



Journal of Co-operative Studies

2026 Special Issue: Co-operatives and co-operative principles in sport

Guest editors: **Dr Mark Middling**, Assistant Professor of Accounting at Northumbria University, **Professor John Wilson**, Professor of Business History at Northumbria University, and **Pau López-Gaitán**, PhD Candidate at the University of Bristol.

Sport is perhaps the world's greatest pastime. From participation at grass-roots level to spectating at the professional, global level, sport has the ability to inspire, unite, to bring joy and hope into people's lives the world over. However, it is also becoming increasingly packaged and commodified, with tournaments such as cricket's The Hundred, golf's LIV tour, and football's new Club World Cup as examples of how a monetary focus has come to prevail. At the same time, there has been push back against the commercialism of sport, most notably football fan protests stopped a breakaway, elitist European Super League in 2021. Protests like these echo the collaborative and social principles of co-operatives, and especially the need to reengage with communities. This timely special issue seeks to investigate the role of the co-operative movement and its associated principles in sport at all levels, assessing the extent to which there needs to be a much closer link between sporting activities and the people who support it so enthusiastically.

The editors welcome submissions ranging from full academic articles/research papers (7,000 words), as well as short articles (4,000 words), and short think pieces (approx. 1,000 words) from practitioners — please see the *Journal's* [guidelines for submission](#) for information on Journal style and formatting.

Accepted papers will be published in a special issue of the *Journal* by the end of 2026.

Key dates

16 March 2026

Deadline for submissions

Email to: mark.middling@northumbria.ac.uk, john.f.wilson@northumbria.ac.uk, and pau.lopezgaitan@bristol.ac.uk with 'Submission for special issue' in the subject line, and detail in your email the type of submission being made (research article, short paper/practitioner paper, think piece).

11 April 2026

First decision on submission (accept, revise, reject)

December 2026

Publication of Special Issue

Co-operatives and co-operative principles in sport — Call for papers

To paraphrase Kieran Maguire, sport is the most important of the least important things in life (Maguire et al., 2025). As it has such great social importance, the co-operative movement's principles, governed by values and principles which imbue economic activity with democratic and ethical concerns, may be said to be a better fit to the industry than commercialism and profit motives.

However, over the past few decades, commercialism has kidnapped the elite levels of sport, while grassroots and semi-professional levels often struggle, relying on grants and other forms of funding to survive and develop. Applying co-operative principles at all levels of sport could help it to thrive locally, nationally, and globally, to create spaces for participants, viewers, and other stakeholders who would benefit from it. For this to be enacted, however, much more research needs to be completed in the area of co-operatives and sport.

There have been a number of considerations of co-operatives in sport in popular and academic literature, including Dietl et al.'s (2009) analysis of co-operative versus commercial governance, Boyle's (2012) questioning if football clubs could be better run as co-operatives, Harvey's (2014) short summary, Kim et al.'s (2019) analysis of sports co-operatives in Korea, Buszko's (2020) analysis of co-operative banks sponsoring sports, and Kim et al.'s (2024) investigation into the role of family co-operatives in disabled sport. However, numerous research gaps remain which this Special Issue aims to fill.

Potential questions and topics for contributions to the special issue might include (but are not limited to):

- What examples are there of co-operatives in sport?
- Are / how / by whom are co-operative principles utilised in sport?
- How does the co-operative movement and/or its effect interact with different types of sport?
- How are co-operatives in sport managed / operationalised?
- Post Covid-19 – what is the place in sport for co-operatives today?
- What are the barriers to co-operative principles in sport?
- Competition vs co-operation – how can co-operatives thrive in a competitive environment?
- Co-operative or co-operation – should sports club be full-blown co-operatives or is adopting the principles enough?
- Sport has multiple institutional logics, notably sporting, business and social drivers that can conflict or complement – how can the co-operative movement help to align these?
- Should sport put the community before profit? Or even before sporting results?

- Barcelona, Exeter City, Bury – how can co-operative principles be applied to different sized organizations?
- Does the co-operative movement have a place in professional sports?
- Do co-operative principles and sport complement or contrast?
- “I don’t like co-operatives, I love them!” With the commercialisation of The Hundred in cricket, is the sport losing its collaborative approach?
- Does the new Independent Football Regulator have anything to learn from co-operative values?

Submissions

This special issue welcomes submissions of the following types:

Peer reviewed/research articles of 4,000-7,000 words, which either by reporting the results of empirical research or through developing theoretical and/or practitioner perspectives will contribute to knowledge about co-operation and related subject areas. These articles will be subject to anonymous peer review by two specialist referees.

Editorial reviewed shorter articles, generally of between 2,000-4,000 words are assessed on the basis of their general interest and readability. Such articles are not subject to external peer review although the editor may seek comments and suggestions from members of the Editorial Advisory Board, which would be discussed with the author as part of the editing process.

Think pieces/new developments - 1,000-2000 words - papers aimed at stimulating discussion and possible future new directions for co-operative research and practice. Practitioner accounts of new co-operative enterprise and activities.

Book reviews (600-1000 words) and review articles (2,000 words)

Please contact the Guest Editor’s should you wish to suggest an alternative format of submission.

More information on submitting to Journal of Co-operative Studies can be found [here](#).

Thank you and we look forward to reading your submission.

References

- Boyle, D. (2012, May 9). *Would your football club be better run as a co-operative?* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/social-enterprise-network/2012/may/09/football-clubs-run-co-operatives>
- Buszko, M. (2020). Sports sponsoring in cooperative banks—terms, scope and goals based on the example of cooperative bank in Torun. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20(5), 2892-2898. <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2020.s5392>
- Dietl, H. M., Franck, E., Hasan, T., & Lang, M. (2009). Governance of professional sports leagues—Cooperatives versus contracts. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 29(2), 127-137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2008.11.001>
- Harvey, R. (2014, July 3). *The goal of sport co-operatives*. Coop News. <https://www.thenews.coop/the-goal-of-sport-co-operatives/>

- Kim, J.-D., Cho, B.-J., & Lee, M.-S. (2024). Analysis of the possibility of family cooperatives to promote sports for the disabled. *Journal of the Korea Society of Computer and Information*, 29(1), 219-229. <https://doi.org/10.9708/jksci.2024.29.01.219>
- Kim, J.-D., Lee, J.-K., & Lee, M.-S. (2019). Alternatives to promote the sport cooperatives of Korea. *Journal of Digital Convergence*, 17(10), 469-478. <https://doi.org/10.14400/JDC.2019.17.10.469>
- Maguire, K., Day, K., & Kilty, G. (2025-present). *The price of football* [Audio podcast]. Dip Dap. <https://priceoffootball.com>