



November 2024

Football on the Brain newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of the Football on the Brain newsletter. This newsletter is sent every few months to Football on the Brain partner organisations, University of Oxford members, and members of the public who are involved in or interested in the project. It is also available for download on our website.

Please feel free to forward it to your colleagues, or encourage them to sign up to the newsletter mailing list by emailing hanna.smyth@ndcn.ox.ac.uk. In this month's edition below you will find updates about the various strands of the project, including ways to get involved and stay in touch.



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DID YOU KNOW YOUR BRAIN IS IMPORTANT FOR INJURY PREVENTION AND RECOVERY?



New SheKicks magazine insert: injury

Did you know we have written Football on the Brain themed inserts for SheKicks magazine every year 2022-2024?

Our 2024 insert, themed "Injury prevention and recovery", was released in the summer, cowritten by our team member Louise Auckland and some of our Sports Engagement Ambassadors, based on research from the University of Oxford and beyond.

You can download all three inserts from our project website:

<https://footballonthebrain.uk/resources>



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May: Bannister Miles Fair

Football on the Brain was an exhibitor at the Bannister Miles Fair in Oxford, "celebrating the 70th anniversary of Sir Roger Bannister running the first sub-four-minute mile." This took place at the university's Iffley Road sports track, where the record was set in 1954.

Activities include a Community Mile, a pop-up museum, and track races – our team was set up on the grass oval inside the track. We engaged attendees ranging from toddlers to grandparents with football and neuroscience topics including what different areas of the brain do, neuroplasticity, and how the brain changes over time.



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May: SDG Impact Lab visit

In May we hosted another visit from the university's SDG Impact Lab programme, welcoming 45 students from three local secondary schools for an afternoon of MRI scanner demos and hands-on Football on the Brain activities at our research centre on the JR hospital site.

Three of our Sports Engagement Ambassadors – Holly, Izabelle, and Andrew – led activities on sleep, head injury, and areas of the brain used in football respectively.



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July: Leys Festival

Presented by Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys residents & the university's Cultural Programme, we were invited to bring Football on the Brain activities to the 2024 Leys Festival: "a vibrant free community festival, full of exciting activities, delicious affordable food and live performances that bring everyone together in celebration".

Held at Blackbird Leys Park, we enjoyed meeting local residents – including lots of children! – and sharing our hands-on activities with them to spark interest in how neuroscience is relevant to football.



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August: Grimsby Town visit

Grimsby Town Football Club reached out to us and invited us to discuss Football on the Brain with their staff. Our team members Holly Bridge and Louise Aukland travelled there this summer to introduce the project, run some of our activities and to gather input on which neuroscience-related topics are most relevant and most in need of support for their coaching staff.

Questions their staff had for our researchers included:

- How many instructions or pieces of information are teenagers capable of taking on in one go before a match?
- Is it too late to do anything about brain health, for those who have now stopped playing professional football?



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September: Training Ground Guru conference

Our team members Louise Aukland and Morgan Mitchell attended the Training Ground Guru conference in London, joining 450 delegates from clubs, federations and organisations around the world. Over the course of the two days, there were a total of 21 sessions, with topics ranging from Sporting Directors to Artificial Intelligence to Neuroscience.



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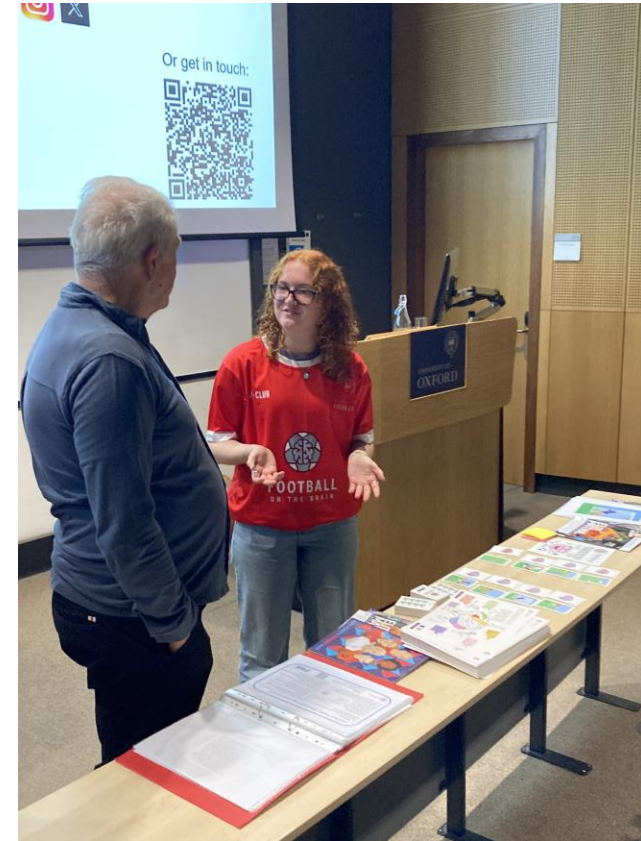


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September: Meeting Minds alumni event

We were invited back for a second year to bring Football on the Brain to Meeting Minds, the university's annual alumni weekend.

Fifty people attended a lecture by our team members Heidi Johansen-Berg and Louise Aukland introducing the project – with plenty of great audience questions. Then we offered a range of interactive activities: indoors (card games, reading material, and a brain age guessing game) and outdoors ('prism goggles' activity shooting goals with distorted vision, and 'blind football' activity learning to pass a noisy ball while wearing blindfolds). Despite the pouring rain, more than two dozen people came outside to give the outdoor activities a go!



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September: Podium conference

The university's Podium Institute for Sports Medicine and Technology hosted their inaugural conference in Oxford, featuring speakers on a range of topics including mental health and wellbeing, wearable technologies, and big data.

Our team members Heidi Johansen-Berg and Morgan Mitchell were there as academic attendees, and other members of our team hosted an exhibitor stall in the lobby, showcasing Football on the Brain materials and gathering input and questions from attendees.



Find out more about Podium: <https://thepodiuminstitute.ox.ac.uk/>



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News from partners and collaborators

From the University of Oxford Podium Institute:

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Young Voices in Sport: Injury and Athlete Mental Health

The University of Bath and Podium Analytics want to find out more about the social, emotional and psychological impact of sports injury among young people. We are looking for young people aged 16-21, who take part in competitive sport of any kind for a club or team, to talk to us about their experience mental health during their recovery from injury. We want to find out how being injured was for you, and how your thoughts, feelings and actions during this time were impacted by people around you – e.g. at school or work, in your club, or team, or at home. You would be invited to meet a trained interviewer for a one-to-one chat either in person or online via Microsoft Teams. The interview would take place at a date, time and location convenient to you, and it would last approximately 45 minutes. You would be rewarded with a £25 voucher for your time. Whatever your experiences of sports injury – good or bad – we would love to hear from you.

You can find out more about the study and your rights as a participant here:

<https://podiumanalytics.org/media/ocjertn/young-voices-pis.pdf>

If you are interested and would like to take part, you can register your interest here:

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/bathreg/youngvoices>



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Keep in touch

The Football on the Brain website tracks all strands of the project, has [blog posts](#) about related topics and links to [resources the project has developed](#).

You can also follow along with the latest updates on Twitter and Instagram (@FootballOnBrain). We are always open to suggestions (or submissions) from project partners for the blog, so please do get in touch with hanna.smyth@ndcn.ox.ac.uk if you have an idea. The next edition of this newsletter will be sent in early 2025.

