

## Business challenge

Wimbledon is synonymous with sporting excellence, which explains its appeal for both fans and partners. To maintain The Championships' prestige, its digital experience must be second to none.



**Mick Desmond**  
Commercial and Media Director  
AELTC

## Transformation

An adaptive, responsive digital platform helped The Championships grip fans' attention by putting real-time data in context, uncovering compelling narratives, and highlighting the moments that matter.

### Business benefits:

**71 million**  
visits to the digital platform,  
a 13 percent year-on-year  
increase

**21.1 million**  
unique devices connected  
to the platform, a 23 percent  
increase

**125%**  
increase in the number of  
unique mobile visitors

# Wimbledon 2015

## Creating a unique digital experience to capture the moments that matter

Known to millions of fans simply as "Wimbledon", The Championships is the oldest of tennis' four Grand Slams, and one of the world's highest-profile sporting events. Organized by the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) it has been a global sporting and cultural institution since 1877.

*"Capturing the moments that matter helped create a more vivid experience for fans than ever before."*

Mick Desmond  
Commercial and Media Director  
AELTC

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## The champion of Championships

The organizers of The Championships, Wimbledon, the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), have a simple objective: every year, they want to host the best tennis Championships in the world – in every way, and by every metric.

The motivation behind this commitment is not simply pride; it also has a commercial basis. Wimbledon's brand is built on its premier status: this is what attracts both fans and partners. The world's best media organizations and greatest corporations – IBM included – want to be associated with Wimbledon precisely because of its reputation for excellence.

For this reason, maintaining the prestige of The Championships is one of the AELTC's top priorities; but there are only two ways that the organization can directly control how The Championships are perceived by the rest of the world.

The first, and most important, is to provide an outstanding experience for the players, journalists and spectators who are lucky enough to visit and watch the tennis court-side. The AELTC has vast experience in this area. Since 1877 it has delivered two weeks of memorable, exciting competition in an idyllic setting: tennis in an English country garden.

The second is The Championships' online presence, which is delivered via the wimbledon.com website, mobile apps, and social media channels. The constant evolution of these digital platforms is the result of a 26-year partnership between the AELTC and IBM.

Mick Desmond, Commercial and Media Director at the AELTC, explains: "When you watch Wimbledon on TV, you are seeing it through the broadcaster's lens. We do everything we can to help our media partners put on the best possible show, but at the end of the day, their broadcast is their presentation of The Championships.

"Digital is different: it's our platform, where we can speak directly to our fans – so it's vital that we give them the best possible experience. No sporting event or media channel has the right to demand a viewer's attention, so if we want to strengthen our brand, we need people to see our digital experience as the number-one place to follow The Championships online."

To that end, the AELTC set a target of attracting 70 million visits, 20 million unique devices, and 8 million social followers during the two weeks of The Championships 2015. It was up to IBM and AELTC to find a way to deliver.

## Delivering a unique digital experience

IBM and the AELTC embarked on a complete redesign of the digital platform, using their intimate knowledge of The Championships' audience to develop an experience tailor-made to attract and retain tennis fans from across the globe.

"We recognized that while mobile is increasingly important, 80 percent of our visitors are using desktop computers to access our website," says Alexandra Willis, Head of Digital and Content at the AELTC. "Our challenge for 2015 was how to update our digital properties to adapt to a mobile-first world, while still offering the best possible desktop experience. We wanted our new site to take maximum advantage of that large screen-size and give desktop users the richest possible experience in terms of high-definition visuals and video content – while also reacting and adapting seamlessly to smaller tablet or mobile formats.

"Second, we placed a major emphasis on putting content in context – integrating articles with relevant photos, videos, stats and snippets of information, and simplifying the navigation so that users could move seamlessly to the content that interests them most."

On the mobile side, the team recognized that the wider availability of high-bandwidth 4G connections meant that the mobile website would become more popular than ever – and ensured that it would offer easy access to all rich media content. At the same time, The Championships' mobile apps were enhanced with real-time notifications of match scores and events – and could even greet visitors as they passed through stations on the way to the grounds.

The team also built a special set of websites for the most important tennis fans of all: the players themselves. Using IBM® Bluemix® technology, it built a secure web application that provided players with a personalized view of their court bookings, transport, and on-court times, as well as helping them review their performance with access to stats on every match they played.

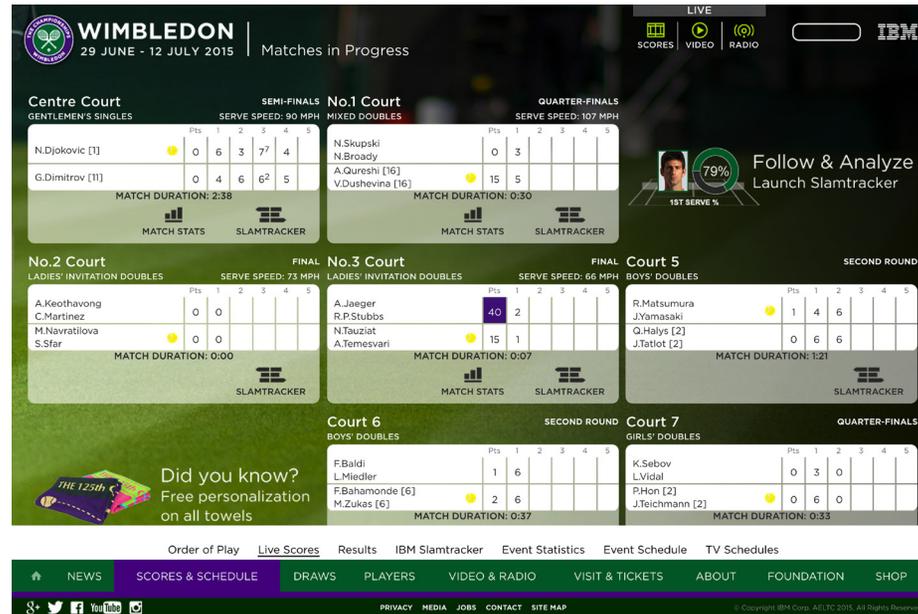
## Turning data into insight – and insight into narrative

To supply its digital platforms with the most compelling possible content, the team took advantage of a unique advantage: its access to real-time, shot-by-shot data on every match played during The Championships. Over the course of the Wimbledon fortnight, 48 court-side experts capture approximately 3.4 million data-points, tracking the type of shot, the strategies and the outcome of each and every point.

This data is collected and analyzed in real time to produce statistics for TV commentators and journalists – and also for the digital platform’s own editorial team.

“This year IBM gave us an advantage that we had never had before – using data streaming technology to provide our editorial team with real-time insight into significant milestones and breaking news,” says Alexandra Willis.

“The system automatically watched the streams of data coming in from all 19 courts, and whenever something significant happened – such as Sam Groth hitting the second-fastest serve in Championships history – it let us know instantly. Within seconds, we were able to bring that news to our digital audience, and share it on social media to drive even more traffic to our site.



“The ability to capture the moments that matter and uncover the compelling narratives within the data, faster than anyone else, was key. If you wanted to experience the emotions of The Championships live, the next best thing to being there in person was to follow the action on wimbledon.com.”

## Harnessing the power of natural language

Another new capability trialed this year was the use of IBM’s natural language processing technologies to help mine the AELTC’s huge library of tennis history for interesting contextual information. The team trained IBM Watson™ Engagement Advisor to digest this rich unstructured data set and use it to answer queries from the press desk.

The same natural language processing front-end was also connected to a comprehensive structured database of match statistics, dating back to the first Championships in 1877 – providing a one-stop shop for both basic questions and more complex inquiries.

“The Watson trial showed a huge amount of potential. Next year, as part of our annual innovation planning process, we will look at how we can use it more widely – ultimately in pursuit of giving fans more access to this incredibly rich source of tennis knowledge,” says Mick Desmond.

## Taking to the cloud

The whole digital environment was hosted by IBM in its Hybrid Cloud. IBM used sophisticated modeling techniques to predict peaks in demand based on the schedule, the popularity of each player, the time of day, and many other factors – enabling it to dynamically allocate cloud resources appropriately to each piece of digital content, and ensure a seamless experience for millions of visitors around the world.

In addition to the powerful private cloud platform that has supported The Championships for several years, IBM also used a separate SoftLayer® cloud to host the Wimbledon Social Command Centre, and also provide additional incremental capacity to supplement the main cloud environment during times of peak demand.

The elasticity of the cloud environment is key, as The Championships' digital platforms need to be able to scale efficiently by a factor of more than 100 within a matter of days as the interest builds ahead of the first match on Centre Court.

## Keeping Wimbledon safe and secure

Online security is a key concern nowadays for all organizations. For major sporting events in particular, brand reputation is everything – and while the world is watching, it is particularly important to avoid becoming a high-profile victim of cyber-crime. For these reasons, security has a vital role to play in IBM's partnership with the AELTC.

Over the first five months of 2015, IBM security systems detected a 94 percent increase in security events on the wimbledon.com infrastructure, compared to the same period in 2014.

As security threats – and in particular distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks – become ever more prevalent, IBM continually increases its focus on providing industry-leading levels of security for the AELTC's whole digital platform.

A full suite of IBM security products, including IBM QRadar® SIEM and IBM Preventia Intrusion Prevention, enabled this year's Championships to run smoothly and securely, and the digital platform to deliver a high-quality user experience at all times.

## Capturing hearts and minds

The success of the new digital platform for 2015 – supported by IBM cloud, analytics, mobile, social and security technologies – was immediate and complete. Targets for total visits and unique visitors were not only met, but exceeded. Achieving 71 million visits and 542 million page views from 21.1 million unique devices demonstrates the platform's success in attracting a larger audience than ever before and keeping those viewers engaged throughout The Championships.

“Overall, we had 13 percent more visits from 23 percent more devices than in 2014, and the growth in the use of wimbledon.com on mobile was even more impressive,” says Alexandra Willis. “We saw 125 percent growth in unique devices on mobile, 98 percent growth in total visits, and 79 percent growth in total page views.”

Mick Desmond concludes: “The results show that in 2015, we won the battle for fans' hearts and minds. People may have favorite newspapers and sports websites that they visit for 50 weeks of the year – but for two weeks, they came to us instead.

“That's a testament to the sheer quality of the experience we can provide – harnessing our unique advantages to bring them closer to the action than any other media channel. The ability to capture and communicate relevant content in real time helped our fans experience The Championships more vividly than ever before.”

## Solution components

- IBM Bluemix®
- IBM InfoSphere® Streams
- IBM Integration Bus
- IBM Power Systems™
- IBM QRadar® SIEM
- IBM MessageSight
- IBM SPSS® Modeler
- IBM System Storage®
- IBM Watson™ Engagement Advisor
- IBM Web Content Manager
- SoftLayer®
- IBM Global Business Services®
- IBM Global Technology Services®
- IBM Interactive Experience

## Take the next step

To experience the Championships' digital platform for yourself, or to learn more about the AELTC, please visit [wimbledon.com](http://wimbledon.com)

For more information about IBM's 26-year partnership as Official Technology Supplier to the AELTC, please visit [ibm.com/wimbledon](http://ibm.com/wimbledon)

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YTC04041-USEN-01

