



Science, Technology and Innovation
Trade Industry and Competition



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Intellectual property crucial for enabling sport development through innovation

The 25th segment of World Intellectual Property Day (WIPD) 2026 launched on Thursday, 09 April at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT). This event serves as a catalyst for an outreach campaign earmarked to spotlight its role and significance in everyday community use.

Themed “**IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate!**”, the discussions focused on how intellectual Property (IP) drives innovation and contributes to the growth and sustainability of the global sporting ecosystem.

Organised by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), in partnership with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), through the National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO), Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) to highlight the role of IP in encouraging innovation and creativity.

Speaking at the launch, the CIPC Commissioner, Rory Voller, said that the purpose of the celebration is to highlight the value and the strategic importance of IP to the public at large, a concept that CIPC takes to the length and breadth of South Africa through education and awareness programmes.

Speaking on the this year's theme on IP and Sport, Advocate Voller said technology and innovation in sport enhance training precision, enable real-time performance tracking, and improve officiating with artificial intelligence (AI) driven systems such as video assistant referee (VAR) and Hawk-Eye or ball tracking, which protects the integrity of the game and reduces the sense of injustice for players and fans.

IP touches every aspect of human beings and our ecosystem, its rapid growth among young people can serve as a transformative value in economies and communities, Advocate Voller added.

“One cannot leave the value of technology on fan engagement to produce virtual reality and augmented reality as they provide enjoyable viewing experiences bringing the game closer to fans”, he said.

“IP inventions such as the nature of high performance, footwear enabling athletes to run, jump faster and endure more because of what they wear, as well as developments like advertisement and designing logos and shirts with lines that help release sweat from players and athletes to prevent sticking”, Voller said.

A well-managed IP system operates as a complex adaptive system, continually adjusting IP rights to foster innovation while ensuring sustainable social and economic advancement. Garmin Sport Watches are premium GPS-enabled wearables for fitness, timing, sleep, multisport training, and smart connectivity, enabled by technology and innovation and protected by IP.

The VUT Vice Chancellor and Principal, Khehla Ndlovu, said the launch not merely marked the date on the calendar, but it ignited conversations that sit at the very heart of progress and the advancement of human creativity.

The annual WIPD, commemorated globally on 26 April, reminds us that behind every innovation and every creative expression, there is a mind that dares to imagine differently.

This platform exists to deepen awareness, promote IP respect, and position institutions such as VUT as catalysts for innovation and social economic development, said Prof Ndlovu.

“At first glance, sport is a movement, a competition, and a spectacle. However, beneath that surface lies a powerful ecosystem of innovation, from performance analytics to wearable technology, and from equipment design to broadcasting rights,”

“Sport is driven by intellectual capital that is protected, commercialised and scaled,” said Prof Ndlovu, who added that the university produces graduates who turn ideas into impact through our Technology Transfer Office (TTO).

The DSTI's NIPMO, Director Advisory and Support, Thabang Jase, said innovation backed by IP rights keeps the world of sport thriving, dynamic and accessible for everyone and everywhere. He stated that, through partnership, they will ensure that IP arising from publicly funded research and development is leveraged for national benefit.

The dtic Acting Chief Director: Innovation and Technology, Nontombi Maseko, emphasised that innovation advances sport, enable inclusivity and transformation, bringing physically challenged people into the sport. She added that technological innovations in wheelchairs have enabled basketball and players with amputated legs to run and compete.

Post-launch, the campaign looks forward to a successful Road Show and the IP Talk, to be hosted on 23 and 24 April 2026 at the Thabong Mall and in VUT Science and Technology Park, Sebokeng as part of education and awareness and to commemorate the WIPD.

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