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MLB 2016 REVIEW > ACTIVATING THE FUTURE OR AMERICA'S LAST GREAT SPORTS STORY?

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SPONSORSHIP ACTIVATION, RIGHTS HOLDER MARKETING & SPORTSBIZ CAMPAIGNS

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ACTIVATIVE

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Major League Baseball (MLB) grew at a phenomenal rate in 2016. The league added half-a-billion to its annual income and generated record revenues approaching \$10bn - the 14th consecutive year of record revenues.

So often seen as a game of history and tradition, as an American pastime dating back to the 1880s and part of the country's cultural heritage, baseball's successful strategy to engage younger fans means it is also clearly part of the USA's future.

It is incredible what two droughts and one goat can do.

The league boasts robust television ratings (including the best postseason audience figures for a decade), stable annual attendance at around 73 million (the league's 11th highest all-time), major growth for its MLB Advanced Media digital media division and a significant surge in sponsorship.

While its digital media that sees a large portion of the league's revenue growth, more traditional television continues to grow and has now surpassed gate receipts as the MLB's top revenue generator.



## MLB > Statistical Snapshot 2016

Total MLB revenue: \$10bn

Total season attendance: 73 million

Total US baseball participants : 13.71

Average MLB team payroll: \$106m

Average MLB player salary: \$4.3m

New MLB sponsorships: \$360-\$400m

Av. World Series TV 'viewers': 23.4 million

Av. World Series TV 'ratings': 13.1

Max Cost World Series 30-sec TVC Fox:  
\$500,000

(Source: Statista)



It's \$10bn earnings figure doesn't even include revenues for the MLBAM spin-off BAMTech – a new business set up in partnership with the Walt Disney Company (indeed, the Mouse is reported to be investing \$1bn between 2016/17).

The MLB continued to grow its sponsorship portfolio under a restructured approach which Commissioner Robert Manfred calls 'One Baseball': a realigned strategy that puts television, online and the traditional business of the league for sponsorships under one single umbrella to give partners blanketed and joined-up coverage across the platforms.

The nine league sponsorship deals that are new or part of renewals in 2016 totalled between \$360 and \$400m (over their total life): new sponsors signed in 2016 included Evan Williams, New Relic, Papa John's, Tuneln and Under Armour, while renewals were penned with the likes of Bank of America, Chevrolet, MasterCard, Scott's and T-Mobile.

MLB sponsors even saw an increase in the number of fans who could correctly identify them as league partners this season, according to Turneky's annual MLB sponsor loyalty survey.

The Chicago Cubs v Cleveland Indians Game 7 excitement drew 40 million viewers (making it the most watched baseball game in 25 years) and a remarkable 25.2/40 overnight rating/share (the best since 2001 according to Nielsen Media Research).

This enabled broadcaster 21st Century Fox to charge a record \$500,000 for 30-second ads.

(This may be record spot price for MLB, but it still lags well behind the NFL's rates which average \$674,000 through the season and will top out on CBS' 2017 Super Bowl telecast at \$5m).

Driven by a spectacular World Series (with two big markets, two long droughts and a thrilling Game 7) in which the Chicago Cubs broke their 108-year curse and wrote what some describe as 'The Last Great American Sports Story', this season witnessed a game in great shape generate some outstanding sponsorship activation and sportsbiz marketing – both from strategic, tactical and emotional perspectives.

It was a season for all seasons!

And, despite the NFL juggernaut and the rise of Major League Soccer (and the MLB ranking only third among the traditional US Big Four in average operating income and fourth in gate revenue per game and a 20% TV viewer drop for its All-Star game), the future looks bright.

After all, the league and players recently reached a new labour agreement that will offer labour stability through to 2021, new grounds like the Atlanta Braves new ballpark could further boost overall attendance, while new blockbuster partnerships like the 10-year uniform deal with Under Armour and Fanatics runs from 2020 to 2030.

So, in addition to the 'Cub fan fairytales' of the World Series, how is a fairly slow game built around pitching craft and statistics that lasts three hours succeeding in the 21st century – an era of declining attention spans and time poverty?

By primarily focusing on younger fans, new stars, hi-tech channels and platforms and the future!

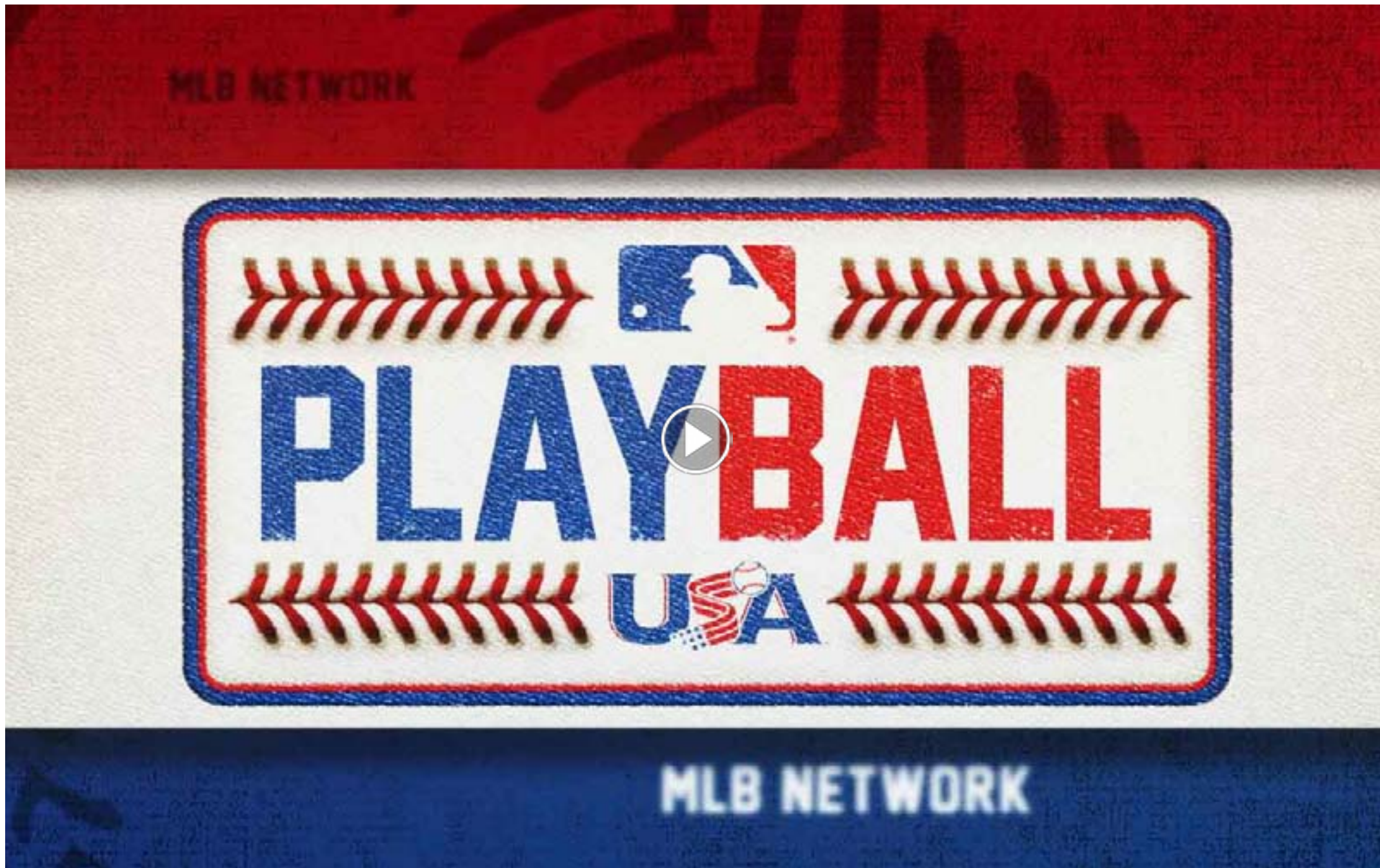
The MLB is also focusing on building interest and engagement with youth via its 'Play Ball' initiative and several of its commercial sponsors are continuing to partnership in these efforts to make lifelong fans out of kids that play any form of baseball or softball.

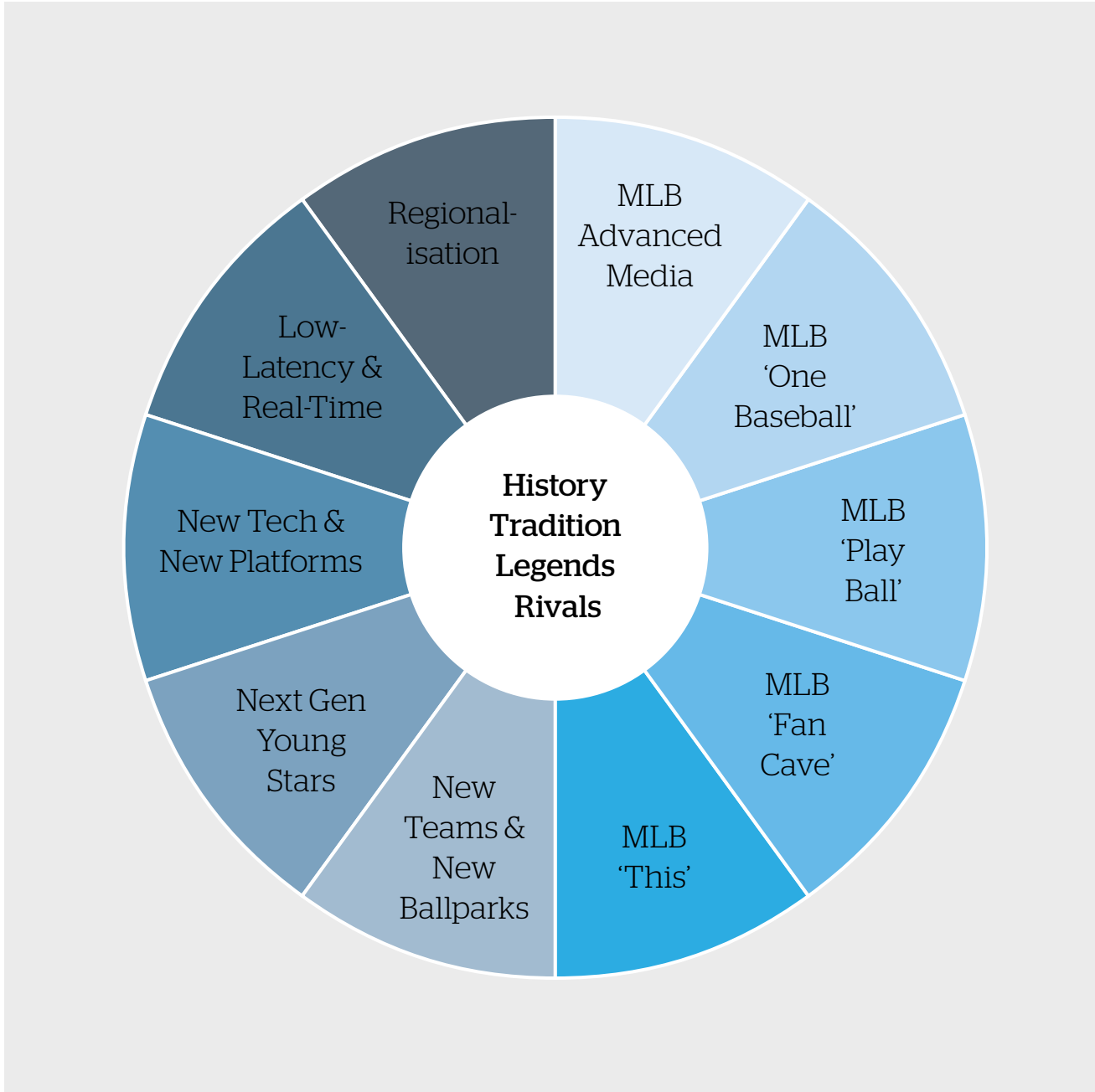
Thus, the twin tactics of the 'Baseball One' realignment and this increased focus on youth and the future has seen interest, awareness and from, plus new alliances with brands that haven't previously expressed interest in baseball as a partnership property.

This briefing report showcase analyses and highlights some of the stand-out sponsorship activation, sportsbiz marketing and league campaigns from the last 18 months – work which reflects the key successful MLB trends, themes, strategies and tactics. <

## MLB > Key Commercial Partners







# MLB > Tactics Wheel

How League & Partners Are Engaging Younger Demographics

## MLB Advanced Media

League (Disney) interactive digital/social media division

## MLB 'One Baseball'

League's umbrella, joined-up sponsorship strategy

## MLB 'Play Ball'

League & partner initiative to turn kids into lifelong fans

## MLB Fan Cave

Flagship experiential, interactive & retail space

## MLB 'This'

League's multi-platform, all-season engagement campaign

## New Teams & New Ballparks

Eg Diamondbacks/Marlins/Rays & SunTrust Park/Rays/Rangers

## Next Generation Of Young Star Players

Eg Campaigns focused on Bryant, Londer, Harper etc

## New Technologies & New Platforms

From latest social platforms to virtual reality and AI...

## Low Latency & Real-Time

Activating live to leverage in-game action and passion

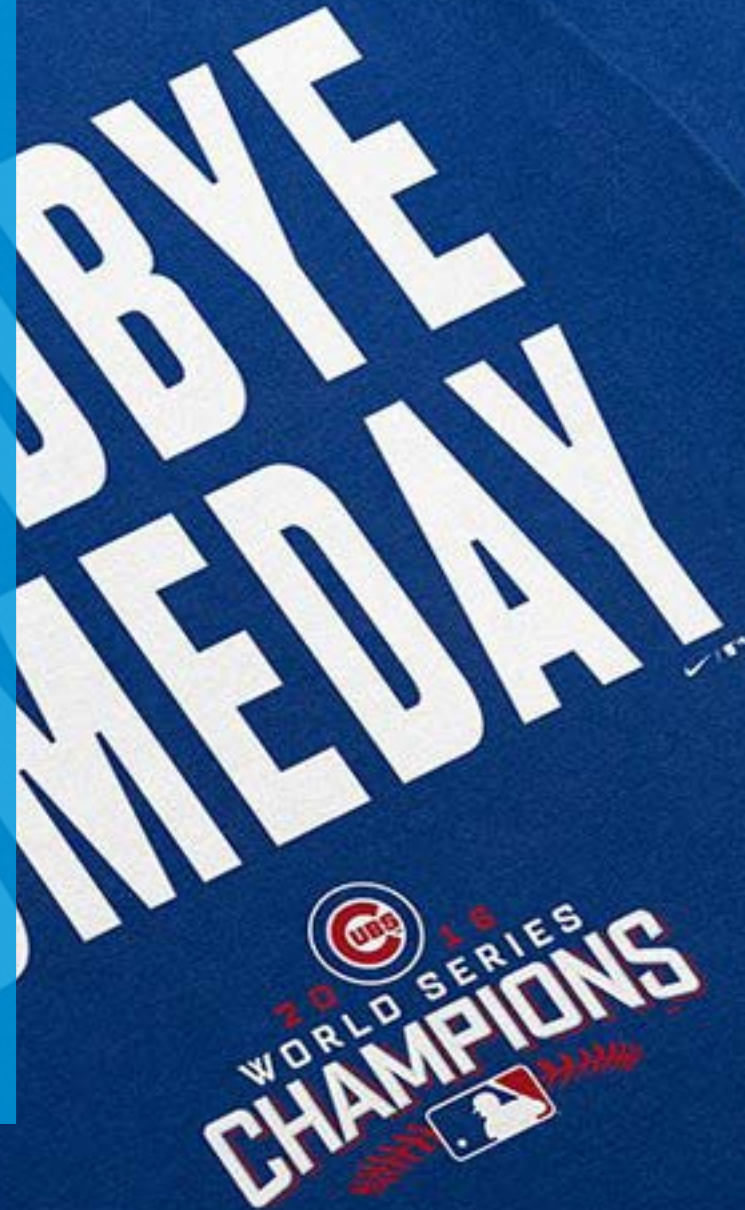
## Regionalisation

Innovative tactical approaches to regional markets/marketing



## (Cub) Fan Fairytales

2016 was a year in which the impossible became possible and a few far-fetched, fan fairytales finally came true. These unlikely sports surprises spawned some superb storytelling from sponsors and sportswear brands. What sets sponsorship apart from other forms of marketing is the ability to leverage passion and tell brilliant stories about properties people are genuinely passionate about and 2016 saw some incredible story arcs to activate around. Passionate storytelling engages like nothing else: it attracts affective attention, has emotional impact and can genuinely move people.





While there were plenty of fan fairytale stories at Rio, while giant slaying Leicester City won the English Premier League and sports fans in the city of Cleveland ended years of misery when their Cavaliers came from behind to upset the record-breaking regular season stars of the Golden State Warriors, our favourite fan fairytale sports campaigns were spawned by the Chicago Cubs.

The so-called losingest team in baseball, finally ended its 108-year wait and broke the 'Curse of the Billy Goat' by winning the World Series (against Cleveland's MLB team).

Little surprise that such a great sports story in such a big market led to plenty of passionate marketing.

Some of the stand-out work in this space was low latency or even real-time - as brands sought to leverage fan passion and at its peak when consumer emotions were highest and the fan fairytale freshest.

#### Budweiser 'Harry They Did It' >

Budweiser, which re-aired one of its classic Harry Caray ads immediately after the Cubs World Series win, followed-up by creating an emotional new spot overnight imagining how the legendary broadcaster might have called the previous night's game which finally saw the North Side Chicago club break their curse and end their World series drought.

The team's official beer partner and its agency VaynerMedia worked together with Caray's family estate on the project: sourcing original old recordings of Caray's voice and then layering it on-top of game footage and fan celebrations from last night's win.

The spot, carrying the tagline 'Harry, they did it. The impossible is possible. Hear the legend call one last game. Cubs', aired within hours of the Cubs win

It was also posted to YouTube on 3 November and amplified across the brand's other digital and social channels carrying the hashtag's #ThisBuds-ForYou. #FlyTheW and further supported with a Caray-themed Snapchat filter.

Caray, the voice of the Cubs from 1982 un-

til he died in 1998, is inextricably connected with the Cubs and is known by fans as 'the voice of the Cubs'.

Surprisingly, he actually started his MLB career calling St Louis Cardinals games (the hometown of Anheuser-Busch) from 1945 to 1969.

With an impressive 1.3m YouTube views in its first 24 hours and with tens of thousands of retweets and likes, there is clearly plenty of emotional connection between the brand spot and the fans.

By engaging through an authentic, fan-loved team icon, Budweiser's approach shows the kind of insider insight and knowledge of club history fans hope and expect from sponsors.

Budweiser is both the official beer of the Chicago Cubs and of major League Baseball.

It was back in September 2013 that the Chicago Cubs signed a deal with Budweiser reportedly worth \$140m that not only saw it replace Old Style as the team's official beer and malt beverage, but also saw the Anheuser-Busch InBev brand logo plastered across a giant new 650-square-foot sign in the right-field at Wrigley Field.

The 10-year deal also applies to the Cubs' spring training facility in Mesa Ariz.

This deal marked the end of the team's decades-long marketing partnership with Old Style.

'This was a very difficult decision following a 60-year relationship we enjoyed with this great brand,' said a Cubs statement at the time.

'We will continue to offer Old Style and Old Style Light to our fans for our remaining games.'

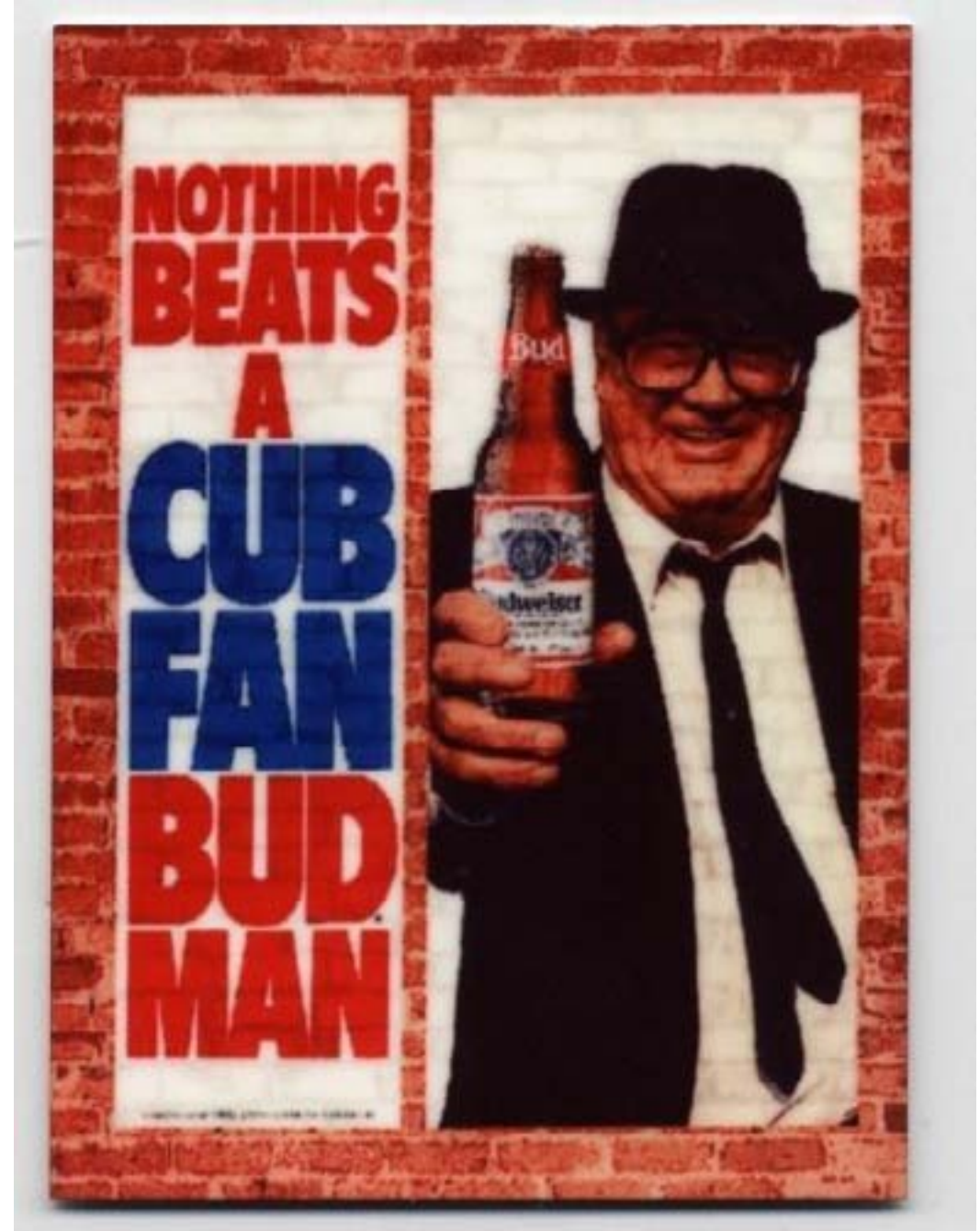
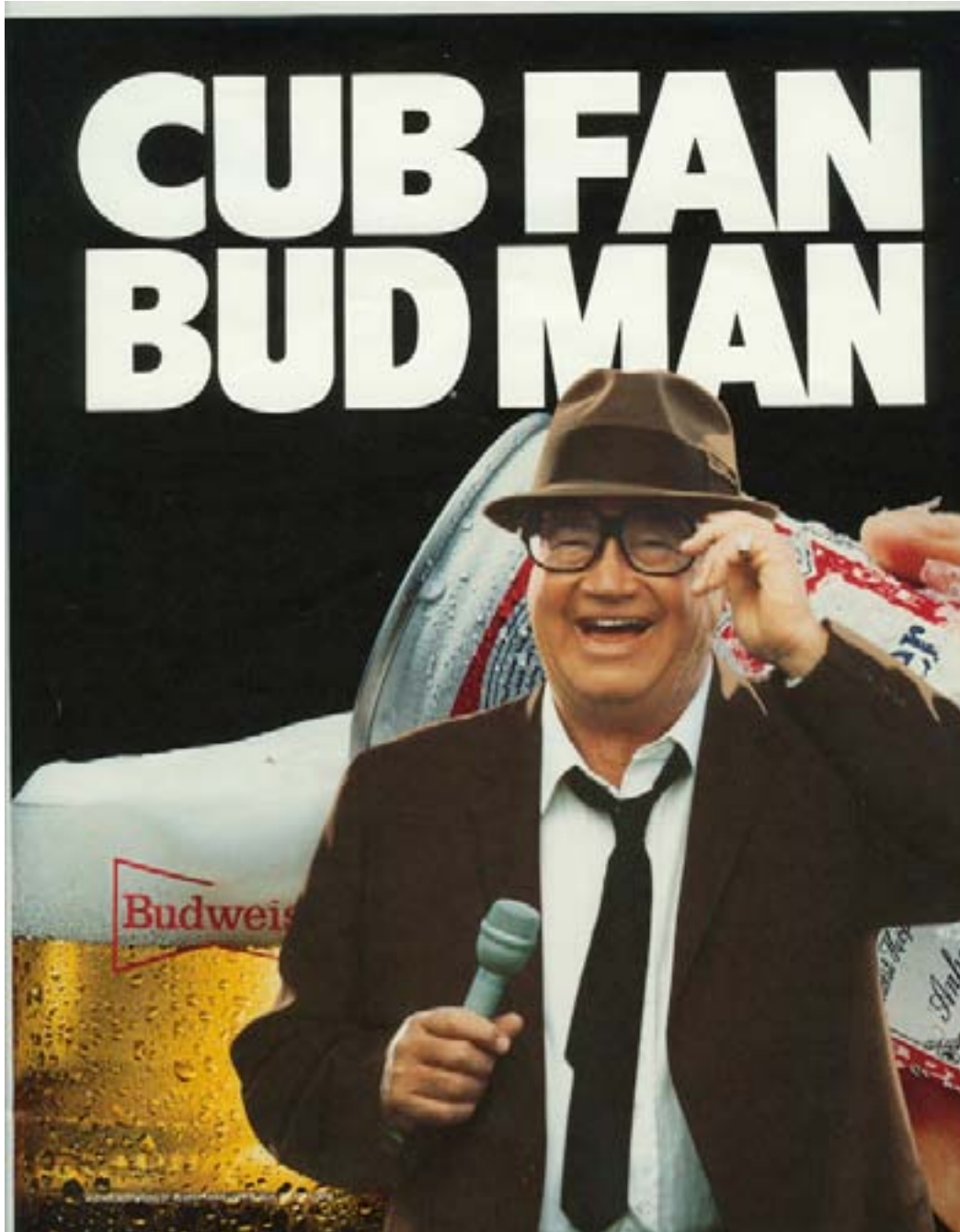
The new sign is one part of a \$500m renovation project at the Cubs' 100-year-old ballpark.

As well as partnering with the Cubs, Budweiser is a sponsor of 22 other MLB teams and is the Official Beer Sponsor of Major League Baseball.

In 2012, Budweiser (which actually has a baseball relationship that dates back to the late 1800s), signed a new six-year MLB sponsorship - extending a 30-year relationship.

The deals sees the Anheuser-Busch brand have exclusive rights in the malt beverage category to use the MLB marks and logos and makes Budweiser the presenting sponsor of MLB Opening







Week and the Player of the Month awards, as well as of the MLB Fan Cave. <

#### **Nike 'Make Someday Today' >**

Spearheaded by an emotional commercial featuring a young kid playing baseball on his own with the Chicago skyline in the background, Club sponsor Nike activates around the Cubs' World Series with a hope-fueled 'make Someday Today' campaign.

From TV work, digital and social strands, as well as local activations, train warps, out of home and reactive billboards, the initiative also includes a bespoke Cubs clothes line carrying the campaign tagline.

The advertising core and end piece of the initiative was a Cubs victory salute commercial that Nike aired on TV immediately after the final out of the World Series called 'Goodbye to Someday'.

Nike used the first ad slot after the final out to leverage the moment that Cubs fans have imagined for 108 years as their World Series win wish finally came true.

The determined youngster acts out his dream of winning the World Series on his local diamond in an attempt to embody the endlessly 'positive spirit' that finally led the Cubs to glory.

The ad ends with the words 'Goodbye Someday' as it plays footage of the commentary from the game as the Cubs won.

The campaign had been rolling out across the usual Nike digital and social platforms, as well as in Chicago and on location at games through the postseason.

Nike rallied the city of Chicago right through World Series week with its 'Make Someday Today' battle cry and clothes line.

Another interesting campaign strand saw Nike run so-called 'living' out-of-home ads - reactive billboards that responded to the actual game action.

The campaign was created for Nike by regular agency Wieden + Kennedy Portland. The director was Daniel Wolfe, the produc-

tion was handled by Somesuch/Anonymous Content and editing by Joint: Trim and the soundtrack was Willie Nelson's 'Funny How Time Slips Away'

The 'Someday' idea itself leverages the anthemic Cubs fan song by star supporter Pearl Jam's Eddie Vader.

These days timing is vital to great event activation.

But so too is a genuine understanding of a team and its fans.

Nike, an official sponsor of MLB, has produced a campaign that illustrates both perfectly!

Kudos to the brand and its agency W+K for blending emotionally relevant creative and second-perfect media timing to celebrating a historic sports moment.

Plus, by activating throughout the series and rallying the fans across the city, the brand avoids any accusations of jumping on the post-win bandwagon.

With 1.2m views YouTube views (just slightly behind Budweiser's brilliant Cubs spot - see case study), plus 1.4m Facebook views, 709k Instagram likes, plus 30k retweets and 55 Twitter likes in 24 hours - the work is certainly generating plenty of traction.

It reminds us of Nike's 'Worth The Wait' ad that it ran immediately after the Cleveland Cavaliers (and its biggest brand endorser LeBron James) won the NBA title in June (see case study).

We presume that Nike had also already made a pre-prepared Indians spot had Cleveland won Game 7

As the 2015 season kicked off, Nike resigned an officially licensed on-field and fashion apparel deal with Major League Baseball Properties.

The partnerships sees Nike, along with New Era and '47 Brand tie-up with the league until 2019 and sees Nike continue its status as the Official Competition Base Layer of Major League Baseball and allows



the Nike swoosh logo to appear on the front centre on players' necks during games.

The 2015 season marks 10 years since Nike began supplying MLB players with performance wear and it has also been an official league licensee since 2005. <

#### World Series Marketing Wrap >

As the Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians battled it out in the 2016 World Series, Major League Baseball sponsors, club partners, broadcast alliances and advertisers leveraged goat-related curses, sports superstitions and record title droughts in their rush to market around this historic Fall Classic.

Fall Classic broadcaster Fox Sports' ad sales boss Neil Mulcahy said his phone began ringing off the hook as soon as the lovable loser Cubs, the so called 'losingest team in US sports', beat the Los Angeles Dodgers to make it to the 2016 World Series.

Interest was high as soon as the big market Cubs made it to their first Fall Classic in 71 years as they attempted to end a 108-year title drought. Add in the fact that the Cleveland Indians were seeking their first championships since 1948.

This drought ending sense of redemption was a theme exploited by advertisers and broadcasters alike (including Fox itself).

One way or another, a losing streak would come to an end and the most famous curse in American sport might even get broken.

MLB / League / Rights Holder / Property Owner

As the postseason got underway the MLB itself and its corporate partners began by focusing on TV-linked, tech-heavy social media activations built around World Series history: a sensible tactic considering the two teams involved and the record consumption and engagement seen across the season on the league's own set of online platforms and mobile products.

In fact, for this year's Fall Classic the MLB worked with software analytics outfit New Relic on a 'World Series Hackathon' event and the Bases Coded tech challenge (<http://mlb.mlb.com/>

basescoded/) to create fresh digital products and the winners were showcased during Game 4.

This MLBAM 2016 World Series Tech Challenge gave coder teams the opportunity to hack at the convergence of sports and technology using proprietary MLB.com APIs and private data provided by MLB.com (and to interface with MLBAM and New Relic technologists, developers and engineers).

The selected finalists showcased their projects to a panel of industry experts and a live audience and the Grand Prize winning team was flown to the 2016 National League Champions home town during the World Series for an overnight software development competition and Game 4 tickets.

Meanwhile, MLB Advanced Media (MLBM) also ran a series of Reddit chats, as well as worked with Samsung on pre-, in- and post-game virtual reality content that spanned from the field of play into the behind-the-scenes clubhouse celebrations.

MLBAM also worked with a line-up of team-specific, local artists to create original baseball-themed murals in several playoff markets not only as outdoor installations but to also act a video and image backdrop for brand and fan created shareable social media content.

MLB Network, which racked up record viewership for its two League Division Series games, similarly promoted its playoff coverage around a #WeKnowPostseason hashtag, and rolled out archival World Series videos on social platforms: such as this clip commemorating the anniversary of Reggie Jackson's three-homer 1977 World Series game.

Another innovative new MLB marketing initiative this October saw the league set up a green screen behind home plate so that viewers watching on TV saw ads on it, while those in the park (players and fans alike) saw nothing.

The MLB call these virtual in-stadium ads and the screen allows sponsors and advertisers to buy in-ballpark commercials tailored to specific markets.

During this World Series, no fewer than 32 different brands - from Delta Airlines and T-Mobile to Anheuser-Busch, SABMiller Rogers, Mitsubishi







and Fiat – advertised across six dedicated TV feeds.

Not only does this offer an existing strand of ad inventory, but in-stadium virtual signage enables brands to link their broadcast TV spots with in-game activities on the ground.

This global, region-specific ad platform is unique to Major League Baseball. <

Sponsors / Commercial Partners / Providers

Most of MLB's top tier sponsors activated around the season climax.

Some tweaked season-long initiatives with fresh postseason strands: such as Bank Of America's 'Undercover Teacher' star player led, hidden camera school stunt which extends its existing #MLBMemory-Bank programme (see case study).

Another example of a sponsor campaign re-purposed specifically for the post-season is T-Mobile's #UnlimitedBaseball consumer-created film/photo competition (see case study).

Another interesting broadcaster/sponsor 'native' style initiative occurred during Game 1 when network Fox eschewed the usual mid-inning commercial break in the middle of the third inning and instead cut to its studio team for a two-minute, 30-second discussion 'brought to you by T-Mobile'.

The segment saw the T-Mobile One logo for the carrier's unlimited phone and data plan spread across the studio desk and on a bottom screen graphic throughout the analysis and the section closed with presenter Burkhardt doing a 30-second live read about the T-Mobile One campaign.

This marked the first time Fox Sports has ever replaced a standard commercial break with a sponsored piece of content: a tactic the broadcaster claims to be looking forward to doing more often.

Other official partners, like Taco Bell's 'Steal A Base, Steal A Taco', are specific to the World Series itself (see case study).

Another league partner, MasterCard, gave away 'texting gloves' to fans during Game 4, while official vehicle of the MLB Chevrolet is sponsored a newly created feature on MLB.com that recognizes the top plays from each World Series game (and a vehicle featured on the field as a prize for the series MVP).

MasterCard also ran a cause campaign linked to the Stand Up To Cancer Game 4 partnership.

While official baseball cap partner New Era and @Lids sponsored a World Series ticket giveaway based around the #MLBONFIELD hashtag.

In broadcast sponsorship, Lincoln Motor Co became the new pre-game sponsor, and for the first time in 69-year history of the World Series, the Fall Classic boasted an official presenting sponsor in T-Mobile. <

Advertisers

Advertisers have been quick to buy up World Series space and guaranteed ad spots for Games 1 through 4 all sold out well ahead of the first pitch.

These are led by brand spots in categories that regularly roll out World Series commercials: like automotive, fast food, insurance and telecoms industries.

This year's series saw ads from brands such as Chevrolet, Geico, Samsung Mobile, Anheuser-Busch and MasterCard.

While Game 7 itself also saw further spots from Apple, Xbox, Google, Ford, Chevrolet, Walmart, Target, Gillette and several films (eg Assassin's Creed, Doctor Strange, Moana, Passengers, Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk and Why Him?), plus somewhat inevitably (and possibly sadly) spots from both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. <

Cub Campaigns

State Farm has been behind the Cubs all season long with its comic 'Jake From State





Farm' social spin-off with ads leveraging baseball and linked to Chicago Cubs ace Jake Arrieta.

During the playoffs, State Farm kicked off a fan-led, social engagement strand of 'Jake From State Farm.'

Featuring Cubs pitcher Jake Arrieta, State Farm created ads that worked off baseball and the name itself.

While at the Addison red line stop, the Chicago Elevated (the 'El') public transport system station for the Cubs' Wrigley Field ballpark, a State Farm outdoor ad reads:

'Jake & Strikeouts. Some things go together. Like Home & Auto.'

The 2015 Cy Young Award winner's "All for Won" Cubs commercial, which features fellow Cubs players, including Anthony Rizzo, Kris Bryant and Addison Russell as young kids, taps into Chicago's love for the Cubs, for this team and State Farm is hoping for their products.

Arreita also featured in an 'Is This The Year?' SAXX underwear commercial earlier in the season.

Adidas is also leveraging the Cubs' tilt at the Fall Classic with a digital campaign featuring the phrase '#\$@& Curses' in reference to the Billy Goat curse on the Cubs.

The German headquartered sportswear giant also works with Cubs star third baseman Kris Bryant as an athlete endorser (see case study).

Another company backing the Cubs is booze brand Jim Beam, which has partnered with ride sharing app Uber to cover an astonishing 10,000 rides during the seventh inning of the third game of the 2016 World Series.

Uber uses a customer's smartphone location to work out if the user is in Chicago: those who are on the app get a pop-up, on-screen message with a promotion code which can be used when booking a ride (which will cover up to \$20 off a ride).

This campaign has echoes of a March initiative that saw NCAA sponsor Buffalo Wild Wings offer \$10 free rides to restaurants during college basketball's March Madness.

'We take care of family and with a historic moment like this, we want to be sure that Chicago sports fans get home safely,' commented Jim

Beam's master distiller and brand ambassador.

The Cubs themselves also tweeted out an 'Excuse Note' form to try and get every single fan out and watching the final Game 7.

And the whole city of Chicago went baseball crazy for the series: even the venerable Art Institute Of Chicago tweeted about it with a Cleveland Art challenge and socially spread Cubs-tweaked images o.f some of its main masterpieces.

The league, its sponsors, the club commercial partners and the broadcasters all got the full seven-game run, the extra-innings and, for the neutrals and Chicagoans, the Cubs 'W' that most hoped for.

Some of us at Activative have been waiting for a Cubs World Series win all of our lives, so, like this smart piece of local activation on the UBS building, we say 'Go Cubs!' <

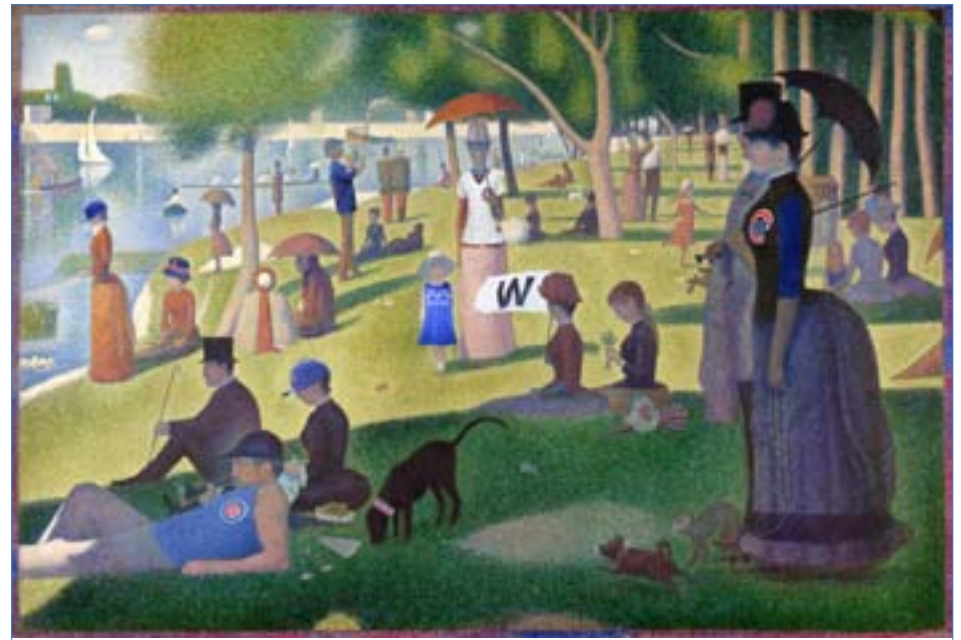
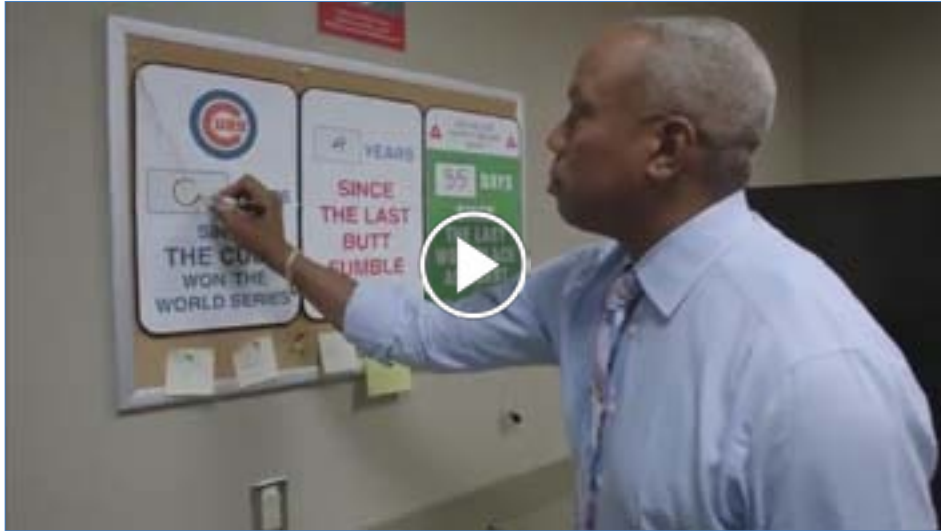
Post-Game Promos

As well as posst-game, low latency responses from the likes of Budweiser and Nike, there were other admiral celebratory comemrcials too.

For example, ESPN Sports Centre's aired a fun follow-up ad called '108 years Erased', while MasterCard rolled out a notable spot called 'The Sound of Priceless',

Holy Cow! <





# \$ @ &   
CURSES





Season Openers



### MLB 'This' >

Helping leverage baseball fever, the Major League baseball (MLB) is extending its multi-platform, season-long #This campaign (see previous case study) for the 2016 Opening Day with a fresh approach boosted by star-powered spots and light-hearted humour

The new creative - featuring the brightest young stars such as Mike Trout, Bryce Harper, Felix Hernandez, Giancarlo Stanton, Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Andrew McCutchen - is spear-headed by several spots that give the players a chance to showcase their acting smarts rather than their baseball skills.

The spots were originally teased a few weeks before the season start across the MLB's own media platforms ([www.MLB.com/THIS](http://www.MLB.com/THIS)) and via a PR push, but arte now breaking on air during Opening Day and Opening Night games across the league's TV broadcast and cable media partners, as well as being further amplified across the internet.

The ads span the league's 30 teams and open with World Series champion Kansas City Royals decked out in denim for some awkward 'Family Pictures' selfies.

Another stand-out spot is 'Souvenir Business' featuring Chicago Cubs teammates Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo who have founded a start-up called Bryzzo Souvenir Company to 'help fans get the home run balls they deserve'.

Last season, the two young Cubs bats combined for 57 home run souvenirs to fans.

A further 'Nice Guy' ad shows two sides of "King" Felix Hernandez: off the mound the Seattle Mariners pitcher is everybody's best friend, while on the mound it's a case of no more Mr Nice Guy.

Los Angeles Angels outfielder and mega-bat Mike Trout's mom stars in a spot called 'Memorabilia'.

While 'Catch Anything' tests out the skills of Pittsburgh Pirates' Andrew McCutchen with a fan guy dressed as Humpty Dumpty precariously perched on the outfield wall,

And Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals shows his compassion and hairdressing skills

in 'Fresh Flow'.

Other spots in the initial 2016 wave of #This include: Boston Red Sox pitcher's 'Bestie', Arizona Diamondbacks' Paul Goldschmidt in 'Dangerous desert Predator', Miami Marlins' star Giancarlo Stanton in 'Tug Of War', And two Houston Astros stars in 'How To Turn Two'.

All the creative was developed and honed by MLB multimedia creative agency Anomaly and can be viewed online at [www.MLB.com/THIS](http://www.MLB.com/THIS).

The spots are amplified socially, and further ads will roll out as the season unfolds.

'As we begin our 2016 regular season, millions of fans around the world can realistically hope that their team will be playing October baseball and contending for a World Championship,' said Rob Manfred, who is entering his second season as MLB commissioner.

'Our game is characterized by great competitive balance. The last five seasons have produced more playoff teams - 24 - than any such period in baseball history and we have now gone a record 15 straight years without a repeat World Series Champion. Fans can also be excited about the great group of young stars in our game today. These extraordinary young players also stand out as ambassadors for the sport,' said Manfred.'

We feel this work genuinely shows last year's ambitious #This creative maturing tonally.

This high profile creative work should also help the league's sponsors as they roll out their own campaigns for the new season and together the property owner and its partners boost awareness of an interest in the sport.

Sponsors who have already launched new season campaigns include Skechers (with a Relaxed Fit spot fronted by Hall of Fame shortstop Ozzie Smith), Topps (with John Lamb), and the KC Royals, PlayStation's 'MLB The Show 16' and New Era's #CapsOn (see previous case study).

While new partners like Papa John's and Apple will roll out MLB led campaigns as the season progresses.

Indeed, this year sees MLB aim to set a new record in terms of sponsorship revenue spend as it aims to surpass its 2015 all-time high sponsor

spend record of \$778m.

Which itself was a major rise of more than \$80m from the previous record of \$695m in 2014 (according to the MLB IEG Sponsorship Report).

Indeed, the league looks to be in good health as its marketing revenue has grown steadily since 2011 (\$585), 2012 (\$626m) and 2013 (\$663m). <

**New Era 'Caps On' >**

To harness the excitement in the weeks before the start of Major League Baseball's regular season, the MLB and its official cap partner New Era launched #CapsOn - an integrated, participatory campaign that aims to generate pre-season anticipation and excitement.

The initiative, which spans TV spots, social media and in-store work, aims to encourage baseball fans across the country to wear their team caps on opening day regardless of whether they are at home, stuck in the office or at the game itself.

(Oddly, while 4 April is officially baseball's opening day, 2016 sees three nationally televised games take place on the day before).

The campaign, which first began rolling out on 1 March, is championed by TV ads that will air not just on broadcaster ESPN and the MLB Network, but also across YouTube and Facebook videos.

The campaign is fronted both by fans and several MLB stars including Bryce Harper, Buster Posey and Andrew McCutchen.

The initial 30-second commercial was launched on 16 March and features an array of fans (of all ages, genders and ethnicities) backing all teams.

It was further supported by team-specific social spots: such as this New York Yankees version which was posted on the Yankees own YouTube channel.

While for New Era, its own initial 15-second star player fronted teaser rolled out in March, before the launch on 4 April itself of a 30-second 'This Is The Cap' commercial.

The campaign also spans bespoke signage in more than 2,100 stores - including Dick's Sporting





Goods, Lids and MLB stadium stores.

The league itself is also pushing the campaign on its central social sites and the social media channels of its teams through fan giveaways, player appearances and fan game footage on opening day.

Plenty of other brands, such as media outfits like Bleacher Report, also got in on the #CapsOn action to amplify the campaign.

'Opening Day is the greatest time of year,' argues EVP Business at MLB Noah Garden.

'Everybody is leading the division, so everybody wants to show their colours in one way or another. Putting their caps on lets fans show their passion.'

A building lighting partnership also saw New York's Empire State Building light up in all the colours of the MLB teams to mark Opening Day.

We tip our hats to #CapsOn - which looks like a major success.

The main spot racked up 550,000 YouTube views on the MLB site in the two weeks before the season started, while, according to New Era baseball category director Tony DeSimone 'the #CapsOn video is New Era's most-liked video on Facebook ever'.

'Combined with MLB, we'll be getting a lot of impressions from a brand perspective, and from a sales perspective, because we're driving buzz to a higher level,' DeSimone said.

'It should drive people to their local stadium store or Lids store to buy a cap.'

The MLB is deploying a range of social media content for the new season across multiple league and team channels.

Initiative range from the successful MLB's Snapchat Day on 11 March (which saw players publish Snapchat stories from spring training games, was a huge success), to the league's use of pre- and post-game Periscope live video across its channels, as well as continuing to use of other technolo-

gies such as Vines and Gifs.

Social is a big part of what the MLB does as it is an effective way to reach fans and keep the excitement of opening day going, harnessing the buzz and making the MLB more visible and accessible.

This year also saw the MLB run a 'My Opening Day' photo and video sharing initiative on its MLB Fans App incentivised by an official MLB gear giveaway.

Another league Opening Day content activation saw the MLB activate around the building excitement around the bookie's World Series favourites Chicago Cubs and their quest to end their long, long title drought.

Will this season see the end of the so called Cubs Curse and the team's 'losingest record in baseball'? <

# CAPS ON!

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## Real-Time & New Tech

The last couple of baseball seasons have seen the league and its partners, unsurprisingly, increase their focus on communicating with new technologies, across more contemporary channels and youth-led platforms. Recent seasons have seen baseball brands activative in everything from Virtual Reality to Snapchat Stories. Many of these new media platforms also enable leverage marketing that syncs live to the game - offering the opportunity for real-time, in-game, action-relevant activation. An approach that enables sponsors to be relevant and to engage with consumers when their baseball passions are peaking and get them closer to the game action.



**Taco Bell 'Steal A Base, Steal A Taco' >**

The entire US population has a free taco to claim thanks to Cleveland Indians' shortstop Francisco Lindor and Taco Bell's 'Steal a Base, Steal a Taco' promotion.

The MLB sponsor's World Series activation is based around a simple promise the nation: 'If a player steals a base during the World Series, everyone in American gets a free Doritos Locos Taco.'

The 2016 iteration off the campaign, which is hubbed around a web platform at <http://tacobell.com/stealabase>, was reintroduced with an integrated marketing effort spanning television and online advertising, digital and social media support assets aand a major public relations push.

These campaign assets, which all asked 'Who Will Be America's Next Taco Hero?', were spear-headed by a flagship TV commercial and YouTube spot which was first posted ahead of the Chicago Cubs v Cleveland Indians Fall Classic on 19 October and supported on the brand's Twitter feed and on its Facebook page.

And America didn't have to wait long for its free lunch.

In the bottom of the first innings of Game 1 on Tuesday 25 October, the Cleveland Indians' short-stop Francisco Lindor stole second base.

The both the league and the fast food brand's social channels reacted immediately.

All of America will be treated to a free Doritos Locos Taco on Wednesday, 2 November from 2pm to 600pm (local time) at all participating Taco Bell locations.

This is the fifth year for Taco Bell's nationwide initiative: one which aims to engage and reward all baseball fans right across the country - no matter which team they support (see previous case study).

Like all great sponsorship activations....if it works the first time, then why not repeat?

'Since we first created the "Steal a Base, Steal a Taco" program in 2007, a whole new category of hero has been created in sports: the Taco Hero. It's an accolade specific to those athletes whose stolen base feat during the World Series has earned





them a hallowed place in the hearts of taco lovers across the country,' trumpets Taco Bell chief marketing officer Marisa Thalberg.

'We are excited to bring this event back again in the 2016 World Series. We look forward to rooting along with the country in the hopes that a player will manage to 'steal' another free taco for America and we will be able to induct a brand new 'Taco Hero,' she said at the 2016 campaign launch.

'The World Series is the biggest stage in baseball and a perfect setting for Taco Bell's "Steal a Base, Steal a Taco" promotion,' added MLB EVP Business Noah Garden.

'Baseball fans will be rooting for their favourite team but free tacos are something we can all agree to rally behind.'

Taco Bell has been an official partner of Major League Baseball since 2004.

This has become one of our favourite annual sponsor activations, but it's not the only sports property partnership initiative that offers a whole nation giveaway.

Back in 2011, Australian beer brand and national cricket team sponsor Victoria Bitter had to buy a round for the whole country to honour its 'Shout The Nation' marketing promise to buy all Aussies a beer if England beat Australia in that year's cricket Ashes series - an event that acts as a warning beacon to all over confident sports sponsor brands everywhere (see case study). <

#### **Gatorade 'Bryce Harper - VR At Bat' >**

The regular season is over and the playoffs started this week, so what better time to offer fans a chance to experience just what it is really like to face a MLB fastball?

At least that's what MLB sponsor Gatorade thinks as it rolls out its innovative 'Go to Bat As Bryce Harper' virtual reality experience: a 360-degree video flagged as a 'first of its kind' athletic experience.

The campaign features Washington Nationals star Bryce Harper and aims to enable fans to step into his shoes at the plate

by blending real-action footage, computer-generated imagery, crowd noise and Harper's internal monologue to provide a 360-degree, all-round experience that spans vision, sound and feel.

Shot from multiple angles with a 14-camera rig, the film can be viewed on YouTube 360 from a computer or mobile,

But it is best experienced in full VR via Google Cardboard, Oculus Rift or other headset devices.

The campaign is supported by paid digital advertising and it is also promoted across Gatorade's own digital and social platforms.

Another strand of the campaign saw Gatorade congratulate the amateur side 'Prince George RBI' on a great season by inviting them to experience the epic Bryce Harper Virtual Reality Experience and then surprising them with a visit from Bryce Harper himself.

There is further support in the form of a 'behind-the-scenes' video posted by effects outfit The Mill.

As well as The Mill, the Gatorade team worked with OMD agency Zero Code and The Mill.

According to Gatorade, the drinks giant has begun experimenting with the 360 technology to stay on the communications cutting edge.

'We're always looking for new technologies and new ways to leverage platforms to bring a unique experience to our consumers and to athletes. We feel like this is going to be one of the platforms of the future to really give immersive and unique experiences to consumers,' says Kenny Mitchell, Gatorade's senior director-consumer engagement.

'So we want to make sure we have a very, very strong grasp on it and can really help tell our brand stories through it.'

Indeed, this initiative follows a similar 360-degree experiences from Gatorade earlier this year revolving around the train-

ing regimes of Serena Williams, JJ Watt and Usain Bolt.

This is a dizzying, visually compelling campaign with multiple phases that is one of the earliest activations to explore the YouTube 360 technology.

YouTube 360 was launched earlier this year and aims to allow consumers to explore various angles and perspectives by dragging a mouse or shifting the position of their phone.

Other sponsor campaigns and sports marketers leading the way with this technology include All Blacks shirt sponsor AIG's Rugby World Cup 'Haka 360' (see case study),

Wimbledon 2015 sponsor Stella Artois through its 'Fly Like Rufus 360 Experience' (see case study), and Nike's Hypervenom II 'The Neymar Jr Effect Virtual Reality Experience'.

As for the impressive Gatorade work, it is just a shame (and something of a surprise) that Harper's Washington Nationals didn't make this season's play-offs.

Gatorade parent company PepsiCo extended its sponsorship of Major League Baseball earlier in 2015 and the deal includes marketing rights for Gatorade, Pepsi, Aquafina and its snack portfolio brands such as Frito-Lay sunflower seeds and Cracker Jack. <







## Next Gen Young Stars

Taking a forward looking approach the league, its sponsors, endorser advertisers and ambushers are switching focus from tradition and the game's elder statesmen to younger demographics and the next generation of stars.

The league is using new teams, markets, and 'young stars' at the core of its marketing: think of the Cubs' Kris Bryant, the Indians' Francisco Lindor, the LA Dodgers' Mike Trout and the Washington Nationals' Bryce Harper (the MLB star with the highest nationwide 'familiarity, recognisability and appeal' Q-Score) - as key selling aspects on the business side.

**KRIS BRYANT:  
THE FUTURE IS HERE**

**T-Mobile 'Bryce Harper - #Unlimited Baseball' >**

Activating around October's Major League Baseball postseason, MLB telecoms sponsor T-Mobile aims to hit a home run with its #UnlimitedBaseball contest.

Linked to its unlimited data T-Mobile ONE offering, this fan-focused competition invites baseball lovers to share just how much they love America's game.

To enter, fans are incentivised to post a video or photo on their Instagram or Twitter accounts sharing how they're baseball's number one fan and tag it with #UnlimitedBaseball and #contest.

Fans can also shoot and post their video/photo at special T-Mobile on-site, at-stadium booths during the American League and National League Championship Series games.

Simply by demonstrating their passion using the #UnlimitedBaseball hashtag participants are guaranteed a \$5 MLBshop.com gift card, as well as a chance to win one of the initiative's major prizes: which range from a year of T-Mobile ONE, MLB.tv for life, tickets to 2017 games or a \$2,500 shopping spree on MLBshop.com.

Plus, one lucky winner will scoop the grand prize: a VIP trip to every game of the 2017 World Series.

Each week through the postseason, T-Mobile is revealing two #UnlimitedBaseball finalists (picked by CEO and president John Legere himself) on its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages.

Then it is the fans themselves who vote to select the winner by simply responding to their favourite.

T-Mobile will announce the grand prize winner live on FOX during Game 4 of the 2016 World Series on 29 October.

The telco amped up its #UnlimitedBaseball promotion at the start of the postseason in October with a set of marketing assets led by an 'Unlimited Baseball: Nats v Sox' spot with rolled out from 4 October.

The ad, which is fronted by Washington National's star slugger Bryce Harper, urges consumers to 'Never miss a moment of Postseason

magic. Stream every pitch, hit, and Bryce Harper bomb with T-Mobile ONE - unlimited data for everyone. Welcome to #UnlimitedBaseball'.

The initiative also includes OOH, print and in-stadium signage, as well as plenty of digital and social support.

And all the assets and executions drive viewers online to find out full details on #UnlimitedBaseball at the initiative's core web hub [www.t-mobile.com/MLB](http://www.t-mobile.com/MLB) and to [www.t-mobile.com/ONE](http://www.t-mobile.com/ONE) for more information about T-Mobile ONE.

'We know T-Mobile customers hate limits and love baseball! Our customers have already streamed more than one million hours of MLB.tv this season alone - without ever worrying about their data bucket or overages - thanks to free MLB.tv from T-Mobile!' explains T-Mobile USA CEO John Legere.

'Now, I can't wait to see all the super fandom and give everyone the chance to win some truly epic stuff!'

While this isn't actually the first 2016/17 campaign based around a sponsor's search for baseball number one fan led by a consumer-created video/photo mechanic (see our Wix.com 'Number One Yankees Fan' campaign case study), this is an impressively integrated initiative with a broad national reach and an admirable depth of creative assets.

T-Mobile has been an official MLB sponsor for the last four years and through the season offers customers a range of fan perks: from the MLB At Bat app for free and free subscriptions to MLB.tv, to deals at the MLB Shop and data bonuses.

Plus, this time around, for the first time in the 69-year history of World Series TV broadcasting, T-Mobile is the Fall Classic's official presenting sponsor.

Back in April 2015 T-Mobile announced it was again giving customers free MLB At Bat subscription worth \$20: enabling its customers to have a season-long Premium pass allowing them to stream the MLB.TV 'Game of the Day', watch in-game highlights and access live look-ins on key plays (blackout restrictions apply).

While it was as long ago as 2014 that T-Mobile





first announced its self-styled game changing MLB deal with a nationwide campaign led by a 30-second spot created by Publicis Seattle and also starring Harper.

In addition to its individual athlete ambassador endorsement deals with Harper and Andrew McCutchen, the telco also boasts six MLB team deals within its baseball partnership portfolio. <

#### **Adidas 'Kris Bryant' & Red Bull' >**

Baseball is searching for a new megastar and Red Bull became the first brand to attach itself to the man many believe could replace the recently retired Derek Jeter as the MLB's ace ambassador - Kris Bryant

Back in 2015, before Bryant came of age as a star in playing a vital role in the Cubs World Series win, Red Bull signed him up as an ambassador and ran an ad campaign revolving around Bryant being the man to break the Cubs' Curse of the Billy Goat.

For technical contract-length reasons, rookie phenomenon Bryant actually began the 2015 season in Iowa's Minor Leagues, but when the Chicago Cubs summoned him from 'the farm' for his Major League debut on 17 April Red Bull continued its exclusive content strategy by rolling out the slugger's first athlete ambassador ad campaign.

The first of many one presumes - after all, Bryant is one of the most hyped young player in baseball.

During his seven games in Iowa this season, Bryant blasted three homers and batted a very impressive .321 and Red Bull's campaign suggests that while he was down on the farm honing his baseball skills he was also milking cows and tending goats (more of which later).

The spot humorously depicts Bryant's time 'down on the farm' in Iowa - complete with Iowa agricultural stereotypes mixing with a heavy dose of 'Field of Dreams' baseball.

The three-minute, mini-mockumentary blends farm-footage with vox-pops from some of Chicago's most notable Cubs fans



and sportsmen – from Chicago Bulls star Joakim Noah, to legendary Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka, ex-Cubs great Ron Cey, Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan and a slew of other diehard Cubs fans.

All these success-starved supporters wax lyrical about the youngster's skills and what Bryant means to the Cubs franchise.

The campaign, the first major commercial Bryant has fronted in his professional career, spans both Red Bull's own web channel ([www.redbull.com/krisbryant](http://www.redbull.com/krisbryant)) and social sites as well as Bryant's personal platforms.

The campaign was also promoted through the slugger's own social channels, including his Twitter and Instagram feeds.

With so much hype, appetite for information about Bryant is high and the energy drink behemoth is feeding it by ensuring more exclusive Kris Bryant content is available at [www.redbull.com/krisbryant](http://www.redbull.com/krisbryant).

The campaign aims not just to engage as a standalone initiative, but also to drive consumers to engage and experience the world of Red Bull and its 'best action sports clips' and 'original series' on the web.

By creating its own content and channels to sit alongside its owned brand sports and adventure properties and its official sponsorships and ambassador deals, Red Bull is creating so much rich content that it is selling ad space and partnership promotional opportunities to third party partners.

But who, you ask, is Kris Bryant?

What is all the fuss about and what's that about a goat?

Well, he was the No 2 draft pick out of the University of San Diego in 2013 was the best hitter in college and the 2014 Minor League Player of the Year.

Hopes are sky high that he can lead the charge to end the Cubs long, long wait for a World Series.

Famously, the legendary north side Chicago team (founded in 1870 and with the second oldest ballpark in America) has what is described as 'the losingest record in baseball'.

The Cubs haven't won the World Series since

1908 and, according to legend, have been suffering from the 'Curse of the Billy Goat'.

This curse was placed on the Cubs in 1945 when Billy Goat Tavern owner Billy Sianis was asked to leave a World Series game against the Detroit Tigers at Wrigley because his pet goat was bothering fans. He was outraged and declared: 'Them Cubs, they ain't gonna win no more'. And they haven't.

The Cubs have not won a National League pennant since this incident and have not won a World Series since 1908.

But fans hope Bryant is going to be the star who breaks the curse.

'Man, I don't believe in the curse of the goat,' says Bulls' 6-foot-11 centre Joakim Noah in the ad (who later adds 'I don't care that Kris is Chicago's new favourite guy. He's only 6-5. He's still a miniature person').

Not only does this campaign showcase Red Bull's storytelling skills, but in linking itself to Bryant it also shows perception and vision.

Indeed, getting in early could turn out to have long-term 'big league' brand benefits for the energy drink.

After all, baseball is a sport in search of a megastar.

While Major League Baseball has its share of stand-out players – such as Buster Posey, Andrew McCutchen and Mike Trout – ever since last season's retirement of Yankees legend Derek Jeter (see case study) the MLB has lacked an iconic, national/global heavyweight star.

There is no MLB equivalent of LeBron James, Tiger Woods, Cristiano Ronaldo and no Lionel Messi.

Sure, MLB is in rude healthy. Despite attendance plateauing out (for the moment), it is benefiting from a record broadcast deal and both the minor leagues and spring training set new attendance records.

Indeed, the MLB's new, feel-good 2015 season campaign, #This (see case study) is looking to the future and trying to unearth stars.

And so are the brands that leverage the game. Has Red Bull got there first with Bryant? <

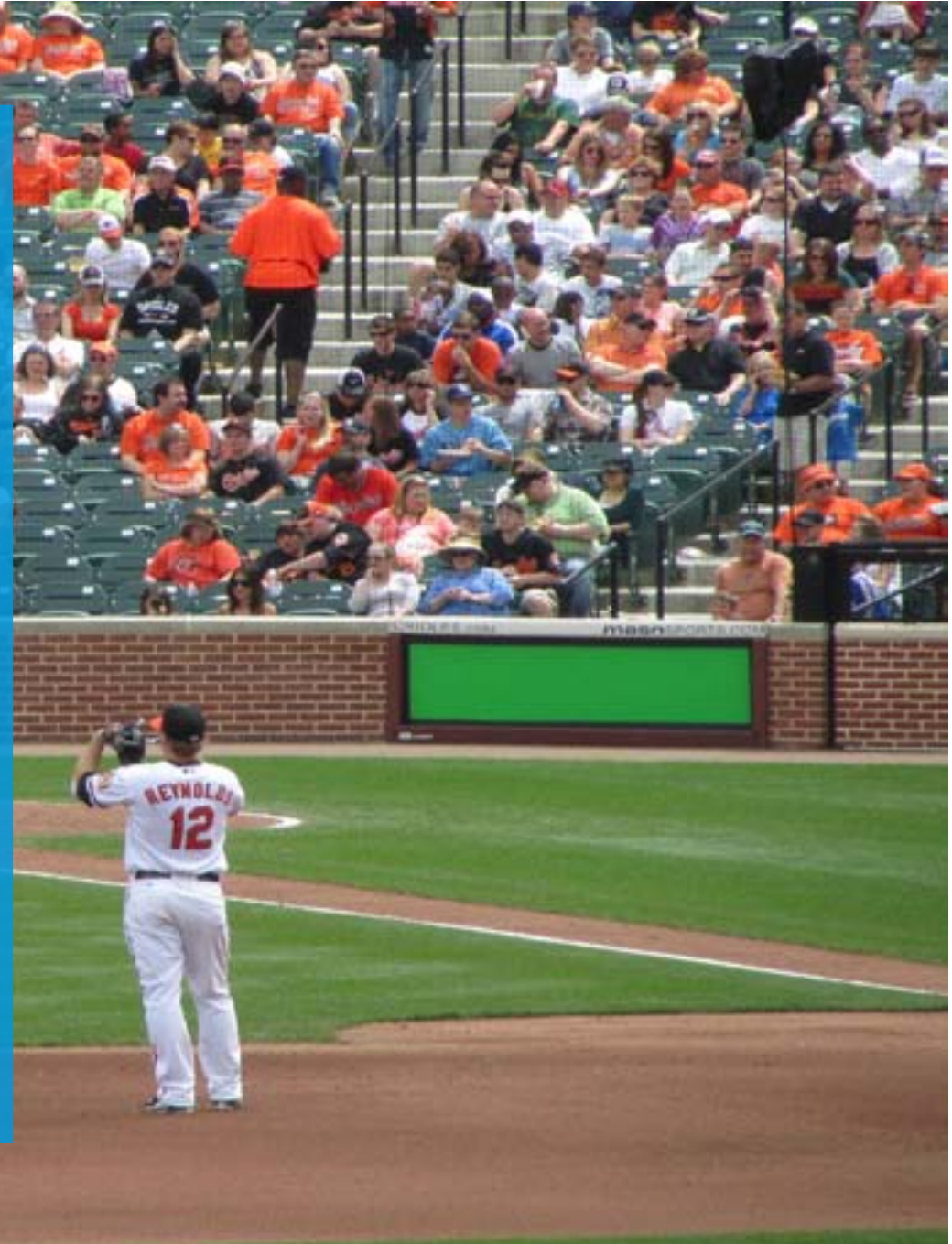






## Regionalisation

Another key new trend is the 'regionalisation' of the MLB, its partners, advertisers and its athletes: leveraging a trend for a more relevant, customisable and regional interests for both local brands and international companies looking to target specific places and demographic groups. The MLB's local TV numbers and contract values illustrate the sport is enjoying success on a local level. Over the last two years MLB teams have penned local television deals worth more than \$1bn. In 2016, 9 US local broadcasters earned the top TV audiences in their local market, while 24 teams enjoyed the highest viewership on cable.





For the 2016 World Series major League Baseball and its TV broadcast partners even introduced a new global/regional-specific 'green screen' behind home plate – a virtual ad platform developed to serve fans watching on television and which enables sponsors to run ballpark ads tailored to specific regions.

So while viewers in one market might be seeing a Pepsi execution, others in a different region might be watching an ad for Copa Airlines.

Indeed, during the World Series, 32 different brands – from Delta Air Lines and T-Mobile to Anheuser-Busch and SABMiller – advertised on the green screen across six dedicated TV feeds.

'Virtual ads allow us to really present ourselves locally to specific markets around the world,' explains Dom Balsamo, MLB International's VP of media sales and marketing partnerships.

'For the most part, our games are played on U.S. soil, so to get our international partners in visible space is invaluable.'

There has also been a parallel rise in the opportunities for MLB athletes to become valuable brand endorsers for local brands and major companies looking to appeal to a specific region via local campaigns.

Below are just three of the thousands of examples of this trend.

#### **Toyota Washington Dealers - Steve Strasburg >**

In a few short seasons Stephen Strasburg evolved from a highly publicised top to one of the super star faces of the Washington Nationals.

And for the last few years he has been leveraged his local popularity and status by fronting campaigns for Washington area Toyota dealers.

Toyota may be a global goliath when it comes to the car industry, yet Strasburg isn't an international or even a national athlete endorser for the auto marquee but rather specifically spearheads regional initiatives to help

Toyota resonate with residents of the Washington area. <

**Fresh Brewed Tees - Jason Kipnis >**

Jason Kipnis has spent his entire MLB career with just one team - the Cleveland Indians. His one-club- man looks set for good as in 2014 he signed a a new deal with the team to remain with the club through to 2020.

Little wonder then that a star athlete so deeply associated with the Cleveland Indians and its local community has become an endorser for local t-shirt brand Fresh Brewed Tees.

2016 saw Kipnis appeared in a Fresh Brewed Tees campaign called 'Kipnis for President': which thematically spoofed the national presidential contest to focus on Kipnis' local ties to Cleveland and how is [personality (and thus the partnership) resonates well with the Cleveland community. <

**Booster Juice - Jose Bautista >**

Ever since the Montreal Expos moved to Washington in 2004, the Toronto Blue Jays have been in a unique position in MLB in so much as they are the only club in Canada and thus have the ability to appeal to fans far beyond the Toronto area.

Thus, geographically speaking, regional campaigns fronted by Blue Jays' stars can actually be national campaigns running right across Canada.

There are a fair few examples of Blue Jays players signing ambassador deals with Canadian brands and fronting Canadian campaigns.

One of the more established of these is the partnership between Booster Juice and Jose Bautista.

The drinks brand has been working with Bautista since 2011 and leverages him in ads across the country - including this 'Taste Explosion' campaign during the 2016 season. <





wix.com



# Club Campaign Innovation



**Wix.com ‘No1 Yankees Fan? >**

As excitement builds around the end of the Major League Baseball Season, a new Wix.com campaign aims to crown the biggest New York Yankees fan of all.

As the Yankees strive for a post-season wild-card spot in the finely balanced American League playoff race, the team’s newest commercial partner has launched a contest to champion the team’s top fan.

The Israeli-based DIY website company’s contest invites Yankees supporters to submit videos demonstrating their devotion to the team.

Participation is incentivised not just with the lure of the winning supporters being presented with a trophy live during a Yankees game, but that fan will also get a unique opportunity to meet the Yankees players and to take the field for pre-game batting practice.

The #BiggestYankeesFan winner will also have his or her own ‘No.1 Yankees Fan Website’ created by Wix.com in tandem with the winner at the TheBiggestYankeeFan.com domain

The activation is promoted through a video, launched in late August, celebrating many of the team’s memorable moments throughout the ball club’s long history and also features tributes to some of its greatest players such as Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth.

The film challenges fans by asking ‘What Legacy Will You Leave? #BiggestYankeesFan Think you deserve the title?’

The competition also ran across the sponsor and the club’s social sites.

The entry mechanic is fairly straightforward – fans are simply encouraged to follow the following three steps:

- 1.Create a fan video showing you’re the one.
- 2.Upload it to <http://l.wix.com/BiggestYankeesfan>
- 3.Include the #BiggestYankeesFan hashtag

Hundreds of fans submitted videos at <http://www.wix.com/biggestyankeesfan/contest> and several got enthusiastically creative in their support: Sam Corbin’s joke-fuelled spot included 50 Yankees puns, while Carly Walsh baked Yankees-

themed pies as tributes to club legends and Willy Appleman covered his kitchen in the famous Yankees pinstripes.

As part of the new Yankees partnership, Wix will also be the team’s official website design sponsor and partner for 2016.

‘So many people are engaged with the franchise, and it was wonderful for us to collaborate with such a huge brand like the Yankees. They have a great history and so many fans,’ said Omer Shai, Wix.com’s CMO.

‘I was really happy with the engagement we got, and the videos that the fans created were great. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience for fans, and it gives our brand visibility as well.’

‘We are very excited to begin our relationship with Wix as the Official Website Design Partner,’ said Michael J Tusiani, New York Yankees Senior Vice President of Corporate Sales & Sponsorships.

‘Wix is offering our fans, worldwide, an innovative way to exhibit passion for the team through its unique website design and mobile platforms. We also look forward to working with Wix to strengthen its already established global brand.’

With 18,226 YouTube view of the promotional spot, impressive social statistics for the hashtag and hundreds of entry consumer-created video uploads, early metrics look positive on this campaign.

Tactically, it certainly makes sense for a new sponsor to explore and showcase the history and legends of a new property – to demonstrate it understands the background and culture of the partnership.

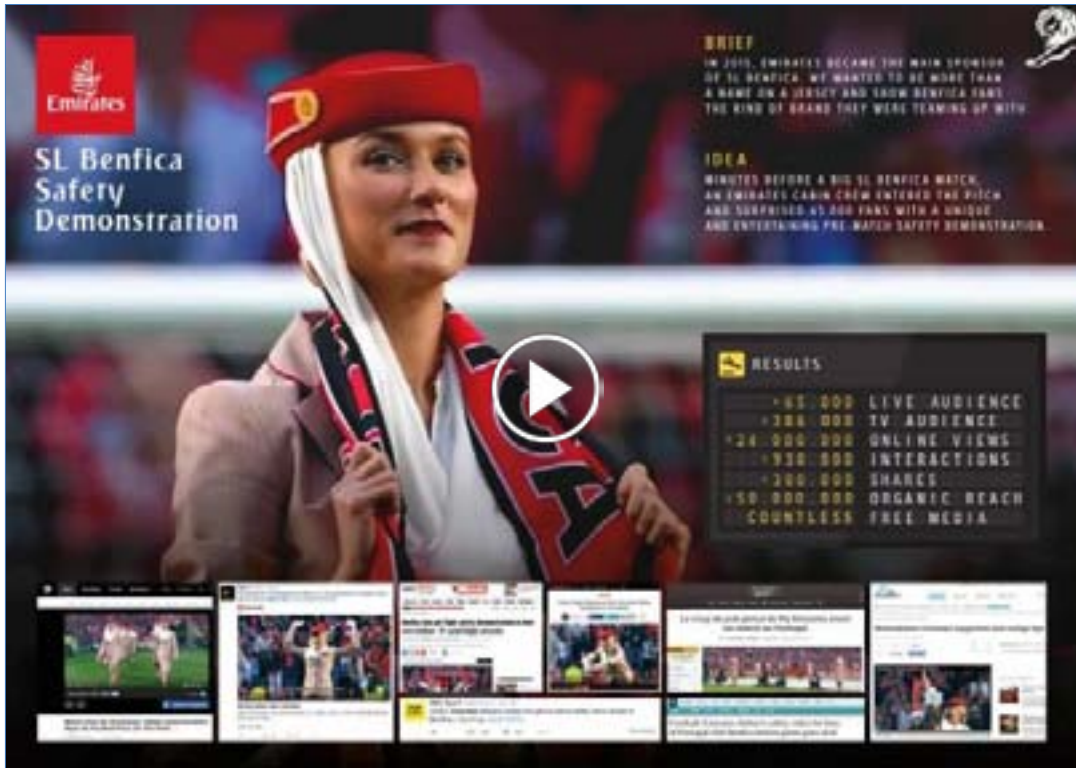
This campaign comes hot-on the heel of the mid August announcement that the Israeli DIY online outfit unveiled its New York Yankees partnership.

The baseball alliance is the second major sports sponsorship in Wix.com’s portfolio following its partnership with the Premier League club Manchester City earlier in the year: which it activated with a campaign that offered fans club-led rewards for social engagement (see case study).

‘Cooperation with a well-known baseball team like the New York Yankees is part of our strategy







to leverage the enormous power that sport has in presenting our brand to the public at large,' adds Wix CMO Omer Shai.

Wix also ran commercials during Superbowl 50 in a spot alliance with Kung Fu Panda. <

#### Emirates 'LA Dodgers Safety Demo' >

Emirates airlines cabin crew stole the show at the opening of the Los Angeles Dodgers vs Cincinnati Reds with a spoof safety stunt on the field that included the game's first-pitch.

The initiative was a straightforward reworking of its 2015 stunt launching its sponsorship of Lisbon's SL Benfica in Portugal.

The matching actions and commentary were simply re-jigged for baseball nomenclature.

The stunt took place on 23 May to promote the airline's new non-stop flights between LA and Dubai, but the partnership itself was first unveiled in February.

The sponsorship sees Emirates become the official airline sponsor of the Dodgers and it will see some partnership-relevant changes at Dodger Stadium for the 2016 season.

This will range from Emirates signage on the foul poles and behind home plate, a set of in-game activations, ceremonial first pitches and fan-appreciation activities, plus a title sponsorship of the 'Emirates Lounge' (a 70-person hospitality space for Emirates and guests).

A number of Emirates airplanes will also be adding Dodgers signage to the exterior of the aircraft.

While there are no current plans for the Dodgers to play exhibitions in Dubai, the deal sees a group of LA Dodgers stars (led by slugging first baseman Adrian Gonzalez visiting Emirates' Dubai headquarters to run a baseball clinic for local Little League teams.

The Dodgers organisation will also be-

come involved with Little League. Indeed, the Dodgers are now sponsoring the Dubai Little League All Star Travel Teams - which will be renamed the Dubai Dodgers.

'We have always been in search of an iconic U.S. sports entity, one that has reached not just the United States, but other parts of our network,' explains Emirates Airline president Sir Tim Clark - referencing the Dodgers' growing popularity in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

'Taken together, the Dodgers were the perfect fit for us. We're honoured and very proud to have our brand associated with such an iconic team here in the US'

The deal is part of a concerted effort by the Dodgers to expand its global footprint as its new ownership aims to grow the brand overseas.

'Over the last year, we have become, finally, the most heavily attended sports venue in the world,' said Dodgers president and CEO Stan Kasten during a media conference at Dodger Stadium to announce the partnership.

'But another important part of our history is the outreach we have had globally and internationally, and at a time when globalization is such an important thing for baseball as part of our new Commissioner's initiative, it gives us great pride to be able to partner with the leading global brand in the airline category. We're looking forward to even greater outreach.'

Dodgers ownership partner Peter Guber summed up the new partnership with a simple comparison.

'The Dodgers provide emotional transportation for [their] audience, [their] fans, and of course Emirates provides physical transportation,' said Dodgers ownership partner Peter Guber.

'The idea of this combination is one that is born because great brands like to associate with great brands.'

This deal sees Emirates expand its in-

ternational sponsorship footprint into the baseball space.

Adding to its existing sports partnerships that span the worlds of football (with both FIFA and some of the world's premier teams including AC Milan, Real Madrid, Arsenal FC, Olympiacos FC, Hamburger SV, and Paris Saint-Germain), plus a strong presence in tennis with a portfolio that includes the US Open, the Emirates Airline US Open Series, the Australian Open, the Emirates Airline Australian Open Series as well as the French Open and the ATP).

In the US Emirates already sponsors the New York Cosmos, the USA Rugby Team and the San Francisco Symphony.

This new sport's addition has deep roots in American history and culture and is one which unifies many communities.

It is often seen not only as a showcase for sporting skill, but also the spirit of competition and fair play, a continuous drive to excel, and ability to foster a shared passion and connection with its fans.

All values Emirates and the Dodgers claim to share.

If it worked brilliantly once, then why not try, try and try again?

This on-pitch safety stunt is a simple reworking of the initiative that launched Emirates' sponsorship of Portuguese football club Benfica (see case study).

That campaign received global media attention, universal praise from fans, the public and the sponsorship industry.

Plus it racked up an impressive 2,500,000 YouTube views.

The airline's marketing and partnerships team will hope to achieve the same for its Dodgers do-over. <





Club Cause & CSR





### Kansas City Royals 'Relay The Way' >

Defending MLB champions Kansas City Royals, who have had back-to-back World Series appearances, are celebrating the team's recent success at the start of the new season with a not-for-profit campaign revolving around a customised micro-chipped baseball containing thousands of fan messages.

To mark the Opening Day of the new MLB season and leverage KC baseball fervour as the franchise celebrates by hoisting a World Series pennant at the team's hometown opening game,

Kansas City agency VML created a custom team baseball containing a microchip memory of fans messages as digital memento

The initiative supports the Kansas City MLB Urban Youth Academy - a non-profit organisation providing the city's children access to education and career resources - and saw VML work with Mayor Sly James, members of Kansas City's board on urban youth academy and the team.

The pro bono initiative kicked off prior to the Royals' Sunday night season opener against the New York Mets as 2,500 fans formed a single-file 9.5 mile 'Relay the Way' line to toss the ball from one to another all the way from downtown KC's Union Station to the team's Kauffman Stadium where it was used for the ceremonial opening pitch.

This line formed the shape of the team's crown logo.

Each supporter in the line had visited the 'Relay The Way' website (<http://www.relaytheway.com/>) where by making a donation (for at least \$1) to the Kansas City MLB Urban Youth Academy, they were able to add their own personal tweet-size digital message to the ball itself.

Those messages - which ranged from comments about what the game and the team means to them, to good wishes for a good cause - were all uploaded into a chip

embedded in the ball's core

After the game, the ball was put on display at the Royals' Hall of Fame inside Kauffman Stadium, but by using wi-fi, anyone in the museum can look at the messages stored in the ball on a smartphone.

The ball's computer chip can store between 100,000 to 200,000 pieces of text.

'It will be stored inside this baseball forever - we're looking at it like a digital, physical time capsule,' explains VML executive creative director Tony Snethen.

'Our hope is that while this was a Kansas City-focused thing, that we're going to reach people all over the globe to take part in this. There are balls out there that track activity (like a basketball that can track how many dribbles and movement), but we searched high and low and couldn't find anything that was more message-based. This is not necessarily an activity tracker, it's more of immortalizing messages in time, and we wanted it to be historical.'

VML created the digital memory ball by opening and carving out dozens of balls to find the right method to fit the computer chip inside while still maintaining the ball's original shape and weight

The agency also worked with local leather company Sandlot Goods to ensure the ball's laces were stitched back up properly.

The initiative was also backed by several local companies and was promoted by the agency and the Royals in the local media and across social media too.

? This is certainly one of the more innovative recent cause campaigns we've seen in the sports world.

While the Internet Of Things is seeing objects of all kinds chipped and connected to the web, this wi-fi, supporter message memory ball will be an interactive exhibit in the team's museum recalling fan feelings after such a successful period in the team's history.

But it is also the centrepiece of a community-led, local cause campaign that links the kids of the city to the sport.

Home Run! <

### Philadelphia Phillies 'Clubhouse Sleepover' >

Young patients from local children's hospitals are gifted the run of the Philadelphia Phillies clubhouse on special sleepover night organised by the MLB team and its stadium title sponsor Citizens Bank.

For one offseason evening in late November sees the ballclub host a unique Friday night sleepover at Citizens Bank Park for kids receiving treatment at several local children's hospitals.

The overnight baseball experience begins when each child is actually signed to one-day Phillies contract by general manager Matt Klentak, before being shown to their own individual locker (complete with personalised name tag and balloons) to put their things in for the day-night experience.

The evening also included an indoor batting-cage session (with the help of a quartet of Phillies ballgirls), a team meal in the clubhouse, movies on a giant projection screen and then a late-night behind-the-scenes tour of the ballpark.

See the 2016 Clubhouse Sleepover video here.

The initiative was promoted across the social channels of the club, the league and local media outlets.

Images from the Clubhouse Sleepover were also posted on the club's own website at [http://philadelphia.phillies.mlb.com/photos/gallery.jsp?content\\_id=209226394&c\\_id=phi](http://philadelphia.phillies.mlb.com/photos/gallery.jsp?content_id=209226394&c_id=phi) and on MLB.com at <http://m.mlb.com/news/article/156703674/citizens-bank-park-hosts-sleepover-for-kids/>

'When they walk up and they see their name hanging above their locker, or when the Phillie Phanatic comes over to give them a hug, it's truly special and we just hope it's a night they'll never forget,' says Philadelphia Phillies community outreach spokesman Jameson Hall.

'It gives the kids a little break from what they might be going through in their daily life, to just be

a kid and be around the other kids and just enjoy themselves here,' adds Michele DeVicaris, the Phillies' director of community and charity events.

'The clubhouse is theirs — they can run around here and just enjoy being here all night.'

A fantastic local cause initiative from a sponsor and a property owner committed to its young community.

Putting kids under contract and treating them to a unique major league experience for the night creates an unforgettable experience for patients and parents alike.

This is the third year the Phillies and commercial partner Citizens have hosted the sleepover event.


It actually began in 2014 when the winner of the team's 'Phantastic Auction' anonymously donated the prize to the local children's hospital: allowing four patients and their families to spend the night in the clubhouse.

This year's event gave six families with kids of all ages an experience never to be forgotten. <



## > Traditions, Legends, Rivalries

Of course, that's not to say the league and its partners have turned their back entirely on old-school 'tradition, legends and rivalries' in their activation and marketing approach. After all, the MLB is the oldest North American professional sports league and boasts so many legendary players, hallowed traditions and long-running rivalries. Sponsor and sportsbiz marketers do continue to turn to former stars as endorsers who offer nationwide recognition and use themes of tradition and rivalry to connect across multiple generations. But even most of these campaigns have a modern twist in terms of technology or ad approach.

#MLBmemorybank 

**MasterCard 'MasterPass It' >**

Perhaps the greatest rivalry in MLB is that between the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees: both fabled baseball teams steeped in history and both are also huge American markets not too far from one another).

This traditional rivalry has been the subject of many marketing campaigns through the years (one of our recent favourites being paint brand Benjamin's Moore's 'Green Monster' outdoor campaign from 2014/15).

The 2016 season saw MLB sponsor MasterCard activate around the rivalry in a simple spot for its new MasterPass mobile payments product.

In the MasterCard commercial, set at a game between the two sides, a Yankees fan panics after accidentally spilling his nachos on the jersey of a giant Red Sox fan while his friend calmly uses his MasterCard to immediately buy a new jersey online and alleviate any potential confrontation. <



**Bank Of America #MLBMemoryBank >**

Major League Baseball (MLB) sponsor Bank Of America extends its ongoing #MLBMemoryBank activation (and leverages postseason excitement) with a CSR strand based around an initial hidden camera school stunt and a subsequent class VIP trip to see the Orioles in action.

The campaigns is fronted by Orioles All-Star Adam Jones and is led by a spearhead spot in which the centre fielder puts on a disguise and goes undercover into a Baltimore public school classroom as a substitute teacher.

Mid class, the baseball star reveals his true identity and surprises the whole class with tickets to that evening's Orioles game and thus helps the students 'create memories that will last a lifetime'.

The stunt spot, which was initially posted on both the bank and the league's own YouTube pages on 19 October and then amplified digitally and socially, drives viewers to share their own baseball memories using #MLBmemorybank and learn more at [www.bankofamerica.com/MLBmemorybank](http://www.bankofamerica.com/MLBmemorybank).

Baseball is a game about tradition, part of America's culture and full of personal memories - that is the insight behind MLB sponsor Bank Of





America's #MLBMemoryBank.

This campaign, developed with agency Hill Holiday, asks baseball fans to share their memories and celebrate America's favourite pastime.

The campaign encourages fans and players to share baseball memories through the season using the campaign #MLBmemorybank hashtag.

The 'Undercover Teacher' campaign follows hot on the heels of other recent strands of #MLB-MemoryBank such as the real fan film featuring 'The Reckmeyers' (a married couple who have been making baseball memories since 1952), and this summer's 'Player Memories' online video series: which included August spots featuring first baseball memories like this mixed team spot starring LA Dodgers shortstop Corey Seager, San Francisco Giants second baseman Joe Panik, Boston Red Sox catcher Blake Swihart and New York Yankees pitcher Dellin Betances (among others), plus team-specific films such as player memory vox pop videos from the Baltimore Orioles, the San Francisco Giants, the LA Dodgers and the St Louis Cardinals, as well as the Atlanta Braves, the Houston Astros, the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox.

This ongoing campaign, developed in alliance with the MLB and dating back to 2015 (see case study) is based on the idea that baseball creates memories that last a lifetime.

Bank of America's objective is to demonstrate its shared passion for baseball with the game's fans, while simultaneously boosting engagement and sentiment on social media and driving overall favourability for the brand.

The campaign's specific aim is to provide a programme of content pieces and mechanics that honour fan memories, enable them to be shared and help them create new ones.

BoA leveraged its MLB and individual team rights 'to create contextually relevant messaging'.

The ultimate goal is to inspire memory sharing at scale throughout our creative assets.

Social media is at the heart of the campaign.

To drive engagement, the campaign saw the brand's team visit baseball markets right around the USA, surprising lovers of the game fans with

MLB merchandise and tickets and creating shareable video content.

Prizes on offer to selected fans who posted their memories using #MLBmemorybank included MLB experiences and prizes: from MLB.tv subscriptions, to jerseys, as well as regular season and postseason tickets (to ensure Bank of America itself also helps fans create new memories).

The initiative also capitalises on a sport partly built on statistics, records (and memories), by using its BoA MLB contractual social media inventory (from MLB.tv and the league's core website, to Bank Of America's own Twitter feed, Facebook page and YouTube channel) to promote contextually relevant messaging - thus both MLB and team content accounts and channels all asked fans to share their memories while also highlighting iconic moments throughout baseball history.

In addition to video-led content, other strands from the ongoing campaign include the sponsor developing a new partnership with Snapchat to give away World Series tickets and generate 3,660 Twitter mentions in a day.

For example, thebank and MLB created a Snapchat Story on the official MLB account that asked fans in New York City to create their favourite postseason moments in a series of videos.

A call to action then directed people to screenshot an art frame of World Series tickets and tweet it along with their favourite baseball memory using #MLBmemorybank, for the chance to win the tickets.

In the postseason, BoA brought the #MLB-memorybank Vault to New York City and Los Angeles, where it worked with player ambassadors (including Yankees legend Tino Martinez and Dodgers great Eric Karros) to surprise dozens of fans with prizes ranging from team jerseys and signed memorabilia to the ultimate prize - World Series tickets.

This strand was also filmed for a social video that was released during the 2015 World Series.

In terms of big picture results, the objective is to forge stronger connection between Bank of America and MLB fans by celebrating the national pastime and the passion it inspires. <





# ACTIVATIVE

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**About Us** > The activation of sponsorship rights and partnership marketing is more creatively and strategically complex than ever - but the potential rewards are greater too.

Activative provides unique intelligence and insights that keep our clients - rights owners, brands, agencies and professional services - at the forefront of this evolving landscape.

The old sponsorship model, based on one directional brand-biased claims, vanilla hospitality, logo badging, eyeball metrics, cost per thousand, reach and frequency, is being replaced by one based on authenticity, customisation, dialogue, interactivity and permissive engagement.

Sponsorship is flourishing in this new environment as brands seek symbiotic passionate platforms around which to build consumer conversations.

Activative explores this landscape's emerging strategies, tactics and trends, champions original thinking and innovation and showcases future facing media and new technologies across the sponsorship community - from sports, music, arts and culture, to education, ecology and cause.

Our role is to explore, filter, analyse and advise - we stimulate marketers across the entire space: from traditional sponsorships and to brand tie-ins, to strategic collaborations and commercial partnerships.

A key aspect of the value in our work lies in linking standout sponsorship activation to contemporary socio-cultural, economic and technology trends and in making connections, finding fresh and daring ideas and identifying breakthrough thinking.

We work with some of the world's most forward thinking brands from right across the partnership space - including property owners, brands, agencies, media businesses and other sponsorship professional services companies.

Activative is independent and objective. We are not a mouth-piece for the profession and we have no ties or bias to any agency, rights owner or brand.

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