

# **Sports pack**

# **INMA Retention Masterclass**

**Graham McDougall**

**DC Thomson**

June 2025

# Exec Summary

- This is about creating an entry point for users who previously would not subscribe.
- This is about generating and growing a cohort engaged subscribers who retain well.
- This is about delivering a product that has given an audience what they want in a package that meets their needs.

It's the opposite of creating more features and hoping they will retain and pay more.

# DC Thomson news brands

- Two regional news brands covering North-East Scotland.
- Grown to around 50k subs over 5 years.
- Low propensity to pay for content online.
- Free competitors.
- Grown through successful acquisition.



**THE COURIER** Local Matters

**The Press and Journal**

**“your new subscriber offer is the  
biggest lever to retention”**

**Robert Skrob**

# Where did the Sports pack come from?

## Slower growth

- Growth had plateaued.
- What was working before wasn't anymore.

## Customer data & insight

- A large audience / content area that did not convert.
- Insight telling us readers only wanted this content.

## Competitor activity

- Other news brands launching club specific products. Likely to come onto our patch.

# The Sports pack

- Both Courier and Press & Journal brands.
- Sport only content
- Half the price of standard pack
- No app access
- >2k subscribers over year / 20% of annual growth

**This did not fit into our wider objectives of improving retention & growing ARPU**



**Be the ultimate football insider with the sport pack**

Unlock exclusive news including access to interviews, expert analysis and insights you won't find anywhere else

**SUBSCRIBE NOW**

The P&J

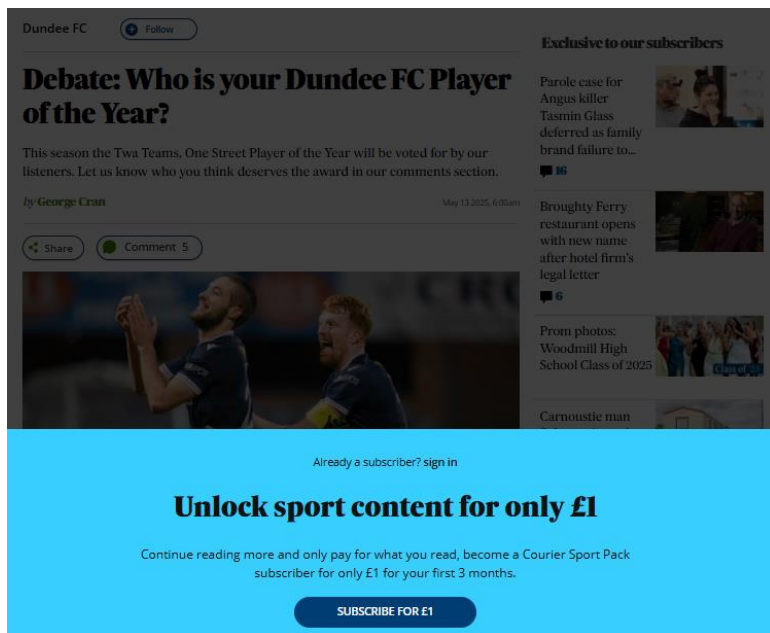
The advertisement features a green background with a smartphone in the center. On the phone's screen, there is a 3D map of a region with blue and green areas. A yellow location pin is placed over the map, with a football icon inside it. The text is in white and yellow, and there is a yellow button at the bottom.

# Launch Objectives

- Prove if there was an audience willing to pay for sports content.
- Confirm if a pack with restricted content and a cheaper price is viewed more favourably for this audience.
- Confirm if the brand was the blocker to paying.
- Be able to say if we needed a standalone website to succeed.



# What did we need to get to a launch?



The screenshot shows a web page for Dundee FC with a paywall. The main article is titled "Debate: Who is your Dundee FC Player of the Year?" and is by George Cran. Below the article is a large image of two football players. To the right, there are several "Exclusive to our subscribers" articles with small images and titles: "Parole case for Angus killer Tasmin Glass deferred as family brand failure to...", "Broughty Ferry restaurant opens with new name after hotel firm's legal letter", "Prom photos: Woodmill High School Class of 2025", and "Carnoustie man". At the bottom, a blue banner contains the text "Already a subscriber? sign in", "Unlock sport content for only £1", "Continue reading more and only pay for what you read, become a Courier Sport Pack subscriber for only £1 for your first 3 months.", and a "SUBSCRIBE FOR £1" button.

Dundee FC [Follow](#)

## Debate: Who is your Dundee FC Player of the Year?

This season the Twa Teams, One Street Player of the Year will be voted for by our listeners. Let us know who you think deserves the award in our comments section.

by [George Cran](#) May 13 2025, 6:00am

[Share](#) [Comment 5](#)

**Exclusive to our subscribers**

Parole case for Angus killer Tasmin Glass deferred as family brand failure to... [#6](#)

Broughty Ferry restaurant opens with new name after hotel firm's legal letter [#6](#)

Prom photos: Woodmill High School Class of 2025

Carnoustie man

Already a subscriber? [sign in](#)

### Unlock sport content for only £1

Continue reading more and only pay for what you read, become a Courier Sport Pack subscriber for only £1 for your first 3 months.

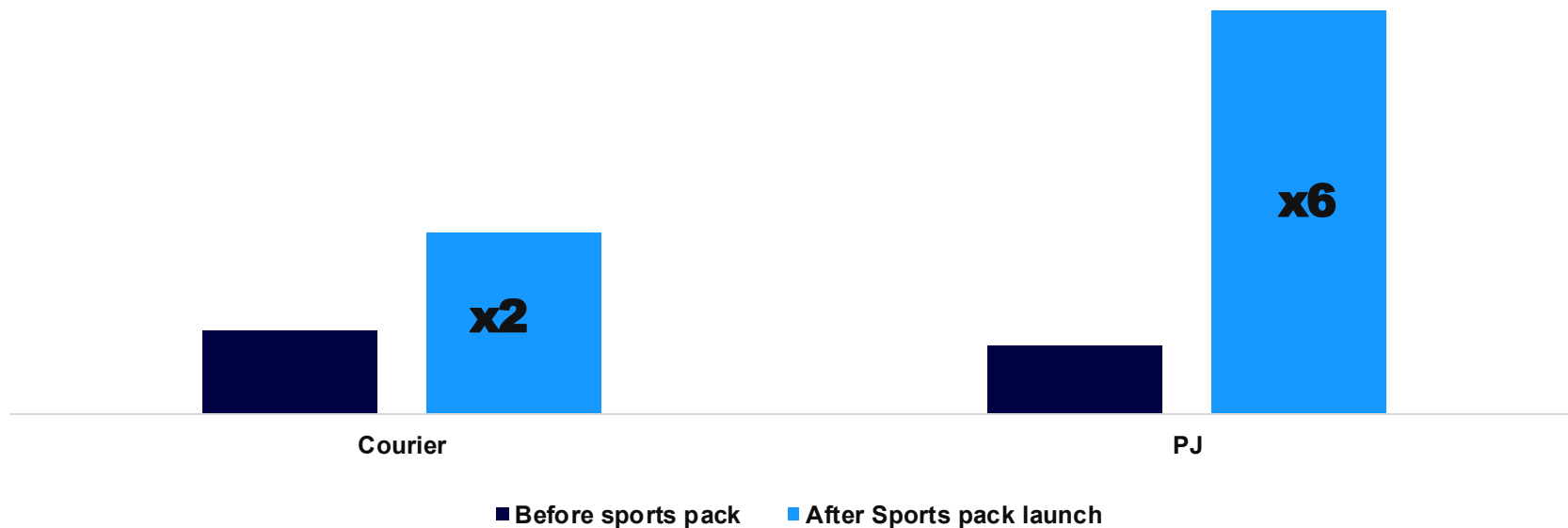
[SUBSCRIBE FOR £1](#)

## What did we need to launch?

- 1 x passionate sports (football) audience.
- 1 x restricted content pack.
- 1 x paywall offer.
- 0 x marketing effort.

# What happened when it launched?

# Sports content conversion rates



# So we started testing

## Offer testing

£1 for 1 month

£3 for 3 months

£1 for 3 months

### Save now and unlock more sports

Continue reading more of the sports content you love by subscribing to The Courier Football Pack today - only £3 for your first 3 months.

SUBSCRIBE

## Copy testing

Team messaging

Specific town messaging

### Unlock every Aberdeen FC story

Unlock access to Aberdeen FC and all sport content with The Press & Journal Sport Pack. Pay only £3 per month for more of the sport content you love, and save over 50% against our standard monthly subscription.

SUBSCRIBE

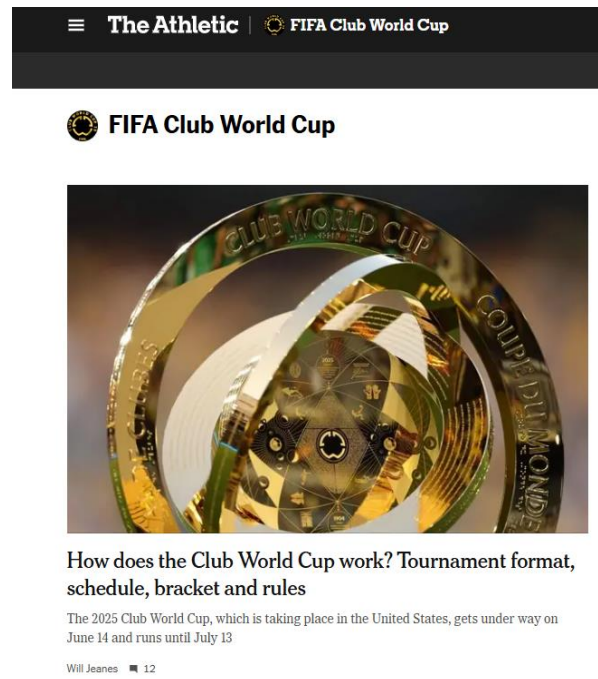
# And then... Content reviews

## What kind of content converted

- Exclusive.
- Analytical.
- Increase premium content level.

## Not

- Match reports.
- Press conferences.



The screenshot shows a mobile interface for 'The Athletic' with a 'FIFA Club World Cup' article. The article title is 'How does the Club World Cup work? Tournament format, schedule, bracket and rules'. The byline is 'Will Jeanes' and the date is '12'. The article text states: 'The 2025 Club World Cup, which is taking place in the United States, gets under way on June 14 and runs until July 13'. The image shows a close-up of the FIFA Club World Cup trophy, a golden cup with a soccer ball in the center, surrounded by a ring of text including 'CLUB WORLD CUP' and 'COUPE DU MONDE'.

Local journalism worth supporting.

DECK TITLE HERE

# Other opportunities it presented

Monthly Annual

**Sport Pack Monthly**  
Sport content only  
**£4.00**  
Cancel anytime  
SUBSCRIBE  
Renews at £4/month

**Web Pack Monthly**  
Web + App  
**£7.99**  
Cancel anytime  
SUBSCRIBE  
Renews at £7.99/month

**Web + ePaper Monthly**  
Web + App + ePaper  
**£21.99**  
Cancel anytime  
SUBSCRIBE  
Renews at £21.99/month

**Low price entry with upgrade**

**Downgrade option**

**Better subscribe page balance**

# End of season: panic?

Would subscribers cancel due to the off season?

...sales actually increased

No matches and no press conferences so content performance is down to the skill of the writers.

## Revealed: New Aberdeen manager Jimmy Thelin's transfer masterplan

New Aberdeen manager Thelin rocketed former club Elfsborg's finances by tens of millions of pounds with his prowess in the transfer market.

by Sean Wallace

June 7 2024, 3:00 pm

Share

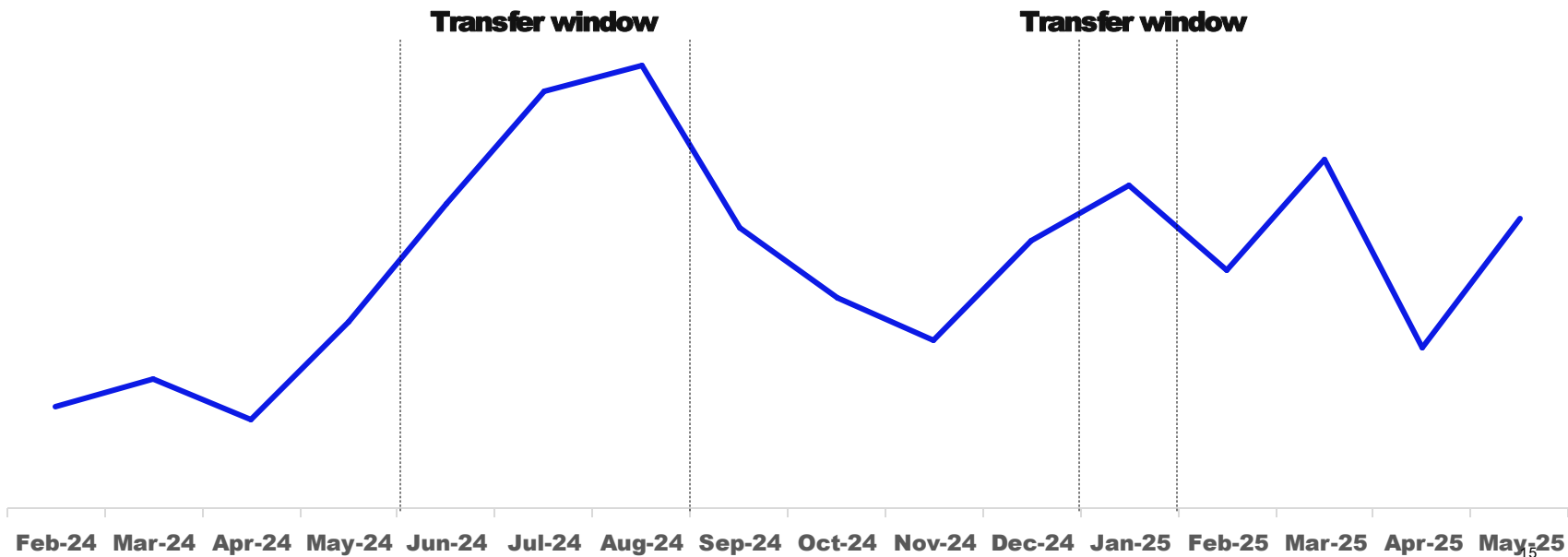
Comment 0



New Aberdeen manager Jimmy Thelin says goodbye to the Elfsborg fans in his final home game. Image: Bildbyran.

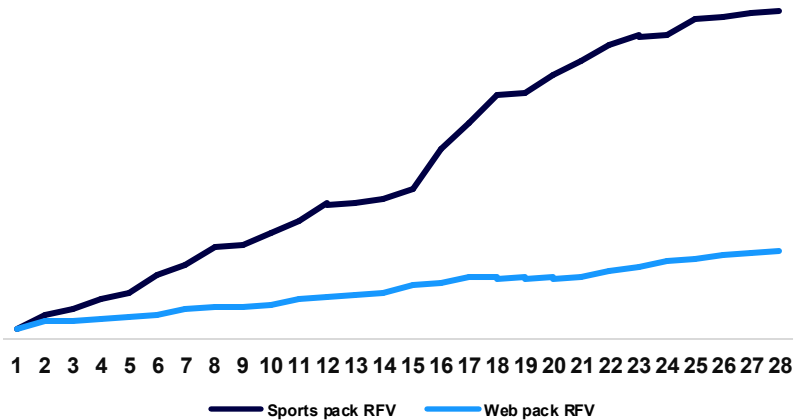
# Out of season peaks

Sports pack sales

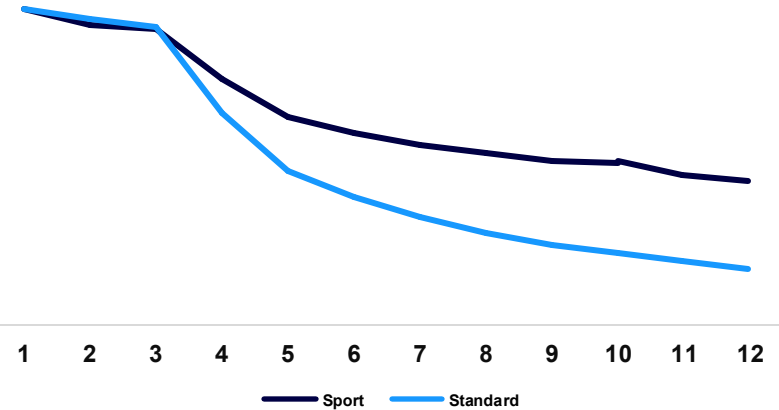


# Can a subscriber read enough content to see value?

RFV score over first 28 days



Decay curves



# Is it different?

- Sport is different to local news.
- Live news matters now...your team will always be there.
- Perhaps tapping into a passion could be in this list....



**Robbie Kellman Baxter** • Following

Advisor to the world's leading subscription-based companies | Keynote Speak...

[View my newsletter](#)

5mo •



12 value propositions that attract and retain members:

- Economy: Saving money
- Efficiency: Saving time
- Security: Mitigating risk
- Community: Connecting with like-minded individuals
- Expertise: Receiving expert guidance
- Enhancement: Accessing enhanced services
- Discovery: Exploring novel horizons
- Variety: Tapping into a broader array of choices
- Adaptability: Increasing flexibility (with a smaller initial commitment)
- Exclusivity: Accessing exclusive resources
- Status: Achieving recognition and standing
- Belonging: Feeling a part of something recognized and understood

Start by asking how your members benefit before you focus on how membership benefits your business.

It starts with customer outcomes.

# The learnings go back into everything else we do

- Exclusive content is what makes our product worth paying for.
- Experiment and iterate.
- Listen to customers.
- Content reviews deliver huge value.
- “Doesn’t let perfection get in the way of progress”.



# Summary

- The Sports pack created an entry point for users who previously would not subscribe.
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- The sports pack created a product that has given an audience what they want in a package that meets their needs.
- It's the opposite of creating more features and hoping they will retain and pay more.