

PlayerStatData keeps players on top of their game

Waterford start-up [PlayerStatData](#) is developing performance data solutions for elite soccer players in Ireland and the UK, with plans to expand to other markets and sports.

Headed by Colin Brett, PlayerStatData currently collects player performance data by watching each game from recorded video footage and gathers data across more than 70 individual player performance metrics, including each of the SSE Airtricity League Premier Division clubs for the 2020 season.

The datasheets include defensive, possession and attacking metrics to give a clear picture of each team's output and allows teams to compare against other teams' metrics.

During our extensive market research efforts, we spoke with many prospective clients (players, clubs and agencies) about problems they face in their current data provisions," said Brett.

"We found that there were several problems – inaccurate/incomplete data output that left users questioning the validity of available data outputs, giving clubs and agents an inaccurate/incomplete picture of a particular client or transfer target and players missing out on opportunities to further their career goals."

He said clubs need data that is specific to their needs rather than generic reports. The research also revealed shortcomings in the quality of data gathered in the Irish market that compared poorly with what is available to international leagues.

"Some interviewees felt that lip service was paid to some smaller global leagues, with the feeling that much greater resources are devoted to other leagues.

"The club/agent profile we are targeting are faced with an opportunity cost around many financial outlays. Paying a data provider subscription means being unable to afford something else in the club's operations. They need to get the maximum bang for their buck, especially in these very testing times due to Covid-19. An affordable, flexible approach to data output would suit many operations more than a large, annual financial outlay."

Game plan

PlayerStatData founder Colin Brett

For the first 18 to 24 months, PlayerStatData will focus primarily on the Irish and UK markets (players, clubs, agents, and other data provision markets).

“The player market size is substantial, with over 3,000 targetable players in the League of Ireland Premier and 1st Division, WNL and our targeted divisions in the UK. We have also identified just over 150 clubs and 60 agents to target in the coming 18-24 months. Expansion after the UK and Irish markets will involve North American markets.

“Our USP (unique selling point) is the flexibility of our data output – each client will get exactly what they want on a report-by-report basis, not what we think they want to see from their data reports. Unlike generic reports from other providers, we hand full control back to the client.

“Our medium-term plans involve developing our own AI model to automate the collection of data from video footage. We are currently working closely alongside TSSG (Telecommunications Software and Systems Group) at WIT and we are also developing a client portal through our site that will give all the datasets and filter tools to our clients, allowing them to create their own reports on a regular basis. As we grow the company, we will hand more tools to the user for their data output requirements and we will branch out into other sports.”

Ready Player 1

This is Brett's second sports start-up. He previously founded Waterford Dodgeball.

“I have always wanted to work in sport, soccer primarily, so I was always on the lookout for opportunities to tread my own path in sports enterprise. When living in Auckland, I read a book called [*The Numbers Game*](#) and I knew that sports data is where my future lay.

“Getting a job with Football Radar in London was part of my education in this industry, but the end goal was always to create a niche in this market, here in Ireland.”

Brett says Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on several problems within the start-up ecosystem in Ireland. “Pre-revenue start-ups are struggling badly and there are not nearly enough supports to allow promising start-ups to have a fighting chance to see this pandemic through.

“Some accelerators/programmes such as New Frontiers, TechStars and InterTrade Ireland's Seedcorn programme are of value to many companies and there is some valuable guidance and experience to be had.

“Covid-19 has been challenging for everyone, but I do feel that more can and should be done for pre-revenue and new start-ups with potential for solid growth.”

Brett said the company is currently looking to raise funding. “We have learned a lot from our pitches in 2020, namely getting to the Munster final of InterTrade Ireland’s Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition. Funding will be key for us to afford the early expertise needed to drive our plans for the data product in 2021.”

If 2020 has taught Brett anything it is to be resilient. “I also learned how to value good advice. In my case, it was best to seek out advice from those in the sports-tech/sports data space, along with entrepreneurs who have been there, made the mistakes and had the successes and can speak from experience. You must seek out advice/criticisms/feedback from those that can add value to my product with their knowledge and experience.”

His advice to fellow founders is seek out advice from people who can offer insight from their own experiences.

“Always work to be the hardest working person in the room. You will always give yourself a chance by working long and late hours to get your idea researched, off the ground and then fight to get a foothold in the market.

“If you want something, you will have to ask for it. Asking for potential business, a meeting, an interview, an introduction or even a favour from someone can change the course of your year – you have absolutely nothing to lose (and all to gain) by reaching out and asking, no matter how big/small you feel the request is. It could make all the difference in the end.”

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