

NOT TRACKIE



STUDENT-ATHLETE POLITICAL ORGANIZING

👍 **420** 🔥

(NOT 101)

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Yeah, “keep politics out of sports.” If I had a loonie for every time I’ve heard someone say that over the last four years, I might be able to work full time as a content creator for Not Trackie instead of losing money from web hosting RunningHotTakes.com. Okay, maybe I wouldn’t have THAT many loonies, but I would DEFINITELY collect enough funds to sustain my yearly consumption of CTC ¹.

Imagine telling John Carlos and Tommie Smith that sports aren’t political as they raised their fists on the podium in 1968.

Imagine telling Billie Jean King that sports aren’t political as she fought for equal pay in women’s tennis.

Imagine telling Muhammad Ali that sports aren’t political as he refused to join the US armed forces in Vietnam.

There have always been people saying that sports are not political or are not a place for politics. Takes like these often come down to priorities, and whether an uninterrupted flow of sports should come before human rights.



¹ Cinnamon Toast Crunch

So, what makes sports an ideal platform political advocacy?

- They reach vast segments of the population across political lines.
- They are sources of pride for the institution that funds them, which means they can be leveraged to pressure that institution to make changes.
- They’re fun, social activities that encourage a sense of teamwork and community.

The way I have started to respond to comments like “keep politics out of sports,” is not with words, but with a picture ².



At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised their fists in what is known as the “Black Power salute.” This photo is so well-known that many people who do not follow sports are aware of it, which demonstrates the political reach that sports can have.

Dave Zirin’s short write up on ZinnEducationProject.org gives much better context for the Black Power salute, including why it happened and how people reacted ³. The photo of the demonstration generates a positive response today, but it was not received well at the time. It’s not uncommon for historical protests that we celebrate today to have been perceived poorly at the time they occurred.

² I guess a picture is technically worth 1000 words.

³ www.zinnedproject.org/if-we-knew-our-history/fists-of-freedom-an-olympic-story-not-taught-in-school/

Alright, let's go Los Coast music mode and Simplify things here ⁴:

- Representing political institutions is political.
 - Representing a UNIVERSITY is political.
 - Representing a COUNTRY is political.
- Professional sports are political.
 - In many professional leagues, players (workers) have formed unions so that their bosses are forced to pay them more fairly.
 - Women still fight for pay equity in many professional sports.
 - Team sponsorships are political.

Sporting events are the most common place we tend to hear national anthems, a pretty glaring indicator that sports are political.

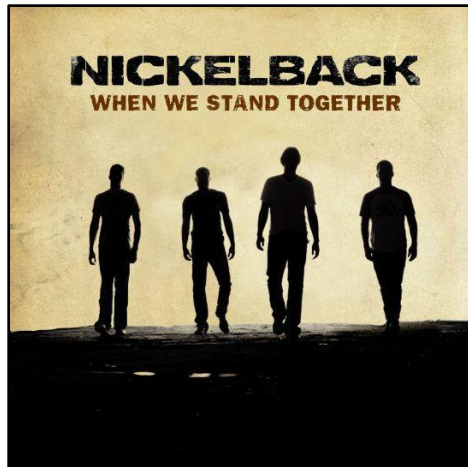
So, when people say, "keep politics out of sports," what they actually mean is, "keep politics *that I don't like* out of sports." Otherwise, to be consistent, the "no politics" crowd would be up in arms every time they hear a national anthem play over the speakers ⁵.

If sports are political, then we should make use of them to promote human rights and equality. One of the best examples of people doing this was for the issue of apartheid South Africa. Public pressure from advocacy groups, and especially other African countries, proved to be successful when the International Olympic Committee expelled South Africa in 1970 ⁶. South Africa rejoined in 1991 once it started to repeal its apartheid laws.

⁴ Simplify, by Los Coast, is an absolute banger.

⁵ Not Trackie studios would easily back protests that advocate for a Nickelback song at random to be played before every sports event instead of national anthems.

⁶ olympics.com/en/news/why-south-africa-barred-from-the-olympics-apartheid



While the thought of addressing human rights and social justice might seem overwhelming, the best time to start is now. We are facing MULTIPLE existential global crises. For example:

- A climate emergency (emphasis on emergency: large-scale droughts, food shortages, and heat waves are intensifying) ⁷.
- A global COVID-19 pandemic that is being ignored and disabling millions of people ⁸.
- An escalation in global conflict.

It also just so happens that all three of these crises make participating in sports more difficult:

- Extreme weather events like forest fire smog, heat waves, and flooding disrupt sporting events and training.
- Athletes are faced with repeated COVID infections and developing chronic health conditions as a result.
- State-sanctioned violence is killing athletes and destroying sports infrastructure ⁹.

Sounds bleak! LUCKILY, you can do something about it. Actually, you HAVE to do something about it. Nobody is going to do it for you, not politicians, and certainly not private corporations. If you don't act, things will only get worse.

It's understandable if you don't know where to start. We didn't! We tried a shitload of things in our last few years of university. Mistakes were made, but some stuff worked, and lessons were learned. We have compiled some of the things that we learned into this zine so that you can be a step ahead. Normally we would say "read OR DON'T," but not this time. READ ¹⁰.

BEFORE we get to the good stuff though, grab your baskets and go picking in the next couple pages of low-hanging fruit.

Not Trackie

⁷ Unfortunately, the climate crisis also worsens the spread of viral disease and global conflict.

⁸ www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00015-eng.htm

⁹ www.theguardian.com/sport/article/2024/jul/27/palestine-olympic-chief-no-handshakes-with-israelis-unless-they-recognise-state-paris-2024

¹⁰ Just whenever you have time. You don't have to drop everything this instant. OR DO.

Barriers to action

1. Apathy

We overcome apathy when we realize that we actually CAN do something about the big problems we face when we work together ¹¹.

It's almost never the case that people in power will simply do the right thing ¹². Mass movements of people are required to make an issue impossible to ignore. Sports have played a large role in these movements before, and you can help make sure they do once again. It's self-defeating to think that nothing will ever change, because the only way to ensure that reality is if we do not even try to make a difference.

2. Fear of Repercussions

A valid concern, but one that is mitigated by mobilizing around an issue as a group instead of as an individual.

3. Unsure Where To Start

If you agree that we can and should use sports to promote human rights and equality, you might be wondering where to start when it comes to your university.

For one, universities are linked to the issues that were mentioned earlier through investments, research partnerships, and/or university policies. You can usually find student groups that are already working on almost any issue.

Secondly, check out the case studies and appendix materials in this zine.

Thirdly, sometimes you just gotta go Larry Enticer Denim Danger mode and send it.



¹¹ During my chemical engineering education we often talked about how the first step in solving a problem was to tell yourself "I want to and I can." The lesson aged well.

¹² It would be nice if the first line of Rush's "Closer to the Heart" was accurate, but it's not. Change almost always starts from the bottom. Steaming hot tune though.

Student-Athletes

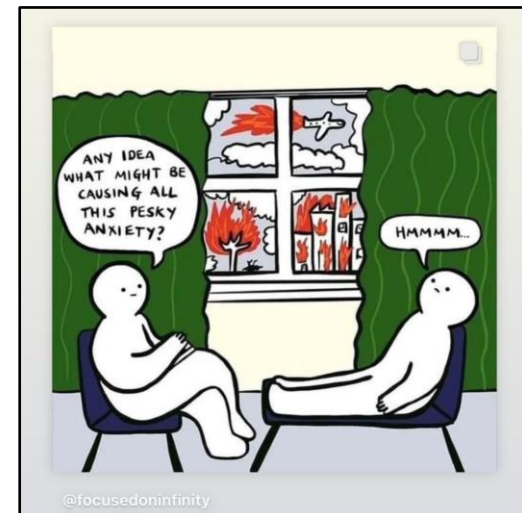
There is a long history of student activism at post-secondary institutions that has furthered human rights and equality efforts globally. If **student-athletes** were to get involved in these waves of activism, their presence and platform would boost momentum and apply greater pressure to key decision-makers.

Athletics programs are a source of pride for institutions. Sporting events help universities build a positive public image within the community and for future students. The threat of having a key promotional mechanism turned against them can force decision-makers to act, especially when athletes connect their action with an existing student advocacy campaign.

Universities often have special policies in place for student-athletes because administrators are very aware of the potential damage that student-athletes can do to a university's public image. They're scared. Remember though, it's always safer to do things with a group rather than do them alone.

Lack of Time

FORTUNATELY, there are easy ways to support political causes as a student-athlete that do not take up much time at all; however, the problems that we face also do demand some of our time if we actually want to fix them.



| LOW HANGING FRUIT |

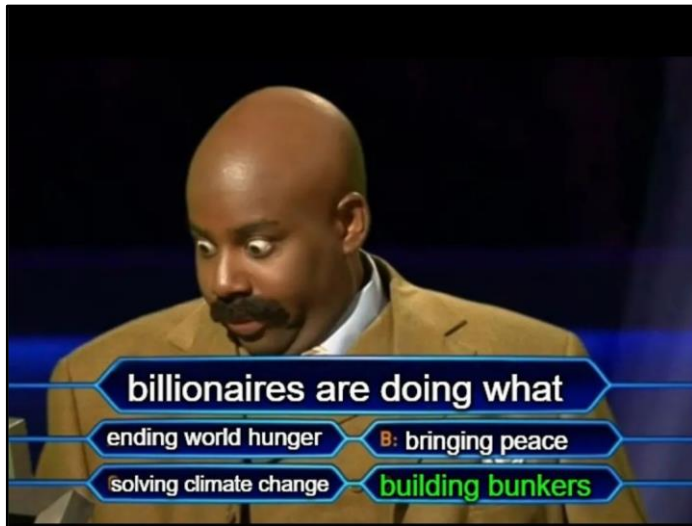
Naming the Cause of the Problem

So why is everything going to shit? A lot of people seem to want to wrongfully place the blame on immigrants.

It's not immigrants who are causing the climate crisis, it's oil company billionaires. They are guilty of misleading the public for decades so that they could amass fortunes by polluting the earth ¹³.

Similarly, it's not immigrants who are causing the cost of living to rise, it's food and housing sector billionaires. In the case of food, extreme weather caused by the climate crisis raises prices too.

When it comes to COVID-19, billionaires would rather keep people sick at work instead of pay for sick time. When it comes to war, they would rather make money from weapons sales instead of promoting peace.



People talk about corrupt politicians all the time, and most are, but who are the ones corrupting them? Billion-dollar corporations entice politicians with large donations and promises of big investments. They lobby university administrations in the same way. The only way to fight back against more money is with more people, which is why we need to work collectively to change things.

Anyway, let's get to the good stuff...

¹³Supran & Oreskes, Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977-2014), *Environmental Research Letters*, 2017.

| U SPORTS ATHLETES FOR SAFE SPORT |



WHAT HAPPENED:

In 2020, a Globe and Mail exposé was released that detailed a culture of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse on the University of Guelph (U of G) Track and Field and Cross Country teams while Dave Scott-Thomas was the head coach. For more than a decade, Scott-Thomas was allowed to remain in his capacity as head coach despite numerous complaints to university administration made by student-athletes and parents ¹⁴.

U of G refused to commit to an independent investigation. A group of student-athlete alumni released a letter in the fall of 2021 that detailed some of the allegations and demanded an independent, transparent investigation ¹⁵.

Active student-athletes from many universities demonstrated at a mid-season cross country race in Hamilton to support the calls being made by the alumni ¹⁶. It was cool to see athletes unite to take a stand that was public-facing. We need to see it more.

¹⁴ www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-athlete-breaks-silence-about-sexual-misconduct-of-university-of-guelph/

¹⁵ www.irun.ca/index.php/open-letter-to-student-athletes-the-university-of-guelph-and-the-canadian-running-community/

¹⁶ www.irun.ca/index.php/track-teams-stand-in-unison-begin-protest-alongside-the-university-of-guelph-athletes/

LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1. It's important to obtain contact info from students to follow up for future actions.**

Unfortunately, this was not done. It's easy to go around with an email and phone number sign-up sheet, but nobody was thinking that far ahead, and organizing around this issue fizzled out. We hope it comes back though, because as you will read later in this section, the U of G administration and coaching staff continues to be problematic.

- 2. Sexual abuse is a key issue in the sports community.**

Athletes are ready to mobilize around this issue. A small core organizing team contacted the team captains from other universities and they agreed to participate almost immediately.

The Canadian government has made announcements since 2020 to make it appear as though they care about safe sport, but these announcements were criticized as being more for PR stunts than for measures that would actually make an impact¹⁷. There is more work to be done.

- 3. Abuse has, unfortunately, been effective at driving competitive success.**

One of the reasons that abuse in sport is common is because it works. While some athletes suffer, others achieve success. Dave Scott-Thomas' track and field program at the U of G was one of the best in Canada. Athletes, coaches, and administrators are susceptible to overlooking the harm being caused to some athletes if a program is successful overall. Only the courage of Megan Brown and other former Guelph athletes who went public with their experiences was enough to hold Scott-Thomas accountable. Other administrators have not had to face any consequences.

Because abusive programs can be successful, keeping abuse out of sport requires a continuous collective effort from everyone involved. Luckily, the most successful programs are ones that promote a culture of care, not abuse. Athletes achieve better long-term success under this method.

¹⁷ www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-sport-funding-group-b2ten-calls-for-tougher-action-to-prevent-athlete/

LESSONS LEARNED:

- 4. It's harder to convince people to protest their own university.**

U of G athletes had the most difficulty convincing teammates that it was important to demonstrate even though they were the ones most affected by the administration that people were protesting.

- 5. Some athletes could go beyond refusing to participate. They may try to undermine participation efforts.**

It's important to plan for this. Athletes do not have to participate, but it becomes a problem if they start trying to convince other people not to. It is riskier for everyone involved when less people take part.

Often, the best strategy is to quickly talk to others on the team who you think will be on board. Then, two or three of you can approach anyone who is adamantly opposed to your efforts. You have to be willing to meet people where they're at. They may have valid concerns that you can work through together. Talk about why the protest is important and necessary, and emphasize that they do not have to participate, but that it is safer for everyone if more people do.

- 6. Coaches are not your friends.**

Some of the U of G coaching staff tried to convince student-athletes not to protest. They also actively communicated with the athletics administration, which was obviously opposed any protests. By siding with the admin, many of whom were (and still are) the same people who were there while Scott-Thomas was abusing athletes, these actions served to uphold the culture of abuse that the athletes were protesting. Coaches could have helped the athletes protest instead. They also could have just done nothing.

It's almost always better to exclude coaches. They will likely work more with the administration than they will with you.

- 7. In general, coaches care more about losing their job than they do about furthering political causes, even causes that help people.**

There was ample opportunity for coaches at other Canadian universities to sign a letter of support for the U of G alumni and active student-athletes who were protesting the U of G administration. Coaches did not make any public statements.

One of the few who did, Steve Boyd, was fired from Queen's University, which shows why collective action is important for this type of work to mitigate risks. Queen's students protested this, but it was not enough to get the decision reversed.

LESSONS LEARNED:

8. Student-athletes can overpower their coaches and administration.

The majority of U of G student-athletes still participated in the protests despite efforts from coaches and administrators to stop them.

At Queen’s, emails were uncovered from a freedom of information request that detail the university administration’s fear when student-athletes began speaking to media about the firing of their coach ¹⁸. This demonstrates the power of student-athletes speaking up.

9. Universities care more about their public image than they do about the well-being of students and athletes.

If they did not, the U of G would have immediately commissioned an independent investigation. To be successful, these protests must make the U of G administration think that the university’s public image or financial standing is at greater risk if it continues to avoid an independent investigation than if it commits to have one done.

To this day, legacy administrators remain at the university. Recently, Chris Moulton, who did a lot of the recruiting during the Scott-Thomas years, was hired back at the university in a coaching role for the 2024-2025 season. This shows why an independent investigation was (and is) needed to hold the administration accountable.

10. Interuniversity student-athlete collaboration is necessary to help combat interuniversity administration collaboration.

We know from the emails uncovered by Steve Boyd that the University of Guelph and Queen’s University administrations worked together to protect the public images of their universities when they came under public scrutiny ¹⁹.

This should serve as another reminder to take down contact info and get to know other student-athletes to ensure the sustainability of future actions. It often takes far more than one demonstration. If university administrations are going to work together to uphold their problematic status-quo operations, then student-athletes have to work together too.

¹⁸ Photo numbers 9,11,12, <https://physi-kult.blogspot.com/2021/02/my-queens-saga-inside-story-in-25-emails.html>

¹⁹ Photo numbers 1, 3, 5, <https://physi-kult.blogspot.com/2021/02/my-queens-saga-inside-story-in-25-emails.html>

LESSONS LEARNED:

11. Working within existing systems of power does not fix the problem.

At least, it does not fix it by itself. There must be external pressure as well.

There will always be people who think it is better to try and negotiate with those in power instead of fighting to make them fix the problem. This “being nice” approach is almost never successful. It assumes that those in power want to fix the problem even though they are the ones causing it. At the U of G, the absence of a sustained confrontational approach has led to problematic individuals being hired back. You can’t negotiate when you have no leverage.

IMPORTANT: A common tactic that university administrators use to tire out student movements is to tie students up in hours of meetings to make them think they are getting somewhere.

Finding middle ground through negotiation is not always a good thing either. When the two ends of the spectrum are:

- investigating an administration under which a coach abused athletes
- not investigating them

then what’s the middle ground? In the case of the U of G, it was to commission a review of their policies and not hold any anyone in administrative positions accountable. The existing policies were already good enough to prevent what happened.



¹⁸ Photo numbers 9,11,12, <https://physi-kult.blogspot.com/2021/02/my-queens-saga-inside-story-in-25-emails.html>

¹⁹ Photo numbers 1, 3, 5, <https://physi-kult.blogspot.com/2021/02/my-queens-saga-inside-story-in-25-emails.html>



WHAT HAPPENED:

Throughout 2022 and 2023, runners competed in prominent community road races wearing km4publichealthcare logos and signs to raise awareness for the need to improve COVID-19 protections in public spaces ^{20,21}. Masking and improved air quality both protects individuals from long COVID and reduces the load on our healthcare systems that have been underfunded for years.

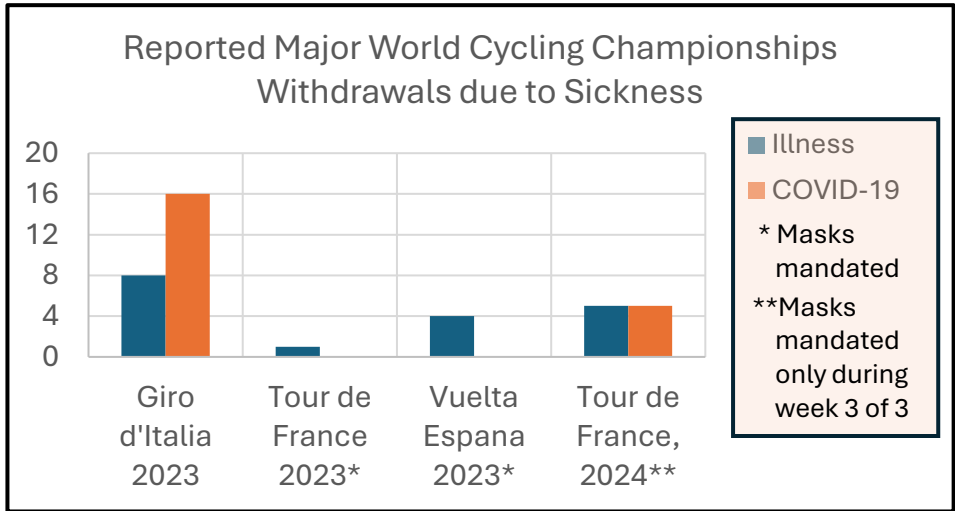
²⁰ www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/former-university-athlete-covid-stop-running-1.6966950

²¹ km4publichealthcare.ca

LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1. You can get media coverage by doing an interesting community activity.**
- 2. A longer-term strategy requires more in-person conversations.**
The movement was able to get some good media coverage that promoted COVID-19 safety, but did not have enough community engagement to grow past that.

IMPORTANT NOTE: COVID-19 Continues to harm athletes. During the 2023 Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) professional cycling season, officials started to mandate masks in situations such as media scrums and communal indoor areas after outbreaks occurred at the three-week Giro d'Italia stage race ²². Very few riders got sick during the next two major three-week stage races ^{23,24}. Unfortunately, the UCI did not learn from their mistake and ended up doing the same thing in 2024. They reinstated mask mandates midway through the 2024 Tour de France again after outbreaks occurred ^{25,26}.



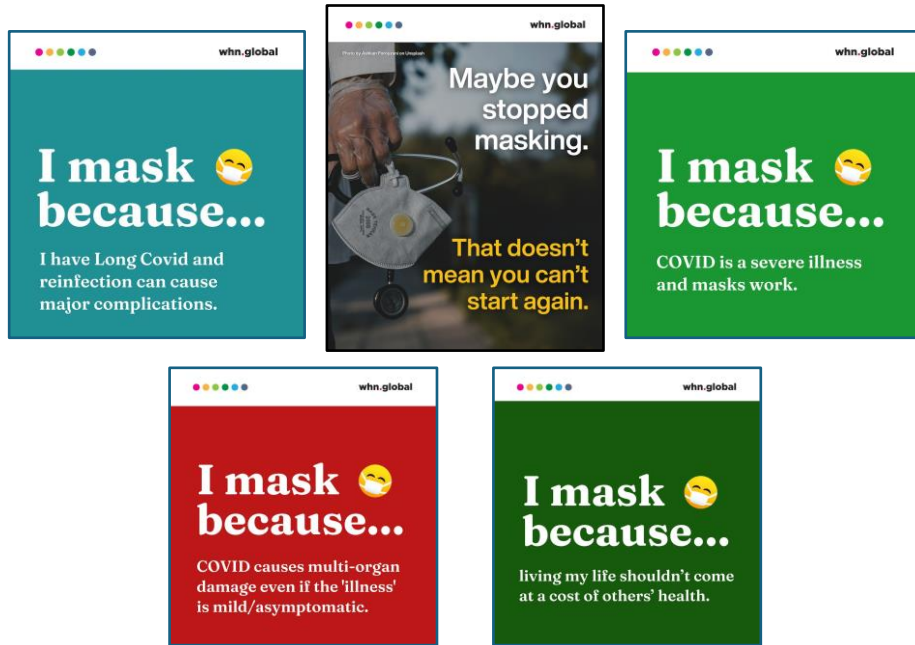
²² www.cyclingnews.com/features/giro-ditalia-abandons-the-full-list-of-riders-who-have-left-the-race/

²³ www.cyclingnews.com/features/tour-de-france-abandons-the-full-list-of-contenders-who-have-left-the-race/

²⁴ www.cyclingnews.com/news/vuelta-a-espana-abandons-the-full-list-of-riders-who-have-left-the-race/

²⁵ www.cyclingnews.com/news/tour-de-france-reintroduces-mask-mandate-amid-covid-19-concerns/

²⁶ www.cyclingnews.com/features/tour-de-france-abandons-all-of-the-riders-who-have-left-the-2024-edition/



IMPORTANT NOTE:

- World Health Network is a good resource for COVID-19 updates, best practices, and communications²⁷.

MASKING BEST PRACTICES:

1. If it's an indoor, public setting, it's best to be masking
2. COVID-19 is airborne. This means that although surgical masks give some protection, N95 respirators are far more effective. Better masks work better.
3. Masking is not all or nothing. If you find masking stressful, start masking in essential places first. Healthcare spaces, the grocery store, and public transit is a good start.
4. Remember that masking protects yourself AND others, and that when other people see you wearing a mask it makes them more comfortable.
5. There are likely people on your team who have some form of immunocompromising condition such as diabetes or asthma. It's essential to mask in places like team buses to make spaces accessible for immunocompromised people, but also, anyone can develop long COVID if they keep getting reinfected. Universities should be providing teams with N95 masks and rapid tests.

²⁷ <https://whn.global/>, @whn_global on Instagram

WHAT HAPPENED:

In April 2022, Laval student-athletes Jo Tedeschi and Louis Brosseau started to wear “cercles verts” on their singlets during their track and field competitions to bring more awareness to the student climate movement.



La province du Québec is a powerhouse for student activism, especially when it comes to the climate crisis. Take a look at this march that Québec City activists organized in April of 2023²⁸. Students protested while demanding the following from the Québec government:

- A rapid phase out fossil fuels,
- Massive reinvestments in public services and social programs,
- A fair transition to clean energy that supports workers and communities.



²⁸ Photo Credit: Lény Mbourou Mou Tang
Instagram account for the demonstration: @la_ceves

WHAT HAPPENED (Continued):

In November of 2022, we were able to work with a team of Laval student-athletes to bring the cercle vert challenge to U SPORTS Cross Country. Over 100 athletes wore green circles and signed on to a pledge to support climate justice, including the men’s and women’s team champions²⁹. This continued at the track and field championships in 2023 and 2024, but we were not able to grow it further. Shoutout to the Alberta G Bears and Pandas though for repping the cercle vert to the max in 2024 in Winnipeg³⁰.



²⁹ <https://runninghottakes.com/?p=1784>

³⁰ Instagram @sac.jc.usports

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. **Brainstorm visual ways to show that there is support for an issue.**
The green circles were a good entry-point for athletes to participate individually, but they do not display well in group photos. That’s why to accompany the green circles, we asked athletes to sign their names on big Bristol boards to more effectively show how many athletes were supporting the movement. This was a powerful visual.
2. **Brainstorm methods to engage teammates.**
A really good idea that the Québec athletes had was to organize “green circle nights” where athletes on their teams met up prior to a competition to cut out some green circles together from felt or fabric purchased at the store.
3. **Do not expect people to participate in an activity that was promoted online if you have not talked to them about it beforehand.**
Tedeschi was super effective during the 2022 cross country championship because he was able to announce the green circle challenge during the pre-race breakfast banquet, which most athletes attended. There was no such in-person event for Track and Field.
4. **People need to be in the proper space to talk about political issues.**
“Trackside” is great for Not Trackie. It’s not so great for trying to bring up political issues with athletes who you have not met before. The best time to do this is in regular team hangout spaces.

A serious interuniversity student-athlete movement requires the leaders of the movement to find contacts at each university who are willing to have smaller group discussions or 1-on-1 discussions with their own teams to ensure broader participation. The only way to do THAT is to build relationships with students and athletes from other universities. COVID-19 has made it more difficult to do this safely, but it’s still possible. We recommend some black N95 masks with head straps if you feel confident enough to tear apart the dancefloor while strapped in³¹.

We’ve also attached an organizing discussion best-practices guide at the end of this zine. This should help with having tougher political conversations with teammates.

³¹ <https://canadastrong.ca/products/vitacore-can99-black-headband-surgical-respirator-made-in-canada-99-pfe>

(we have no affiliation to Canada Strong, it just so happens to be the only black mask with head straps that is made in Canada, to our knowledge)

LESSONS LEARNED (continued):

- 5. The message of the protest campaign needs to be clear and tangible.**
Many athletes were confused about the purpose of the green circle campaign. The idea was to use the concept of climate justice as an entry point to collect contact information and then to build from there. People were interested in climate justice, but this was too abstract of a message to motivate people in the long-term.
- We can learn from the Québec student movement. They had three, clear demands.
- Student and athletes could develop a short list of demands that could be implemented universally at universities in Canada. Currently, student-oriented climate groups seem to be focused on getting their university administrations to meet two demands:
- Cut ties with oil and gas companies, including investments and research partnerships.
 - Decarbonize the university campus (many university campuses still rely on methane gas heating systems that should be electrified and powered by wind, solar, hydro, and battery storage).
- Students could also ask their university administrations to sign on to the demands of student movements like the one in Québec where the focus is to pressure the government to make the required changes.
- 6. Keep demands simple, but don't water them down.**
Some students worry that if demands are too extreme, fewer people will join the movement. In general, the opposite is true. More people will join a movement if they feel the demands are bold enough to make meaningful change.
- Watered-down demands also fail to address the urgency of the problems we face. The goal of a social movement is not to fight for something that those in power already agree with, it's to fight for something better. This approach may take more 1-on-1 discussions with people to explain the reasoning behind a protest, but it is far more effective in the long run.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- 7. Collecting contact info to stay in touch works, but not if you don't have clear demands and tangible actions.**
We did collect contact info in November of 2022 when students signed the Climate Justice pledge (learning from the 2021 Safe Sport campaign). It helped keep people engaged for a while longer. Athletes continued to wear the green circles at the U SPORTS track and field championships in 2023 and 2024; however, without clear demands or tangible actions, interest began to dwindle.
- Future student-athlete initiatives would benefit from developing a list of tasks in advance that new students can work from once they join.
- In the beginning stages, these tasks will mostly be centred around recruiting more people. Identifying team leaders and maintaining a contact list is important during the beginning stages.
- Later on, these tasks will become more public-facing, such as wearing green circles during competitions, taking group photos, doing mass email campaigns that are addressed to the administration, etc.
- Working with a student group at your university that already exists for the issue you are mobilizing around could help with this.
- 8. Identifying team leaders and getting them on board is important.**
This is usually pretty easy with sports teams, as the captain is almost always one of the team leaders. There will be others on the team with significant influence too. You may have to rely on those athletes if the captain is initially hesitant to support your idea. Most athletes will be able to identify who their team leaders are.
- 9. Athletes will be more likely to participate if multiple teams from their university participate.**
In many of our conversations with student-athletes, they were pretty open to the idea of protesting in support of climate justice, they were just hesitant to do it without broader support, which is entirely fair. It can be reassuring to tell students that they can commit to participate conditionally (e.g. only if 100 others also commit).
- Many schools have student-athlete committees that meet about once a month. Those are important meetings to attend so that you can connect with other teams at your university. Advocacy is more powerful and less risky if the entire student-athlete body at a university mobilizes behind an issue instead of just one team.

WHAT HAPPENED:

During a Canadian National Track and Field Tour summer track meet at the University of Guelph. Protesters briefly disrupted the event in solidarity with the Palestine Encampment that had been set up by students at the University³². Flyers were distributed to the crowd to explain the purpose of the disruption.

The disruption was also done to encourage Canadian National Team athletes to take responsibility for the actions of the Country that they represent and promote on the world stage.

Canada is guilty of human rights violations both in Palestine, through the export of weapons that are used to commit war crimes, and at home, through the systems of oppression that the Canadian government continues to enforce against the Indigenous population. Only 13 out of the 94 Calls to Action that were presented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 have been fulfilled³³.

The Canadian sporting community is rallying together for Palestine!



Scan to read the open letter and sign in collaboration with others in the Canadian sporting community.

tinyurl.com/canadiansportforpalestine

Students across Canada have been setting up encampments to pressure their university administrations to align themselves with humanity by cutting all ties to Israel's apartheid system. This includes boycotting Israeli universities and divesting from the weapons companies that are arming Israel's military as it murders tens of thousands of Palestinians and starves over one million.

It's time for athletes to step up and pressure the Government of Canada to align itself with humanity as well:

- Stop arming Israel.
- End our own occupation of Indigenous territories by completing the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action.

Pushing for political change through sport has a well-established precedent! John Carlos and Tommie Smith raising their fists on the podium in 1968 is one of the most famous sports photos of all time. **This moment demands action! Palestinians need your help!**



@canadiansportforpalestine

To help organize Canadian athletes, email canadiansportforpalestine@gmail.com



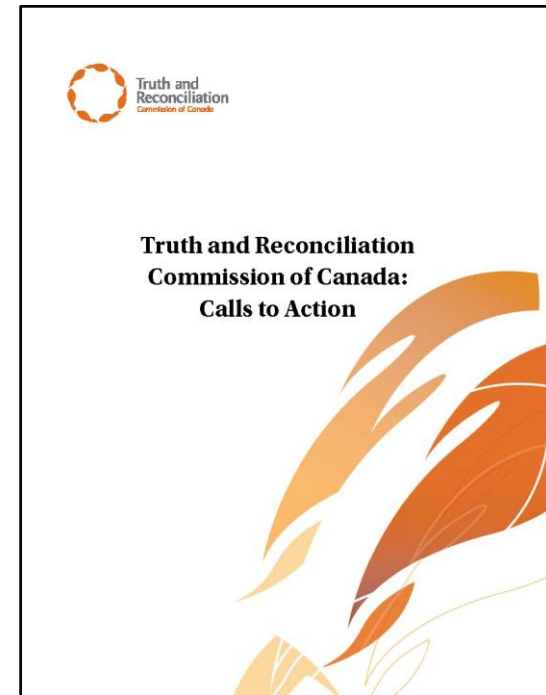
³² Instagram @canadiansportforpalestine

We encourage those who have not been intently following the events in Palestine to browse through the following United Nations reports:

1. Genocide as colonial erasure – Report of Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, 01 October 2024.
2. Anatomy of a Genocide – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 to Human Rights Council – Advance unedited version (A/HRC/55/73), March 24, 2024

The Truth and Reconciliation Report Calls to Action can be found here:

- “Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action,” <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports>



³³The calls to action that the Canadian government as fulfilled are some of the easiest ones. “Land Back” is a common demand that Indigenous-rights protesters in Canada advocate for. Calls to action numbers 45, 46, and 47 are some of the calls to action that involve land back commitments.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1. Disrupting a competition is a good way to bring attention to a cause.**
This protest tactic is impossible for people to ignore. If possible, it helps to brainstorm ways to communicate your message more clearly while disrupting the event. In this case, protesters used large banners, and some were tasked with handing out more descriptive flyers to people sitting in the stands.
- 2. Have de-escalators ready in case some athletes get angry.**
As much as we would like everyone to prioritize political issues over sports events, especially when the political issue is genocide, there will always be some people who do not do this.
- 3. Contingency planning is important.**
What will you pivot to if fans attempt to shout over you? What if the stadium speakers overpower you? What if someone is taken by security?

In this instance, protesters were able to negotiate with event organizers to be afforded uninterrupted speaking time. It's good to designate a small number of people who will speak to security and/or event staff during the action should it be necessary.
- 4. A protest done by national team members must be led by courageous national-level athletes who are willing to put in the work.**
Some active and former Canadian National Team members have signed the Canadian Sport for Palestine open letter³⁴, but as we have mentioned numerous times already in this zine, the number of people who will show support for a cause is limited when their only engagement with that cause is from seeing it posted online.

To reach a critical mass of athletes who would have the power to pressure the Canadian government, a small number of national athletes need to be willing to have conversations with other national athletes to get them to sign on. They could also protest themselves to bring attention to the issue and use the media coverage that they would receive to encourage other athletes to join the cause, but this takes a lot of courage. It would help if they knew they had a network of people from all walks of life who were ready to support them should they decide to take the leap.

³⁴tinyurl.com/canadiansportforpalestine

- 1. Student-athletes occupy a unique situation of leverage within universities. We can make use of that to help further human rights and equality.**
- 2. University administrations are not on your side.**
- 3. Coaches are (almost always) not on your side.**
- 4. Athletes have shown it's still possible to go up against your coaches and administration and win.**
- 5. You can do more collectively than you can as an individual.**

- 6. Have a clear protest campaign goal.**
- 7. Keep protest demands simple, but don't water them down.**
- 8. Collect contact info whenever you plan an event and follow up with people.**
- 9. Identify leaders. Work towards getting them on board.**
- 10. Online posting is useful but must be secondary to in-person conversations and relationship-building.**
- 11. Be willing to meet people where they're at. Practice what you might say beforehand.**

- 12. Check to see if student groups for the issue you care about already exist at your university so that you can work together.**
- 13. Building interuniversity and/or intersport solidarity can help.**

- 14. Don't spend too much time in negotiations. Focus on forcing people in power to act.**

AND LASTLY

Stay humble. You won't always have all the answers, even if you've somehow read through this entire zine.

APPENDIX - HAVING POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS

GOOD QUESTION! Here is a good baseline to work from³⁴:

1. Introductions and Frame the Conversation
 - a. Introduce yourself, set the context for the conversation that relates to the people you are talking to:
 - i. Who you are, who the group you are affiliated with is (if relevant).
 - ii. Why you are there.
2. Issues and Agitation:
 - a) Talk about the issue that you are working on and try to find sources of common agreement. Help the person understand that things need to change and that those with the power to change things will not act unless pressured to do so.
3. Hope, Vision, and Education:
 - a) Tell people how you're going to win. Emphasize that you can only win with enough people involved, otherwise things will stay the same.
 - b) If you want people to participate in some sort of demonstration, you can tell them that they don't have to commit to participate unconditionally. E.g. they can commit to participate if 10 other people have committed.
 - c) Convey urgency. Ask the person if we can wait any longer for the changes that are needed (we can't).
4. Call the Question:
 - a) Ask them if they will participate in the action you are talking about.
5. Inoculation:
 - a) Ask the person what they think people like coaches or administration might do if you follow through with things so that they can be a little more prepared.
6. Follow Up:
 - a) Let the person know that the next step is getting enough people to sign up so that things can be done safely. Set a follow-up date (if necessary) to talk again and see if they have been able to recruit more people to help.

³⁴These steps are based on educational materials from Jane McAlevey, organizer and author of: "No Shortcuts – Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age"

APPENDIX - NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF ACTION IDEAS FOR ATHLETES

Note that this list is non-exhaustive and that some of the ideas can be paired together.

Beginning Stages

1. **Petitions with contact info.**
2. **Stickers, buttons, symbols.**
3. **Online webinars/panels/group discussions.**

Middle Stages

1. **Group photos to show mass support.**
2. **Mass email and/or phone campaign directed at people who hold the positions of power you are targeting.**

Later Stages

1. **Invite the media and host a press conference.**
2. **Demonstrate on the podium (if you win a medal).**
3. **If your team has a problematic sponsor on your competition uniform, cover the sponsor's logo.**
4. **For university athletes, cover the university logo on your uniform during competitions.**
5. **For Canadian National Team athletes, cover the Canada flag or maple leaf logo on your uniform during competitions. Refuse to celebrate with the flag.**
6. **Boycott games and competitions.**
 - We think that covering the logo is a more powerful protest than this because it publicly embarrasses the institution that you are protesting, but a total boycott is also an option.