



SportsInnovation 2022

Keynote

Donata Hopfen, CEO of the DFL

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Ladies and gentlemen,
dear club colleagues,
partners and guests,

Welcome to SportsInnovation 2022! I'm really delighted that we can all meet up in person once again – and to do so at an event like this, in a stadium like this.

We can look forward to two exciting days full of innovation, new technology, incredible speakers and amazing ideas for our sport.

Following my opening speech, you will have the chance to witness some exciting applications of future technology live on this stage. Tomorrow's program will be kicked off by the US media and tech blogger Shelly Palmer, and we'll also learn more about the NFL, the Olympic Broadcasting Service, EintrachtTech and lots more.

So as you can see, we can all look forward to lots of inspiring ideas! I would like to take this opportunity to thank in advance



all those who will be presenting their ideas, products and solutions.

I would also like to express my warmest thanks to all partners and, above all, our 'Diamond Plus' sponsor, Deltatre. After all, without their dedication and commitment, an event like this would not be possible.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to the co-hosts D.LIVE and Spielmacher for their outstanding and successful cooperation. And, last but not least, I'd like to thank all the employees of the DFL Group who have spared no energy or effort in ensuring that this event is nothing less than a success. You're all amazing – thank you very much!

Around four billion people in every corner of the globe enjoy football – many of them are enthusiastic fans. The beautiful thing about our sport – and I never hesitate to say this again and again – is that football is, and will forever be, the people's sport. It may be the last thing that still has the capacity to cut across almost all generations and strata of our society.

But as primal and traditional as the core of our sport is and will remain, the role of football has changed dramatically over time – and so, too, have the needs and desires of its fans.

We all know this: every generation is different, has different preferences and seeks to engage with its favourite sport in different ways. This leads to the emergence of whole new ideas



and concepts. For our industry, these ideas and concepts frequently result in technological progress.

There are many examples of this. Today, football and technology, like UHD and virtual reality, are almost inextricably linked. But do you still remember the first time a football was broadcast in colour? Or do you remember the first satellite broadcasts? These were milestones in the history of our sport.

This innovation would not have been possible without the endeavours and support of thought leaders, game changers and visionaries like you here in the MERKUR SPIEL-ARENA. The sport has also been a catalyst for launching and embedding new technologies in wider society.

I can say with absolute confidence that football has been at the forefront of innovation ever since the black-and-white television was invented. And this is why I am also confident that we can look ahead to incredible opportunities – indeed, the possibilities and formats available in the digital realm in particular are far from exhausted. And it is also thanks to you, dear guests, that I am extremely optimistic when it comes to the ground-breaking solutions of the future.

The DFL has achieved a great deal in terms of innovation over the past few years and is recognised both in Germany and worldwide for its endeavours in this area. But for us, simply managing the status quo has never been an option. We will continue along the path we have taken, bravely and with new



ideas and business models. My mission is this: ‘We want to be the most digital football league in the world!’

But what does that mean? I want to achieve this leadership position by focusing on three different aspects:

1. The stadium experience: because the pleasure that fans derive from their visit to the stadium will also largely depend over the long term on the digital infrastructure and match-related services.

That said, I’d like to stress at this point that football – and especially the stadium experience – is, in my opinion, a fantastic combination of tradition and innovation. And we want it to stay that way. Anyone who simply wants to enjoy 90 minutes of football with a beer and a sausage should be allowed to carry on doing just that!

But at the same time, it’s our job to provide something for those who want to enjoy digital services too. In short, we want every fan to enjoy their stay at the stadium in whatever way they wish.

2. The media product: the images that are broadcast all over the world are like the global ‘business card’ of the leagues, clubs, teams and fans. Media technology will encompass new formats and content that will bring people even closer to what they love: football.



3. The league itself: among the reasons why the DFL has enjoyed so much success is that innovation and progress are part of our DNA. We have a globally leading technology and product team that is always generating new inspiration and we ourselves are constantly reinventing the media value chain with new innovations.

We have been organising SportsInnovation since 2018 – not least because it is our mission to be an innovation leader. I am especially delighted that some of those ideas and concepts showcased here at SportsInnovation four years ago have achieved the breakthrough and become standard solutions.

Examples include state-of-the-art cameras like the Star Cam, which is controlled automatically by means of live tracking data, or virtual advertising boards, which allow the images on the physical boards to be altered individually using digital overlays in the transmission signal in different regions of the world. Another part of the football viewing experience, that were first unveiled here at SportsInnovation and are now seen as normal, are the UHD and HDR productions that enable unprecedented image quality.

These may be just a few examples, but they all demonstrate that SportsInnovation truly is an event where the future is forged! So, dear guests, you have all come to exactly the right place!



The solutions and services that I've mentioned also make it plain to see that our industry is developing at a remarkable pace. Innovations are making a big impact in the way that they are being incorporated into the day-to-day business of sport. That is precisely why we must not let up in our efforts to identify promising trends and solutions from among the host of possibilities and ideas available. We need to keep on testing them out, putting them into practice and refining them – and, occasionally, abandoning things that don't work out.

At the DFL, we are focusing a lot of attention on new trends in particular, at various levels and with a range of partners from business and academia.

For example, we are working with the WHU business school on analysing current trends in how young people are using media. In other words, we want to gain a better understanding of what makes Generation Z and Generation Alpha tick. In Germany, this cohort accounts for roughly 20 million people, or around a quarter of the population.

I have taken some of the opinions of the experts surveyed into account in my hypotheses for the future of media in sport, which I will explain now.

Firstly, automation and sustainability will be increasingly prominent aspects of the production of content.

The number of cameras will continue to rise, as will their performance level. This, coupled with specific software, will



mean that directors will be able to show matches from almost every conceivable angle. We will get a chance to see that up close today.

Also, cameras will be automated using artificial intelligence and will no longer be dependent on networks of cables, thanks to high-performance wireless connectivity at the stadiums.

Secondly, the range of data available is becoming ever more varied. That is opening up the possibility of entirely new types of storytelling.

The opportunities for collecting and processing data are becoming almost innumerable, with the use of more and more optical systems, tiny sensors and artificial intelligence. We have installed 90 cameras and 140 sensors just for our 'innovation matches' today.

The diverse array of data now available is giving rise to new content formats. These are also helping to keep fans engaged, helping them understand matches better, follow decisions and discuss them on social media.

Thirdly, the inexorable march towards personalised content will continue unabated.

We are currently in a phase in which fans can already take on an active role during a broadcast, for example, to select camera angles or call up specific data. This is going to be followed by



the age of artificial intelligence. That will open up a whole new world in terms of personalised content. One day, every fan will be able to watch a broadcast tailored specifically to that person.

Technological progress is leading us from the broadcast to what might be termed the 'singlecast'.

Fourthly, platforms such as the metaverse will become increasingly relevant.

Real life and the virtual world are going to become more and more intertwined, and football is no exception. Virtual platforms are getting bigger and more multifaceted, and thus more relevant. They are going to have more of an impact on our lives than we can possibly imagine at the moment – somewhat akin to what smartphones have done. The market potential of the metaverse is estimated at reaching USD 800 million as soon as 2024.

In the future, young fans in particular will want to experience sporting events in a virtual setting more and more often. Easy access and suitably adapted content formats will be crucial for achieving acceptance and success.

Fifthly, the greatest possible reach will produce the greatest possible excitement.

We need our content to be available wherever our target groups are. They have very different needs depending on the generations they belong to. That means new requirements for



formats and digital platforms. To give just one example of this trend, we already have more than three billion video views per season on the digital channels of the Bundesliga, and those are from fans all over the world. That is without any live content.

We need to clarify how we are going to achieve the greatest possible reach and thus the greatest possible excitement with our sport, both in Germany and beyond. We also need to consider how we can strike the best possible balance between reach and monetisation in the long term.

My dear guests, we will experience a great many of the innovations and trends that I've mentioned. Some will turn out to be a bit different, and one or two will take us by surprise.

We are unquestionably going to see a higher pace of innovation in our industry.

Stadiums will become venues for a culture of enhanced digital services without having to lose their character. Fans will be able to experience a visit to a stadium in whatever ways suit their personal tastes.

Media production will become more extensive, flexible, interconnected and sustainable.

Media products will take on a more virtual, diverse and especially personalised aspect.



How people use media is going to be dramatically different in the future. The fans and decision-makers of tomorrow will expect different digital products and services.

It will be necessary to develop these without neglecting the needs of other generations. And that's exactly what SportsInnovation is all about!

On behalf of the entire DFL Group, I would like to wish you all two fantastic, inspiring and illuminating days at SportsInnovation.

Thank you.