FOOTBALL'S DEFINING MOMENT

Marking WFS's tenth anniversary, this edition brings together a decade of unprecedented transformation with the next wave of change already underway. As artificial intelligence, institutional capital and a changing fan base redraw the rules of the game, the football industry stands at its most decisive moment yet. This is where the decisions defining the next decade of football's business, media and culture will take shape.

1

THE STRATEGIC CORE - GOVERNANCE, OWNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP.

Who Controls the Game?

Football's power structures are being redrawn at speed: the internationalisation of club ownership through sovereign funds and multi-club networks, athletes claiming equity and governance roles, and states deploying the sport as a geopolitical instrument. How governing bodies respond will determine who controls the game for the next decade.

2

THE ECONOMIC ENGINE - INVESTMENT, COMMERCIAL GROWTH & GLOBAL STRATEGY.

What Does the New Capital Want?

Institutional capital is moving into the game's fastest-growing segments, with women's football drawing sustained investor interest. New powerhouses are redrawing football's global map, and commercial partnerships are being restructured around data and measurable outcomes. These decisions will shape the sport's economic architecture for a generation.

3

THE OPERATIONAL EDGE - INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY & DATA.

Is Football Ready for AI?

Artificial intelligence, data ownership and smart infrastructure are changing how football organisations operate: automating decisions, monetising new data assets, and converting stadiums into year-round platforms. The organisations that move decisively now will set the operational standards the rest of the industry follows.

4

THE GLOBAL AUDIENCE - MEDIA, CONTENT & FAN ENGAGEMENT.

Who Owns the Fan?

Talent identification and management has become one of football's most sophisticated, capital-intensive disciplines, with the fastest-closing investment gap now in women's performance science and pathways. As data, sports science and player welfare move to the centre of competitive strategy, getting this right now builds a structural advantage that compounds over time.

5

THE CORE ASSET - PERFORMANCE, SCIENCE & TALENT DEVELOPMENT.

What Makes a Champion Now?

Talent identification and management has become one of football's most sophisticated, capital-intensive disciplines, with the fastest-closing investment gap now in women's performance science and pathways. As data, sports science and player welfare move to the centre of competitive strategy, getting this right now builds a structural advantage that compounds over time.

6

THE CULTURAL CATALYST - CULTURE, PURPOSE & IMPACT.

Can Football Still Change the World?

Football's capacity to shape culture, drive social change and build genuine community remains one of its most powerful and least leveraged assets. How the industry balances commercialisation with authentic impact will define its social licence to operate.