


8-5-1992

Olympic Sponsorship:Theme and Variation

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Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Olympic Sponsorship:Theme and Variation" (1992). *On Sport and Society*. 350.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/350>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
August 5, 1992

It is enlightening to page through the "Olympic Preview" issue of Sports Illustrated. The photos are beautiful, but the advertising is clearly the central feature. Not unlike the Olympic Games themselves.

Gatorade is an Official Sponsor of the USA Basketball team, and of course Gatorade owns a piece of Michael Jordan. The people at Gatorade want to wish Mike, and the rest of the team, good luck and remind us that Gatorade offers "all the fluids, minerals, and energy you need."

Bausch and Lomb is a Worldwide Sponsor of the Olympic games, and they are pushing disposable contact lenses and sunglasses, like the ones Matt Biondi wears. The U.S. Postal Service is also a Worldwide Sponsor, and they are hoping to take home some gold with their 1992 Olympic Summer Games Commemoratives. Not be outdone the U.S. Treasury Department is marketing gold, silver, and clad, 1992 U.S. Olympic Coins, and if you order now you can get a personal thank you note from an American athlete.

VISA too is a "Worldwide Sponsor" of the 1992 Olympic Games," and at the games in Barcelona they won't take American Express. And everytime you use that VISA card you are making a donation to the U.S. Olympic team.

And lest you forget, Budweiser, is a "Proud Sponsor of the 1992 U.S. Olympic Team." So proud in fact is Bud, that they are giving away a million dollars in gold in some sort of sweepstakes. Prize categories are of course gold, silver, and bronze. Another sweepstakes the "Unlock the Gold" Spring Sweepstakes is being run by Master Lock, the "Proud Sponsor of the U.S. Cycling Team."

AT&T is another "Proud Sponsor of the 1992 U.S. Olympic Team." Scottie Pippen is slam dunking, while AT&T reminds us that they support the drive and determination of the Dream Team, because "we share in their commitment to be the best in the world." Breathtaking isn't it.

If you want to catch all of this on film, Kodak is another Worldwide and "Official Sponsor of the 1992 Olympic Games" offering a commemorative Olympic sports bag so that you can "Carry On the Spirit." I'm not making this up.

And don't forget to be on time. Seiko, "The Measure of Greatness," is the "official timer of the games of the XXVth Olympiad."

Russell Athletic is the "official uniform supplier of the USA baseball team." Their ad unfortunately says "Our uniforms are sure to be the sensation of Spain. Especially when accessorized with gold." We will never know. On the other hand Champion supplied the basketball team with their uniforms.

If this has you tired it's time to stop for a Coke, which is now "Refreshing The Olympic Spirit," and "Sharing the Olympic Ideal." Yes Coca Cola too is a Worldwide sponsor supporting "national Olympic teams in 154 countries around the world--including ours. That's why every time you pick up a Coca-Cola classic, the Olympic spirit is refreshed." Another two page ad shows Diet Coke bottles in six languages under the caption, "This Summer the Finest Will Gather in Barcelona."

To go with your Coke you will want nothing but Kraft Food products, because "Kraft sets the Training Table for the 1992 U.S. Olympic Team....Kraft will be providing our athletes with the same good, wholesome food you serve at home. It's our way of feeding their dream."

Texaco too is an "Official Sponsor of the 1992 U.S. Olympic Team." And as you may know Texaco is "Pushing the Limits of Performance. One athlete. Many challenges. A boundless energy that takes many forms. At Texaco, we share that energy in all that we do.....The energy to go as far as we can...and then go even further." I repeat, I am not making this up.

A two page ad thanking "Worldwide Olympic Sponsors 1992" quotes Baron Pierre de Coubertin as saying "the important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part." Twelve corporations are taking part at this level.

But clearly the biggest cash cow is the Dream Team. Forty different corporations have Dream Team tie-ins at a total price of some \$40 million dollars. These include cereals, card companies, and clothing producers. NBA properties and Nike also have a piece of this action, not to mention the players themselves.

In addition there are vast entertainment expenditures such as Sports Illustrated's use of a yacht to entertain clients and athletes, a common practice by the great corporations. Even more

obscene is the treatment afforded the members of the national and international Olympic committees. Someone said recently that if they can come back in another life, they do not want to come as royalty, they want to be a member of the International Olympic Committee.

It is clear that the Olympic motto needs to be changed to Faster, Higher, Stronger, Richer.

Such is the legacy of Peter Uberroth and the L.A. games.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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