 5T, we've been working hard on our travel-related emissions. Like many organizations, this is our biggest carbon factor. We've reduced single occupancy auto trips by 80% over the last 2 years. We were also able to do roughly one third of our mid-range travel by train/transit combinations which was terrific - and took a lot of air travel hassle out of our days. We have begun

documenting our local and social procurement policies so that we **can share them with our suppliers** and clients. This is also part of our journey in becoming a certified B Corp – hopefully by the end of 2018.

In Canada, we continue to work with multiple levels of government, the private sector and professional associations about advancing local and

social procurement, which aids the sustainability of the local business community economically, but also contributes greatly to reduced footprint of the supply chain as well as ripples out social benefits such as greater circulation of money to community charities and causes and job security. Currently we sit on a national roundtable on procurement as well as conduct workshops for supply chain professionals.

**Melina:** Could you tell us a bit more about your work and projects?

**Aileen:** We are currently **working with an operator of multi-sport complexes (ice rinks, indoor soccer, gym space) on the development and implementation of their Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.** This has been really rewarding as it touches on both environmental and social/community-based programs. In addition to supporting their own in-house waste reduction and education efforts across 22 facilities in North America, we also recently connected them with the NHL's Greener Rinks program - extending the reach of the NHL to additional community touchpoints (our client operates 57 ice rinks!), and strengthening the connection of the community to the NHL and its franchises.

Projects currently under development stem from our **Fan Mobilization Playbook**, which is a set of fun-first, and fan-first personal challenges, enabling fans to show how much they truly support their team/community. Hopefully by the time of the conference we'll be able to share more !

**Melina:** What do you see as the key requirements for an orderly and efficient move to a lower carbon footprint in the sports industry?

**Aileen:** Well, this is a loaded question and one up for endless debate among the sports sustainability crowd, but sure, I'll have a go:



**Aileen McManamon,**  
Founder and Managing  
Partner of 5T Sports  
Group

### 1. Competition

We can't discount the importance of a challenge. And competition. And recognition. I mean significant recognition. If there were a World Cup for Sports Sustainability, you can bet organizations will show up to vie for it. Whether that's a UN Prize, an IOC Prize or perhaps a combination of those, but of significant visibility and status. Because it starts with awareness and clear, well-understood examples.

I could potentially argue that **high-level commitment** organizations like the Philadelphia Eagles, the Minnesota Twins, the Portland Trailblazers, the Deutsche Fußball Bund or Manchester City are already positioning for it when it finally comes along. Face it, this is the language of this industry. The Olympics aren't just about the athletes' achievements anymore, but also the host cities' triumphs (or failures). Each successive city wants that coveted 'Best Ever' acclamation. **Competition fuels aspirations.** Winning begets adulation. Sports brands and city brands get that.

### 2. Rules

Without a rules structure, no competition is legitimate. Or for that matter, much of any endeavour, such as business, education, government. And although many of us deny it, we all generally prefer having them. I'd suggest that **federations, leagues and international rights holders setting baselines for operations will go a long way toward bringing about the efficient adoption of sustainable operating standards.**

### 3. Proactively Shared Tools and Resources

Without elaborating too much here (since we'll be focused here in Amsterdam!), but to keep the sports analogy going, research, technologies and experienced practitioners will all be needed to accelerate orderly and efficient lowering of the sports footprint. It's exceptionally exciting to see resources becoming available across the globe and even more exciting to have this burgeoning community of practice talking to each other/connecting at the various conferences. We must continue to push for shared, open resources wherever possible, and for collaborative work everywhere we can. There's too much to do to not, as one of my favourite colleagues in this space, Claire Poole, would say 'Crack on with it!'



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**Melina: What do you see as the main challenges for becoming more sustainable within the sports industry? And how do you think they could be alleviated?**

**Aileen:** The sports industry is show business. By nature it's unrelenting. Schedules, costs and the utter dependence on capturing people's attention at a fixed place and time – whew! Many franchises (in the bricks-and-mortar leagues) are barely breaking even. Major events? Well, you've noticed the bidding pool is thinning. How can you add requirements or tasks to this tricky mix? And how will you pay for it?

Look to the digital and social media impact on sports for examples. At first, **why would a team hire a blogger? What in the world would they need WiFi coverage in the arena? How could they justify the cost or quantify the ROI?** Initially, they couldn't. But some explored it anyway, curious enough to try to peer into the future. But you know, there's a correlation between some of those open-minded front offices and the sports industry's most respected and highly-valued properties.

Sustainability is no different. The biggest challenge? **What to do and how to pay for it. How do you mitigate the risk? Find the right corporate partners and find the win-win/risk mitigation of not going it alone.** There's a reason we call them partners now and not sponsors. Many sports relationships are synergistic – the club gets high performance technology, the partner gets a high-visibility reference client. Win-Win.

**Melina:** As a speaker in the forthcoming Sustainable Innovation in Sports 2018, what do you think can be achieved in terms of outcomes of the Forum?

**Aileen:** I'd like to see a common, non-partisan, continuing and open forum materialize so that questions and discussions set in motion prior to and during the forum can be answered/deliberated afterward. I've been working in this space for about 8 years now (specifically sports and sustainability) and have attended quite a few conferences – as participant and speaker – and I note we often retire to our corners in between. Fair enough, we do all have our work to get on with, but I'd love to see a virtual home for the keeners to connect/chat/query one another. This takes 2 things: the actual agnostic, digital home (a LinkedIn group perhaps?) and the modest, but meaningful participation of the community of practice.



**Sustainable Innovation in Sport** is the only high-level European meeting to bring together stakeholders and influencers innovating in the **sports sustainability sector**; **Governments, UN, sports leagues and clubs, governing bodies, brands, sports venues, NGOs and broadcasters**, to discuss the unique **opportunity** that the realm of **sports** offers the **climate change effort**.

The Forum will take place on **2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018** at the **Amsterdam Arena**, the world's leading smart playground.

#### Event Highlights Include

- + **Crucial topics to drive sustainability in sport forward, including:**
  - **Financing sustainability projects and projected return on investment**
  - **Building more sustainable, innovative and safer sport venues**
  - **Sustainable sports culture in mega sport events**
  - **Creating sustainable memories and influencing your fans**
- + **World leading sustainability speakers from IOC, UEFA, BBC Sport, Aviva Stadium, Wimbledon, Formula E, Philadelphia Eagles, Roland Garros, Arsenal, Land Rover BAR**
- + **The Sport & Sustainability International (SandSI) annual General Assembly meeting**
- + **Sustainability Innovation Tour of the Amsterdam Arena**
- + **Panel discussions and round tables for optimal deep dive discussions and networking**
- + **An exhibition of cutting edge innovations making sustainability in sport a reality**

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