

The Strong Side Launches to Confront Predator Culture in Sport—from the Locker Room out

*Two recent headlines. Same old pattern.
A new prevention engine built for clubs,
leagues, and the entire game-day ecosystem.*

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Predator Culture thrives when sexist dismissal gets written off as "just locker room talk." Sport needs prevention infrastructure—not just apologies and penalties when harm goes viral. Do Better!”

*Lissette Brassac-Fitzgerald,
IAESDP*

[Association of ESD Professionals](#) (IAESDP) today announced the launch of [The Strong Side](#) (TSS), its flagship culture-change engine designed to help sports organizations prevent harassment, discrimination, and escalation—from the locker room out—to the pitch, to the stadium, to the community.

The launch comes amid renewed scrutiny of what TSS defines as Predator Culture: a system-level environment where disrespect and boundary violations are normalized, targets are isolated, and institutions are left reacting after the fact instead of preventing what everyone can see coming.

TSS is now scheduling interviews and briefings for sports desks and league stakeholders.

Why now

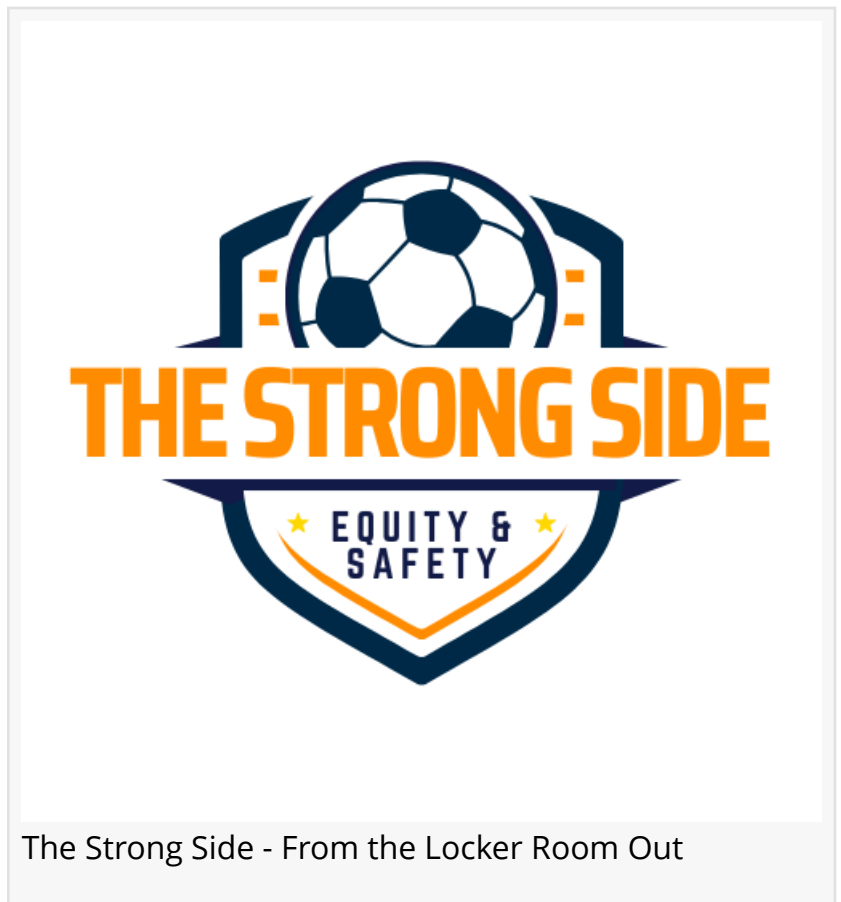
In the span of days, two high-profile incidents—one in Brazilian football, one in Olympic hockey—sparked backlash and renewed debate over sexism, power, and accountability in sport:

Brazil (Campeonato Paulista): In a post-match interview, Red Bull Bragantino defender Gustavo Marques questioned the legitimacy of appointing a woman referee for a major match and stated that referee Daiane Muniz “did not have the capacity” to officiate a game of that magnitude.

Winter Olympics hockey: A viral locker-room clip following the U.S. men’s gold medal win

captured a remark implying the women's team's recognition was obligatory rather than earned—an inside attitude said out loud and laughed off in public.

“The incidents may look different on the surface. Underneath, they share the same logic: women are treated as optional in spaces where men are treated as default,” said Lissette Brassac Fitzgerald, Executive Director of IAESDP. “Predator Culture thrives when sexist dismissal gets waved away as ‘just locker room talk.’ These moments are signals—tests of what the culture will allow. The Strong Side exists because sport needs prevention infrastructure—not just apologies and penalties once the harm is public.”



Predator Culture is a system problem—with broad harm

TSS uses Predator Culture to describe an ecosystem where power is protected and targets are isolated, enabling harassment and discrimination to spread across the game-day environment. The resulting harm is gender-inclusive, impacting women and men, LGBTQ+ people, officials, athletes, staff, and fans—on the field of play, in the stands, online, and in the community.

Evidence: measurable leading indicators

TSS is informed by research and practice showing that norms, bystander behavior, and online abuse volume are measurable leading indicators that can predict escalation risk—and can be tracked and reduced with prevention infrastructure.

Research collaboration

The Strong Side's approach is informed by a research collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, supporting evaluation and evidence development around sports culture, prevention, and outcomes.

The Strong Side: From the Locker Room out

The Strong Side is built for clubs and leagues that want more than statements. As IAESDP's

flagship culture-change engine, TSS delivers a plug-and-play, hybrid in-person + digital program designed to reduce incidents, shift norms, and demonstrate measurable community impact—without dumping massive workload onto club staff.

“Our message is simple: don’t wait for crisis or scandal. Respond with prevention,” said Lauren Lopp, The Strong Side Spokesperson. “From the locker room to the stands, sports culture is teachable and it starts with teams. We give clubs the tools they need to set standards, train athletes and staff, activate fans, and prove impact in the community—so safety becomes part of the brand, not a reactive press cycle.”

ESD Professionals: expertise built for prevention

IAESDP represents Empowerment Self Defense (ESD) Professionals—trained specialists in violence prevention, boundary-setting, de-escalation, and behavior change. The Strong Side translates that expertise into sport-specific prevention infrastructure.

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