

# SPORT CENTRAL

Innovative centre will take research –  
and Canadian athletes – to the next level

**B**ruce Kidd can't sit still. With his ever-present pedometer strapped to his belt, he moves from desk to conference table to bookshelf, grabbing reports, emails and letters to make his case. His enthusiasm is palpable, and for good reason. The subject of the hour is a project close to Kidd's heart, and one that will change the landscape of competitive sport at U of T and beyond: the Centre for High Performance Sport.

Long a topic of discussion, the facility is finally coming into focus as the crown-jewel at U of T's new Varsity Centre. With a proposed plan that includes research and teaching labs, a strength and conditioning centre, a state-of-the-art sport medicine clinic and court sport facilities to complement the nearby Varsity stadium and arena, the Centre for High Performance Sport represents something Kidd says has been missing in Ontario for many years: a dedicated place to bring all the key players together.

"The very best centres of high performance sport in the world have a facility-based synergy between the best coaches, the best science, the best sport medicine, and the best research and training. That's what we're going to do here."

It's the ideal formula, Kidd argues, for getting U of T and Ontario back to the level of podium success its athletes once enjoyed. "We pride ourselves in being part of the Olympic movement

right from the get-go, in all kinds of ways. U of T has had athletes, coaches and administrators involved in virtually every Olympics and Paralympics since Canada first competed, and we want to get back to the position where we're regularly winning medals there."

While universities in Montreal and western Canada have created such centres with capital and legacy funding from the Olympics and other major games, Ontario hasn't hosted a big international competition since the first British Empire (now Commonwealth) Games in 1930.

"We can't wait any longer for a major games in Toronto," Kidd says. "We are determined to do it ourselves."

Those international aspirations dovetail with U of T's long-term vision for athletics. "The University's Governing Council's objectives for athletics and recreation include the provision of research-informed opportunities for the pursuit of excellence," says Kidd. "This centre is really an attempt to realize that vision."

It's a popular goal these days, as evidenced by the growing consensus among national sport organizations that Ontario needs more high performance facilities that marry training, research, testing and sport medicine. And potential partners are already knocking on Kidd's door.

One organization with a keen eye on the centre's developments is the Canadian Olympic Committee. CEO Chris Rudge (see profile on page 9)

says he's excited about what the Centre, combined with the new Varsity stadium, means for Toronto. "Together the two create a sport institute-type environment that we very much need here. It creates a philosophy of excellence in research and support for high performance overall."

Playing with the research piece of the puzzle is Scott Thomas, the Faculty's associate dean of graduate education and research. Thomas is enthusiastic about the possibility for collaboration the new space creates. "Faculty members currently working separately and in rather different fields – from physiology to motor learning to sport psychology – could be sharing work space and research ideas in an entirely new way."

Thomas is also helping to explore those external partnerships that could bring the very best brains together to create an unsurpassed university-based support system for athletes. It's a key component of Kidd's goal to get where he thinks universities should be.

"We're proud of that fact that, in many sports, we've helped athletes get to very, very high levels. But in the last decade or so, we've only been able to help people get so far and then they've had to go elsewhere to train and get the polishing they need – and that's crazy. Why should our people have to leave and go elsewhere? Why can't a great university do it for our own people, right here? That's what we're trying to do."  
– Althea Blackburn-Evans



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