



HIGH PERFORMANCE CONFERENCE

MADRID 2025

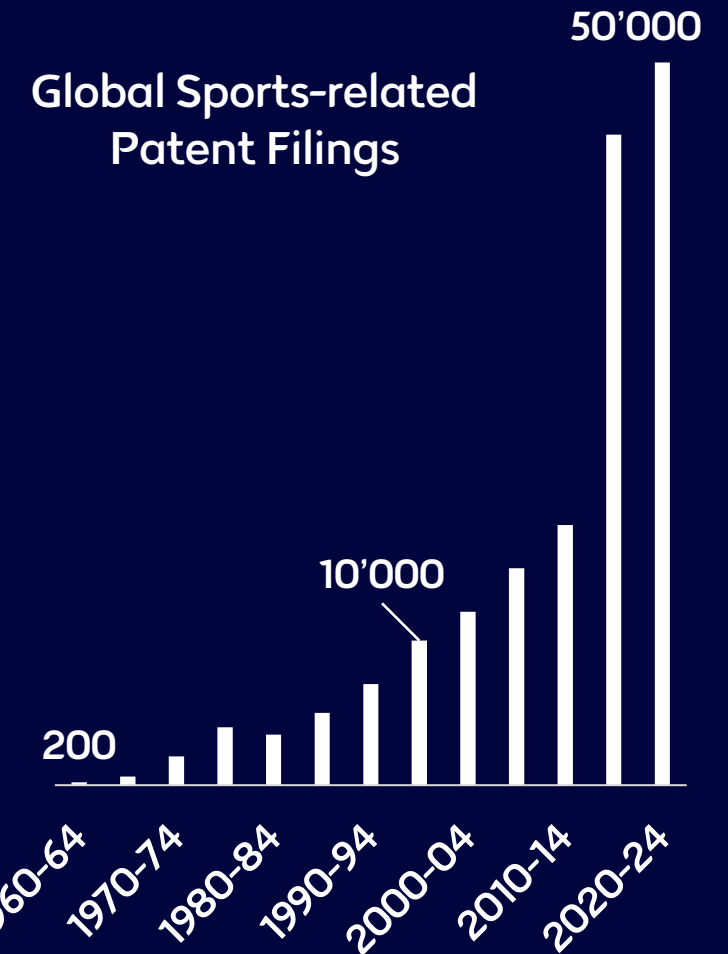
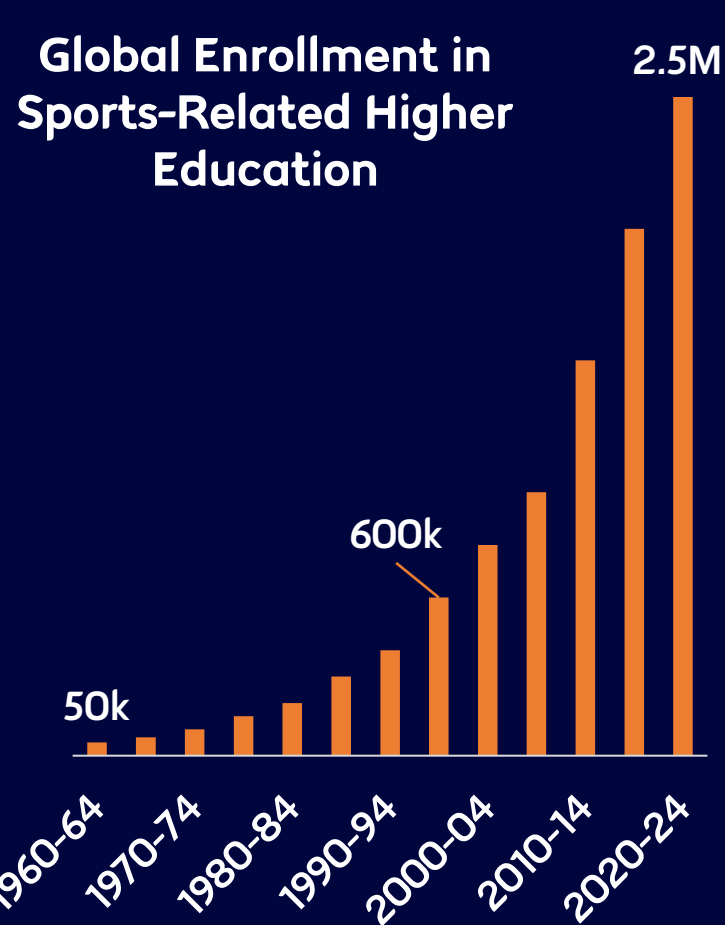
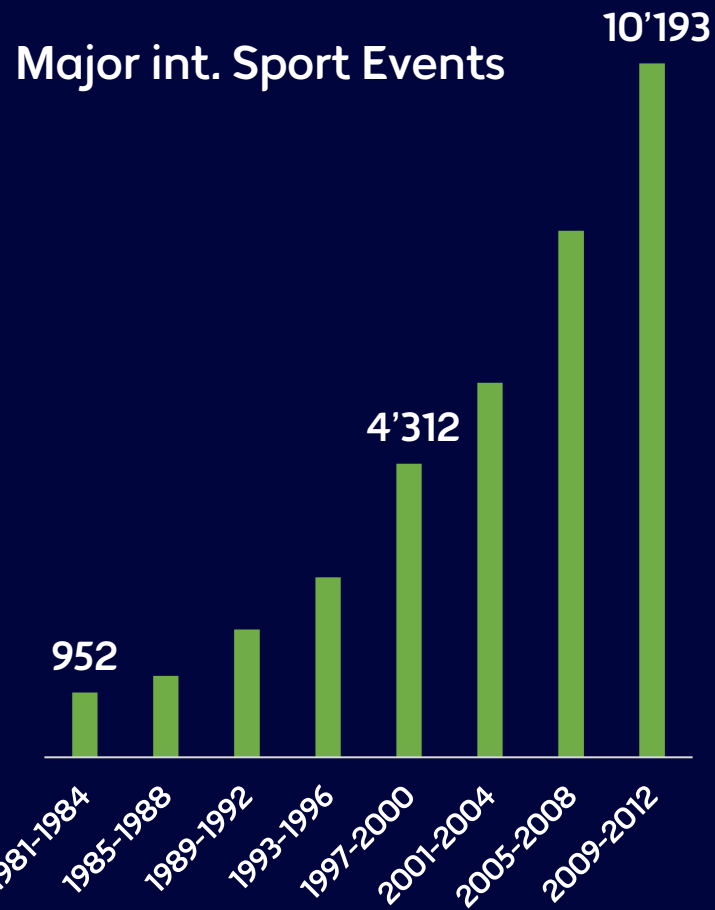
Innovation in competition

Jakob Larsen, World Athletics

A detailed black and white illustration of a boxing match at Madison Square Garden in 1879. The scene is set in a large, ornate arena with a high, vaulted ceiling. The stands are filled with a large crowd of spectators, many wearing hats and coats. In the center of the ring, two boxers are engaged in a fight. One boxer is wearing a striped shirt and light-colored pants, while the other is wearing a dark shirt and shorts. A referee in a dark suit stands between them, observing the match. In the foreground, several men in suits and hats are watching the fight intently. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant public event.

Madison Square Garden 1879

The new World of Sport



Growth areas within Sports

Expected growth next 5 years:

Sports Tech Innovations: +15%

AI, IOT, AR/VR technologies shaping sport

Sports Analytics: +25%

Performance Analytics & Fan Engagement

Sports Tourism: +15%

Mass events, sportainment, wellness, and heritage travel

Olympic Games 2024

Athletics performance

TV & OTT

- Net Reach: 1st
- TV Broadcast time: 1st
- OTT Broadcast time: top 3

Social media performance:

- Activity, Interaction, Video Views & Contacts: Top 3

Ticketing

- More than 3x the 2nd biggest sport

100m Men's Final – 2012 vs 2024

TV viewers



-58%

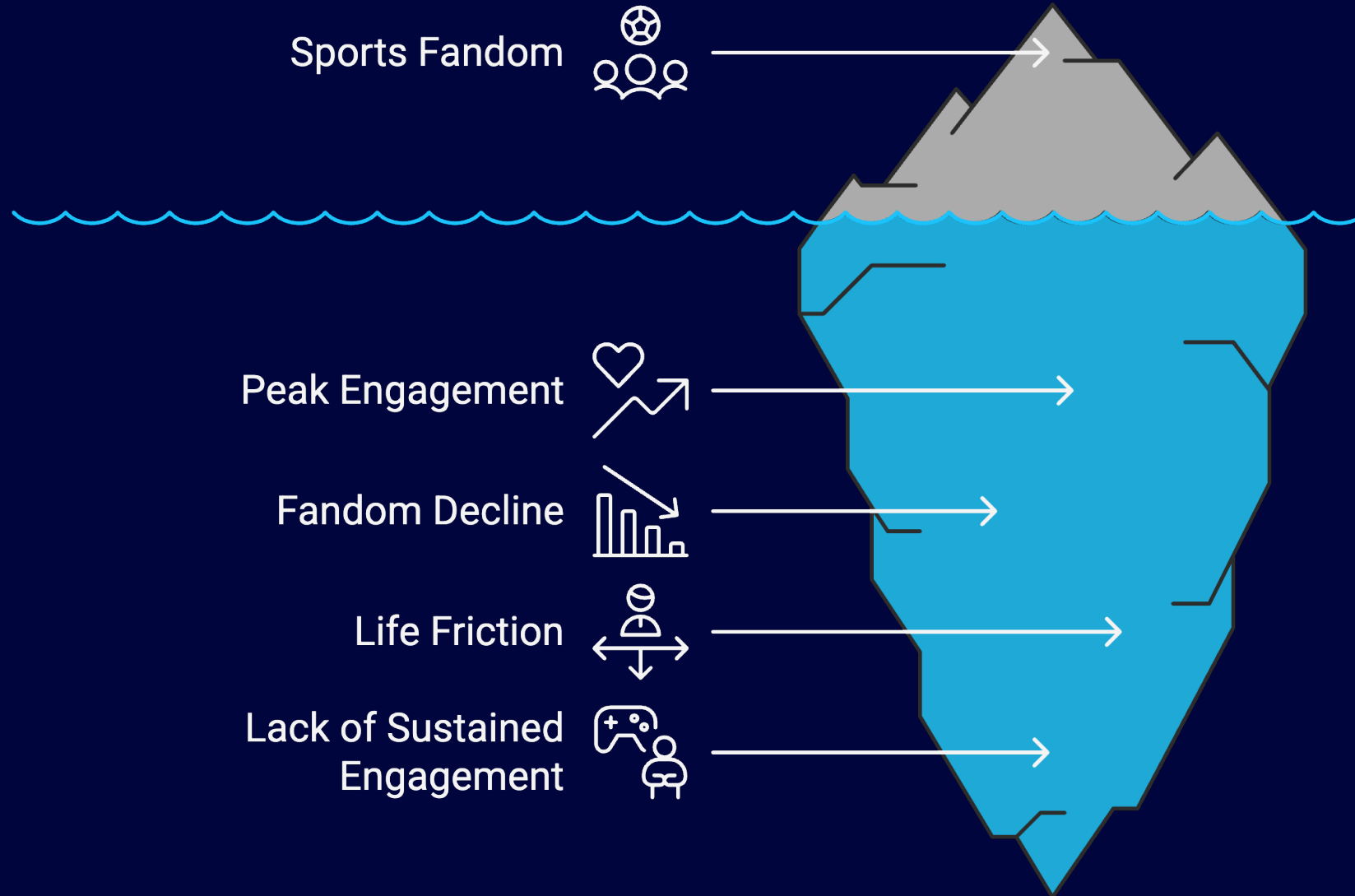


-30%



-36%

No Bolt – Scheduling – Generational trends



HIGH PERFORMANCE—BUT FOR WHOM?

Survivorship Bias

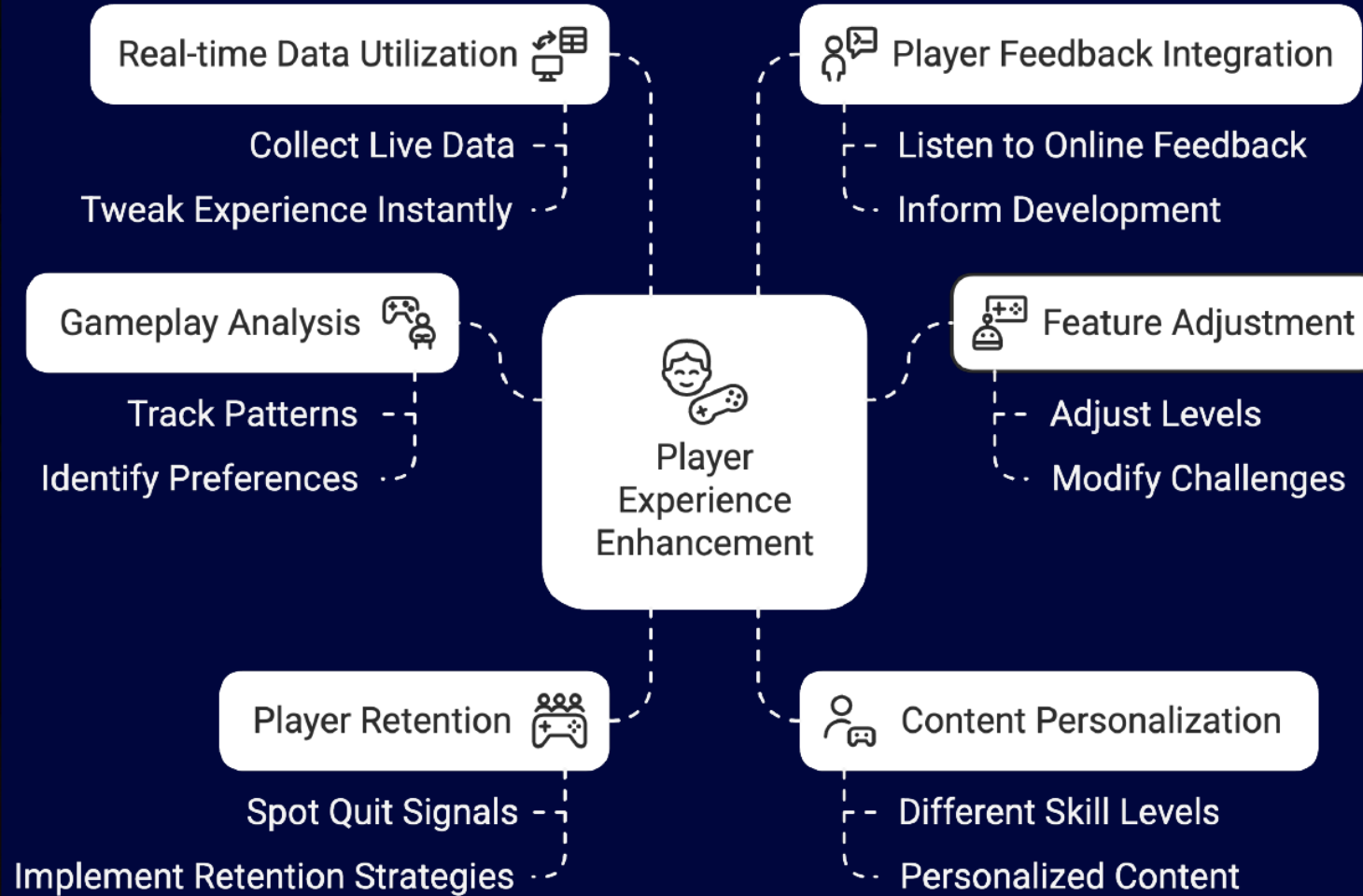


H λ L F - L I F E 2.



The Video Game Industry





How important is innovation in athletics?

We asked people across the globe

Casual followers

1. Improve fan experience
2. Deliver World Class championships
3. **Investing / innovating in events**
4. Regulating the sport
5. Transparency & good governance
6. Increase # of participants
7. Athlete welfare and safety
8. Clean sport
9. Coaches' education
10. Equal participation opportunities
11. Sustainability
12. Give every child access to athletics

Athletes

1. Deliver World Class championships
2. Improve fan experience
3. Transparency & good governance
4. Clean sport
5. Coaches' education
6. Sustainability
7. Regulating the sport
8. Equal participation opportunities
9. Athlete welfare and safety
10. Increase # of participants
11. Give every child access to athletics
12. **Investing / innovating in events**

Coaches and volunteers

1. Deliver World Class championships
2. Coaches' education
3. **Improve fan experience**
4. Transparency & good governance
5. Equal participation opportunities
6. Increase # of participants
7. Athlete welfare and safety
8. Clean sport
9. Give every child access to athletics
10. Regulating the sport
11. **Investing / innovating in events**
12. Sustainability

Q - Please rate the organisations below in terms of how well or poorly you think they are governed?

Q - How do you rate the success of World Athletics in each of the following?

Base: Those aware of World Athletics (5,969), Athletes (451), volunteers/coaches (241)

Case Study: Cross Country

The Greatest race no one sees

- Once the pinnacle of endurance racing
- No viable business model
- Grassroots ≠ Ecosystem
- No clear audience, no consistent identity

Google Search activity

— Cross Country — Trail running



WHY?

Combined Events

Lowest grassroots participation among stadium disciplines

Limited appreciation outside Europe

Fewer than 15% of non-European federations organize national championships

Consistently ranks low in being "easy to follow"

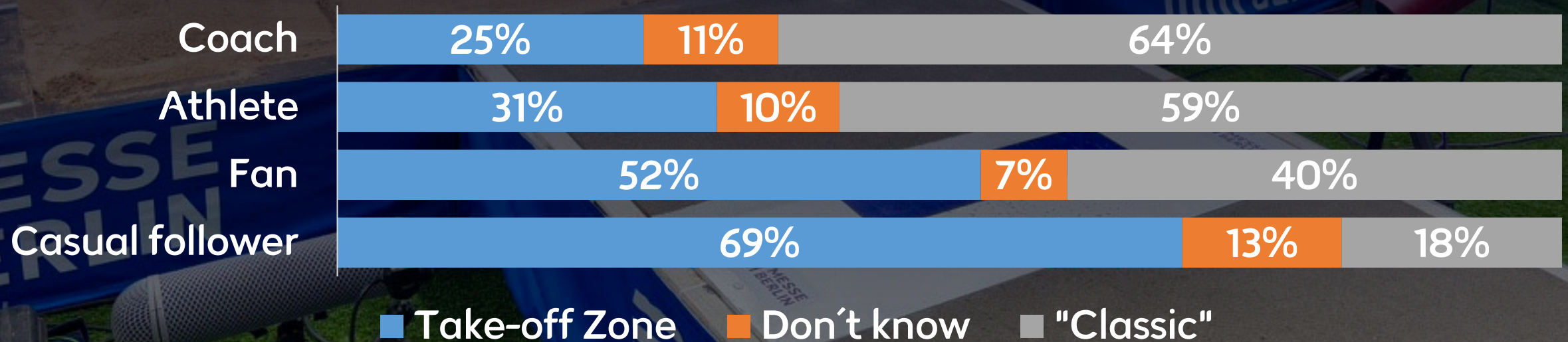
The Decathlon struggles to fit into the current TV scheduling framework.

Unique blend of limited international depth and high athlete churn

Case study: Take-Off Zone

- Identified weakness: 31% of all jumps are fouls
- Valid jumps generate far more positive fan reaction compared to fouls
- A 40cm take-off zone decrease foul rate to 10%

Which format would you personally prefer for future competitions?



Case study: Was Repechage a success?

It depends..



SUB 2-HOUR

MARATHON



Grass Track?

EUROPEAN ATHLETICS
HIGH PERFORMANCE
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Case Study: World Championships

In the last 10 years:

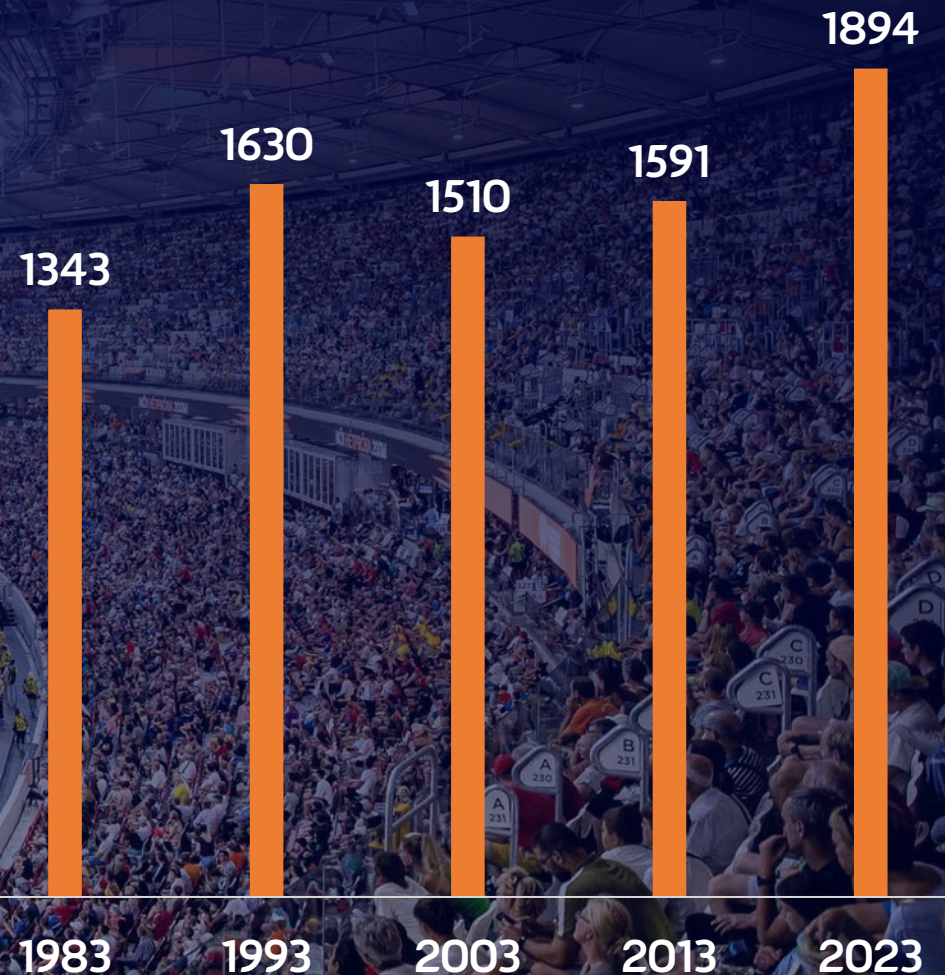
- 19% more athletes at WCH
- 2 additional disciplines
- Reduced total duration

Since 1983:

- Athletes per discipline average increased by 19%
- Field event athlete average increased by 35%

Where do we go from here?

Individual starts at WCH



Questions

- **What would need to be true for Cross Country to become a can't-miss event on your federation's calendar?**
- **The World Championships of the future**
- **Is Grass Track worth pursuing?**
- **What would you bet on? Format futures**
- **What's one form of "life friction" you believe the sport underestimates?**
- **Is Combined Events where we want it to be—or is its purpose drifting?**
- **What tradition in your federation or event would you most like to challenge—but haven't?**