

Keynote Speaker of the 16th ISSP World Congress - Sponsored by Shine Tak Foundation

Professor Chris Wagstaff

- A Professor of Applied Psychology, Faculty of Science and Health, School of Sports, Health and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth
- Has published over 100 papers, primarily in the area of organisational sport psychology and an experienced practitioner within the UK's performance system
- PhD Supervisor, coordinates the School's doctorate course in sport and exercise psychology



Keynote topic

- Organizational Sport Psychology

Research interests

- Organisational culture, systems, and thriving, stress and emotions, and high performance environments

Experiences

- Extensive teaching and supervisory experience in sport psychology
- Long-standing leadership roles in the British sport and psychology systems
- Highly experienced applied sport psychology practitioner, advising UK Sport and serving as Head of Performance Psychology for Team GB up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics

The 16th ISSP World Congress – Keynote Abstract

Title: Beyond the Sidelines: Using Organisational Sport Psychology to Transform Sporting Environments

Presenter: Chris Wagstaff

Framing and Objectives: This keynote addresses the growing recognition that sport psychology's greatest impact may lie beyond individual interventions—within the systems and environments that shape performance and well-being. In elite sport, athlete outcomes are inextricably linked to the broader organisational contexts in which they train and compete. Professor Chris Wagstaff will explore how systems-led approaches informed by organisational sport psychology can expand the discipline's influence and relevance. Drawing on international developments in research and practice, the keynote will highlight the urgency - and opportunity - of engaging with leadership, culture, and structural dynamics to foster sustainable, high-performing sport environments. This address invites the field to look beyond the sidelines and toward a more embedded, strategic role for sport psychology. It is a call to reimagine practice, expand collaborations, and position the discipline as a key driver in transforming how sport is organised, led, and lived.

Conceptual or Methodological Insights: The keynote draws from organisational sport psychology, systems theory, and ecological perspectives to reframe the role of sport psychology in elite performance environments. It challenges individual-centric models and calls for more embedded, interdisciplinary collaboration within sport organisations. Professor Wagstaff will note conceptual advances and methodological approaches key to advancing this work. He will also reflect on work that contributes to the growing disciplinary dialogue about the complexity of high-performance environments, and the importance of organisational-level interventions in cultivating sustained well-being and performance.

Key Insights: Professor Wagstaff will present insights from two decades of research and applied practice in Olympic and professional sport. He will point to how sport psychologists can influence organisational dynamics and support the creation of psychologically-informed environments in sport. The keynote will also address the practical realities of seeking to implement systemic change, including the political and relational challenges practitioners face when shifting from athlete-focused to organizational-facing roles. Drawing on practice examples, Wagstaff will illustrate how collaborative, context-sensitive strategies can yield lasting change. These findings position organisational sport psychology as an essential knowledge base for those seeking to transform systems and structures in elite sport.

Implications and Future Directions: This keynote contributes to international efforts to expand the role of sport psychology in shaping performance environments. Implications include the need for new training models that prepare psychologists for system-level engagement, as well as stronger partnerships between academics, practitioners, and sport leaders. Professor Wagstaff advocates for sport psychology to be recognised not just as a support service, but as a strategic discipline central to the leadership and culture of sport. Looking ahead, the field must continue developing theory, research, and practice that reflect the complex, dynamic realities of modern sport systems.

Keywords: organisational sport psychology, high-performance environments, systems-led interventions, sustainable performance and well-being