

Israel's plan to accelerate innovation in sports tech

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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TEL AVIV, Israel - For a country not particularly known for success in the competitive sporting arena, Israel's high-tech prowess is helping to establish the nation as the Silicon Valley of sports tech.

The global sports market is estimated at an annual \$1 trillion of the global GDP, and yet as an industry, it's been slow to innovate. From a consumption perspective, for example, the viewer experience has largely remained unchanged since the advent of the television – viewers are told what to watch, when to watch it and at what angle.

Explaining some of the reasons for this delay in innovation, Jeremy Pressman, who works with Israel-based global equity crowdfunding platform OurCrowd, says that sport sits at the cross-section of a number of verticals, each of which requires its own expertise, and therein lies the challenge.



OurCrowd's Jeremy Pressman.

However, Pressman – Israel's only active venture capitalist who is also a professional athlete – is quick to note that sports tech is an emerging sector with some 4,000 companies worldwide and over \$5 billion invested over the past five years. These investments are spurred by advances in technology which are impacting every aspect of sport; from nutrition to athlete development and broadcasting.

Few countries are as uniquely positioned to drive innovation in sports tech as Israel is. Dubbed the 'Startup Nation', the country has the highest density of startups per capita in the world – about 1,000 of them are created every year and are in operation at any given time.

This appetite for entrepreneurship, coupled with a robust venture capital community and a large presence of multinationals has catapulted Israel into 'tech powerhouse' status in a relatively short amount of time.



Startup Tel Aviv South Africa winner announced

18 Jul 2017



Colosseum Sports Tech Summit

Some of these stakeholders, including a delegation of journalists of which I formed part, gathered in Tel Aviv last week for the inaugural Colosseum Sports Tech Summit. The organiser, Colosseum Sports Tech, is an international innovation centre working in cooperation with corporates, entrepreneurs and investors with a mission to create a platform for collaborating and expanding sports tech worldwide.



ColosseumSports Tech's Oren Simanian addresses delegates.

It's the vision of Oren Simanian, Colosseum Sports Tech's general partner, to establish Israel as the global leader in sports tech by 2020. As such, the inaugural event brought together the brightest minds in the sport and tech ecosystem to acquaint themselves with industry-disruptive trends and ventures, and engage in ideas to modernise sport for the 21st century and beyond.

The Summit delved into the future of fan engagement, smart stadiums, health and fitness, financing and e-sports, and was attended by Israeli sports stars Neta Rivkin, Tal Brody and Yael Arad, and representatives from FC Barcelona, ESPN International, NFL, Maccabi Israel and the Israel Olympic Committee.



ColosseumSports Tech Summit 2018 opening bell ceremony at the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

As delegates, we seemed to be presented with a vision of the future: where a nutrition plan can be compiled based on information from a single breath, where we're able to virtually attend games halfway across the world and watch said game from the view of our favourite player, see the athlete's heart rate and PH levels in real-time, and even tune into your child's high-school soccer game remotely from your mobile phone.

The kicker is that these solutions, and loads more, already exist – masterminded by Israeli startups, many of whom already have a handful of successful tech projects under their belt.

Football-focused innovation

Also last week, Hype Sports Innovation, a platform that connects and invests in sports innovation globally, launched a SPIN (Sports Innovation) Accelerator programme in Israel. Launched in partnership with Maccabi Haifa Football Club, the programme forms part of a global network, and will focus on developing innovation in sports, specifically football, by maximising the potential of Israeli tech startups.

The Spin Accelerator programme will invite startups with innovative football-centric solutions including those in the areas of fan engagement, performance and analytics, wearable tech, big data, and smart stadiums.



Global journalist delegation at the launch of the SPIN Accelerator programme at Maccabi Haifa FC.

While Hype Sports Innovation is based in Israel, the partnership with Maccabi Haifa FC marks the first time Hype will engage in a long-term programme with an Israeli body in order to grow the sports innovation sector in the country.

The accelerator will begin in October 2018 and will run simultaneously with partners from the USA, Australia, Germany, UK, Sweden, Italy and more.

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