

Copyright

By

Cara Elizabeth Hawkins

2012

The Report committee for Cara Elizabeth Hawkins

Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

How Social Media Can Overcome the Barriers

To Sponsorship for Elite Runners

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Gary Wilcox

Brad Love

**How Social Media Can Overcome the Barriers
To Sponsorship for Elite Runners**

By

Cara Elizabeth Hawkins, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

**How Social Media Can Overcome the Barriers
To Sponsorship for Elite Runners**

by

Cara Elizabeth Hawkins, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

SUPERVISOR: Gary Wilcox

Abstract: This paper will explore how track and field athletes are currently using social media, what types of social media attract or repel sponsorship and what barriers and opportunities exist for social media use in the sport of track and field. A variety of different sources will be used including academic papers, interviews with community managers from Saucony and Brooks and social media publications.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Overview.....	1
Rise of Social Media.....	3
Rise of Running Participation in the United States.....	5
Running and the Internet.....	6
The 2012 London Olympics and Social Media.....	9
Statement of Purpose.....	11
Chapter 2 American Sport Leagues & Social Media.....	13
NFL.....	14
MLB.....	16
NBA.....	18
MLS.....	20
NHL.....	21
Current Sponsor Strategy for T&F.....	22
Chapter 3 The Sponsor & Elite Athlete Relationship.....	25
Why Sponsors Benefit from Sponsoring Athletes.....	25

Low-Level Processing.....	26
Matching and Congruence.....	28
Balance Theory and Meaning Transfer.....	30
Identification.....	31
What makes Elite Runners Attractive to Sponsors?.....	32
Sponsors & Expectations of Social media use by Elite Runners.....	33
Chapter 4 The Sponsorship Process.....	35
Jenny Barringer Simpson.....	36
Meb Keflezighi.....	37
Hanson-Brooks Project.....	38
Barriers to Sponsorship.....	39
Logo Rules.....	39
Lack of visibility.....	40
Measuring Return on Investment.....	41
Chapter 5 Social Media Strategy for Elite Runners & Sponsors.....	44
Strategies for Elite Runners.....	44

Best Practices for Elite Runners.....	46
Twitter.....	46
Facebook.....	47
Blog.....	48
Strategies for Sponsors.....	49
Conclusion.....	52
Appendix	
Sean Robbins Interview (Saucony).....	53
Interview with Joel Ballezza (Brooks).....	56
Interview with Chris Layne.....	58
Works Cited.....	61

Chapter 1: Overview

Track and field comes to the forefront of most Americans' minds every four years for the Olympic Games. In the period of time between these major events, elite athletes are still competing and trying to make a living. However, the ways in which these athletes support their training are different from their counterparts in most sports.

Those who tend to earn the most solely on winning races are marathon runners. They usually compete twice a year and can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in appearance, prize, and bonus money for a victory in New York, Boston, London, Chicago, or Berlin. For the majority of track and field athletes, however, the major source of income is sponsorships. Also, unlike professional football, basketball and baseball players, who earn a salary from an employer (i.e., a team) and rely on collective bargaining, track and field athletes compete and negotiate as individuals. Thus, sponsors (mostly shoe companies) do not function as employers per se. This means that labor laws designed to protect athletes do not exactly apply (Longman, 2011).

The majority of athletes will win a small amount on winning races but rely heavily on sponsorship and race appearance fees. Track's biggest star, Usain Bolt of Jamaica, will soon be the first track and field athlete to earn \$10 million per year, which is still significantly less than many other professional athletes of similar status. For example, soccer superstar Lionel Messi is said to earn over \$40

million yearly in salary and endorsements (Longman, 2011). Most track and field athletes could make more at entry level jobs than they do athletically.

This lack of salary could be one of the factors affecting the U.S. medal count at the Olympics in track & field. In 2008, the U.S. did not win the most gold medals for the first time in a Summer Games since 1992, losing the gold medal count to China, 51–36 (Michaelis & Wier, 2008). The East African countries won the majority of the medals in the distance events. There was only one medal in distance events by an American, (Shalane Flanagan took bronze in the 10,000m), and the Jamaicans dominated the sprint distances (Medal Winners, , 2008). It is a cruel cycle for these athletes. If they do not have the support to train to their potential they will not medal, which affords little in the way of commercial visibility. This makes sponsors less likely to provide the very support necessary to become more commercially attractive. Thus, the visibility provided by the Olympic Games as well as other international events make these competitions important leverage points for athletes who want to increase their marketability.

Now is the time for elite runners and sponsors to embrace social media and make it part of their brand strategy. The combination of peak social media use, growth in participation of running, an increase in fan interest through social media use, and the 2012 London Olympics make it an ideal time. In this paper, social media and how it functions in correspondence with track and field sponsorship will be explored.

Rise of Social Media

Social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system make a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and see their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Most social media sites support the maintenance of preexisting social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Sites like Twitter, Facebook & Google+ have large, diverse audiences, while other niche networks attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or national identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo/video-sharing. What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between ties who share some offline connection (Boyd & Ellison, 2008)

The history of social media traces back as far as the late 1970s, when computer hobbyists Ward Christensen and Randy Suess invented the bulletin board system (BBS). The launch of the Mosaic web browser in 1993 gave birth to the World Wide Web (Bennett, 2012). From 1997 to 2001, a number of

community tools began supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated Friends. AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente allowed users to create personal, professional, and dating profiles—users could identify Friends on their personal profiles without seeking approval for those connections (Boyd, 2008). From Geocities and Blogger in the late 90s, through to Friendster, Xanga and MySpace at the turn of the millennium, the path to present-day social stalwarts Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Pinterest has been winding (Bennett, 2012).

MySpace was perhaps the first major social network of major accolade. Teenagers began joining MySpace en masse in 2004. This segmented their audience to teenagers, bands and post-collegiate. In July 2005, News Corporation purchased MySpace for \$580 million attracting massive media attention. Afterwards, safety issues plagued MySpace. The site was implicated in a series of sexual interactions between adults and minors, prompting legal action. A moral panic concerning sexual predators quickly spread. Facebook came along in 2004 and began as a niche network for college students. Beginning in September 2005, Facebook expanded to include high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and everyone (Boyd, 2008). With the opening of Facebook to everyone, Myspace became less popular and eventually obsolete. Twitter came into the social media world in 2006 and established itself as a major player (Malik, 2009).

New social media networks continue to be created and gain popularity. The rise of social media indicates a shift in the organization of online communities. While websites dedicated to communities of interest still exist and prosper, social media is organized around people, not interests. Social media sites are structured as personal with the individual at the center of their own community (Boyd, 2008). The social media platforms examined in this paper are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, message boards and blogging sites.

Rise of Running Participation in the United States

Within track and field, the growth of the sport's fan base depends on connecting average runners with elite athletes. The most recent data showed that marathons continued to grow in 2010, as U.S. marathons had an estimated 507,000 finishers, an 8.6% increase from 2009. This was the second largest increase in the past 25 years (U.S. marathons grew 9.9% in 2009). This growth was not due merely to an increase in the number of available races; there was a 7.7% increase in finishers from the same 316 marathons for 2009 and 2010 (460,345 vs. 495,577). Overall, there were 40,000 more marathon finishers in 2010 than there were in 2009. Since 1980, there has been a 255% increase in the number of U.S. marathon finishers (143,000 to 507,000). In addition, there were more than 625 marathons in the U.S in 2010, another record, compared to approximately 200 in 1985("2011 marathon, half-marathon," 2011).

Other types of road racing exhibited growth as well. Half marathons experienced a 24% growth rate, from approximately 1.1 million finishers in 2009 to nearly 1.4 million finishers in 2010, a record annual increase for the distance. In the same 733 U.S. half-marathons for 2009 vs. 2010, there was a 17.35% finisher increase (975,409 vs. 1,144,605). Women dominated the half-marathon, comprising an astounding 59% of fields or approximately 820,000 female finishers overall. Perhaps the most accessible race distance, the 5K had nearly 4.7 million finishers ("2011 marathon, half-marathon," 2011).

Running is not only becoming popular with those above the age of 18. In 2010, outdoor track and field gained the most combined participants among high school athletes with an increase of 25,561 competitors. The sport had the second highest participation on both the male & female side behind basketball ("2010-11 high school," 2011). Running as a sport is growing in participation on the non-elite level. This shows that there is an opportunity for growth in the fan base of track and field in the United States.

Running and the Internet

Social media has helped the growth of track and field and running more generally. Like a well-orchestrated grassroots marketing campaign, the use of social networking in particular has become the standard in promoting a sport that otherwise goes widely unrecognized. Letsrun.com's message boards house over two million posts from hardcore runners and track and field fans, attracting 200,000 unique visitors each day. Ten thousand people follow Ryan Hall, a

marathoner, on Twitter; Usain Bolt, a sprinter, has 45,000 followers (Lobby, 2010). There is a thriving community of running bloggers (though mostly non-elite runners). Sites that cater more to the average runner like Runner's World have an average of 25 million views a month with 35% of their traffic coming from their online communities ("Runner's World Media kit").

DyeStat was of the first websites that focused on track and field. Founded in 1995 by John Dye, "the Internet home of high school track and field" started by providing stats and rankings on local runners in western Maryland. Eventually it expanded, giving high school runners and coaches up-to-date rankings on performances across the country (Lobby, 2012). The site became so popular it was eventually sold to ESPN as part of their Rise network.

In 2000, twin brothers Weldon and Robert Johnson launched LetsRun.com with hopes of promoting the popularity of elite running. LetsRun.com became the main website for news on elite running. In addition, they opened up message boards through which runners could interact and exchange ideas about a variety of topics including training or how to get a girlfriend (Lobby, 2012). Flotrack and RunnerSpace have led the charge in bringing video interviews and race coverage to fans. These two sites were able to grow because they were not competing with network television. The races would not have been seen otherwise, because no one covered them before (Lobby, 2010).

As the Internet continued to mature, tech-minded runners saw yet another niche to be filled. With the popularity of blogs and Facebook, a number of social

networking sites aimed at runners appeared. Having made a splash through their marketing on the elite running scene, Strands.com was among the most popular. The site was a social network built around a running log (Lobby, 2010). The site also sponsored 15 elite runners. In 2011, the experiment of social network plus running log failed. The website was supported mainly by ad revenue, and according to its chief financial officer, the site was underperforming. Sponsorship for professional runners ended in the first quarter of 2011 and the training log, which had around 150,000 users, was shut down by the end of 2011 (Rudd, 2011).

Nike had a more successful venture with an online training log with the Nike+ system. Nike+ began by letting runners include a chip into their Nike shoe or attach it to the front of any running shoe that tracked the miles. The chip would also sync with iPod and communicate mileage. Mileage and pace would then also sync to an online training log. To move it to the next level Nike created the Nike Fuelband, a rubber wristband that aims to track your every move, and how active you've been throughout the day. It aims to make every day like earning points in a video game. To build in even more motivation, the band and app register streaks--the number of days you've hit your goal. The app also allows you to share your goals and streaks via Facebook and Twitter (Kuang, 2012).

The internet and social media has changed how fans interact with the sport. With the ongoing improvement of mobile technology and social media there will be opportunities for track & field to reach more fans. The key to success

for elite runners and sponsors using social media will be creating and implementing innovative strategies for the growth of the sport and to connect the average runner with the elite. With the ever changing media landscape, there is opportunity for athletes to gain visibility besides on the main stage with social media.

The 2012 London Olympics and Social Media

The London Olympics this summer are considered the first social Olympics. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Facebook and Twitter had considerably fewer users and less activity on their networks ("Olympic sponsors," 2011). The London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) is preparing to launch a significant social networking campaign based around sponsored mass-participation digital activities and events in the run-up to London 2012. LOCOG is in talks with all of London 2012's official sponsors and worldwide partners, including BT, Visa, and British Airways, to get involved in the social campaign as part of the committee's vision to use social media to reach out to younger consumers (Bearne, 2009). Along with the major sponsors, LOCOG is looking to get the athletes involved as much as possible. There will be very clear rules concerning when they tweet before, during and after competition ("Olympics will be, 2012). The LOCOG is not letting everyone tweet; the 70,000 volunteers for the London 2012 Olympics have been effectively told to disconnect from any Olympic discussion in their social networks (Spence, 2012).

Sportswear companies are also looking to make a large social media push around the Olympics. While many brands scored at the 2008 games in Beijing, London represents even bigger opportunities in a more marketing-friendly city and many will embrace this by upping their social media game. As the official outfitter of the Olympics, adidas will be releasing new technology platforms this year to facilitate consumer involvement in the advertising campaign. Nike, Puma, and Under Armour will be banking on their athletes' visibility to increase sales and exposure during the Olympics but all are staying quiet on what sorts of media will be used (Flores, 2011).

Saucony will use the Olympics as a coming out party for next year's consumer outreach campaign. Since the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, Saucony has built a team of 45 elite runners. The brand's latest endorsers include American hurdler and sprinter Queen Harrison, and 5,000-meter American record-holder Molly Huddle. To get consumers involved, Saucony will hold promotional contests with its retail partners, and sponsored athletes will tell their stories through social media. An integrated social media campaign, which includes a smartphone app, will be implemented in the early part of 2012 and last through the Olympics (Flores, 2011).

New Balance will be focusing more on the story and struggle to get to the Olympics. New Balance's endorsement strategy will focus on middle-distance runners training for the Olympic trials. Among the brand's athletes are current world champion in the 1,500 meters Jenny Simpson and UK-born Andy

Baddeley. The campaign will focus more on human interest stories than Olympic stories (Flores, 2011).

The Olympics are the perfect opportunity for sportswear companies to raise their visibility and the visibility of their athletes. This year, the Olympics will have a social media aspect and sportswear companies will be smart to capitalize upon it. When it comes to the Olympics, the spoils usually go to the victor's label; however, this event is still the perfect time to push an athlete's story to the public. With a broader view, using social media is simply made more salient by the upcoming London 2012 Olympic Games but should be part of any advertising campaign.

Statement of Purpose

Now is the perfect time for track and field as a low-profile sport to gain exposure. An Olympic year shines a spotlight on track & field like no other year. Athletes and Sponsors would be advised to take advantage of new fans and old fans that come back to the sport by using social media. Strict uniform guidelines have athletes looking for more creative ways to garner sponsors and still be able to train and compete. Social media presents an attractive and creative method for elite athletes to please sponsors. Olympian Nick Symmonds was the first to step up to the plate by auctioning space on his arm for a Twitter handle. A temporary tattoo will display the handle when rules allow. His eBay auction was won by Hanson Dodge for \$11,000 ("Olympian Nick Symmonds", 2012). Other athletes are looking to follow suit.

This paper will explore how track and field athletes are currently using social media, what types of social media attract or repel sponsorship and what barriers and opportunities exist for social media use in the sport of track and field. A variety of different sources will be used including academic papers, interviews with community managers from Saucony and Brooks and social media publications.

Chapter 2: American Sport Leagues & Social media

Social media use in the sports world has been growing and many leagues are leveraging their social media to engage with fans. This want to leverage social media networks has expanded to sponsors. No longer is it a matter of putting up a sign in a stadium, placing an ad in a broadcast or tossing a logo on a car. Instead, marketers want to take advantage of the fan loyalty and emotional attachments leagues, teams and athletes produce with fans that follow them. Brands want to integrate Facebook, Twitter, location apps and mobile platforms to excite fans' passion (Feil, 2012).

While sponsorship dollars have long been a part of sports, they are now seen as one of the biggest areas of growth. Soon, revenue from sponsorships will account for the largest share of the sports industry. In fact, many brands today spend up to two or three times as much on sponsorship activation as they do on rights fees (Feil, 2012). For American sports, finding new models of sponsorship will be critical. With online tactics becoming more important, these sponsorships will be looking to go beyond traditional ad structures and get more deeply into areas that complement fan passions while helping to define brand attributes more clearly (Feil, 2012). The solution lies with social media.

Fans are turning to online and social media not as an alternative to watching a game or event in person or on television, but as a way to enhance the experience. An NFL fan may watch the game on TV while pulling up the box score online from ESPN, posting a highlight to Facebook and following tweets from fellow fans. For brands, this can provide the opportunity to enhance in-game messages or otherwise activate fans with

related content. Social media have allowed leagues, teams and athletes to cut out the media middlemen and interact directly with their fans. They are investing in creating content that lets fans interact and set up communities (Feil, 2012). Leagues and brands see their role as an informer for fans and they allow the fans to engage in the conversation.

Twitter appears to be the social media network of choice for athletes and where conversation happens more than league messaging. This platform's operation is helping to produce stories about sports, intensifying and proliferating media sports content and forcing new ways of thinking about the interaction between sport and digital media by sports organizations, athletes, journalists, publicists and fans. Twitter's importance stems from the fact that it is both a constitutive part of contemporary media experience, and a frame through which this experience is filtered and understood (Hutchins, 2010). A study that looked at Twitter usage in sports over a 12 month period showed that athletes are using Twitter more than ever to connect fans and spread their own information. There were also downsides that included athletes not following best practices and the spread of false information (Hutchins, 2010).

Many athletes started using Twitter as a pastime but now most are using it as a way to promote themselves as a brand. It is also changing the athlete-sponsor relationship. An athlete tweeting about a product seems more genuine than a 30 second spot on television. It was all over Twitter that Tiger Woods apologized for spitting on a

golf course. The UFL held its last draft over Twitter. Shaquille O'Neal announced his retirement via @SHAQ, the most retweeted sports tweet (Wertheim, 2011).

In this chapter, there will be a closer look of how American leagues and their athletes are taking advantage of social media and using it for their brand image. Along with building up their brand image, these leagues and athletes are using social media to satisfy their sponsors. Relationship between team and athlete is much like the relationship between sponsors and elite runners since it is the place where elite runners draw their salary.

NFL

The National Football League has embraced social media. The NFL has nearly 4 million Facebook fans, and individual teams have upwards of 2.5 million fans each. There are 474% more active users on the NFL Facebook Page than there were in 2010, and NFL fans generate 144% more content than they did last year, according to NFL Digital. The league has implemented a content management system partnered with BuddyMedia. Their 150-person social media staff manages the platform on which each club's site sits, and then work with the clubs on content strategies. The clubs decide how they want to program not only their sites, but their social media. The NFL is in a position to support them with that and share ideas that work with one club with another for the overall social media strategy (Drell, 2011).

A majority of players have Twitter accounts, partly for personal branding but are now being utilized for team branding with a recent change of policy. Instead of discouraging players from using Twitter, teams now tell their players to just avoid sharing confidential information. Social media gives fans unprecedented access to players, teams and members of the media. Players use Twitter to tell their own personal narrative, communicate with other players and talk to sports journalists (Reinhardt, 2011). According to Klout, a social media influence measuring tool, Chad Ochocinco ranks as the NFL player with the most Klout. He is famous for engaging with his fans directly through social media. In the past, Ochocinco has taken a Twitter fan to dinner and he tweeted that he would move in with a Patriots fan until he found a permanent residence in Boston. The only condition: Must have internet and an Xbox (Nguyen, 2011).

Fantasy football is a huge part of the NFL's social media strategy. Fantasy players drive a massive amount of engagement in season and in particular on Sundays. The NFL operates several Twitter accounts fantasy junkies can follow (@NFLFantasy or one of the fantasy experts @Michael_Fabiano), while its primary account, @NFL, offers more of a blend. While the NFL primarily uses Facebook and Twitter as their channels they are looking to expand to Tumblr and Pinterest (Drell, 2011). The NFL was a bit late to social media but has quickly integrated it into their overall strategy.

MLB

Much like the NFL, Major League Baseball has a large reach with social media. Every team, along with the league itself and its various arms, engages its fans through Twitter and Facebook. Players interact with fans, answering questions and offering baseball fans a glimpse into their favorite athletes' world. Regional television contracts can only stretch so far and the common fan will only travel so much distance to see teams play, but social media allows players to reach out to fans (Nowak, 2012).

This past season, the MLB introduced a new social media component, the “MLB Fan Cave”. The hub of the activity is the “MLB Fan Cave”, a 15,000 square-foot location in New York City. Major League Baseball has transformed this space into an exciting arena by mixing baseball talk with band performances, video content creation of visiting players, interactive technology, and art, all designed to attract young adults. The Fan Cave features a wide array of fun items including six PlayStation 3s loaded with MLB-licensed games and an 18-foot-tall statue of Willie Mays that has its own Twitter feed (Dan, 2011). At the center of this cave are two diehard fans that were chosen by a contest to watch all of the season’s 2,429 regular-season games plus the playoffs and then record their thoughts on social media. During the season, a list of celebrities stopped by from José Bautista to LMFAO (Wasserman, 2012).

The Fan Cave worked and achieved MLB’s goal of increasing engagement with a younger demographic. The fan cave achieved 1.3 billion media impressions and 250,000 combined new fans on Facebook and Twitter. The effort reached younger fans: The

average Fan Cave fan was around 30 years old, versus 45 to 48 for the average MLB fan. The fan cave will be returning in 2012 with a few tweaks. In the future, there might even be advertisers (Wasserman, 2012).

Social media is even changing how athletes are recruited. When "Yoenis Cespedes: The Showcase" found its way to YouTube, few had heard of the Cuban ball player. The video is of a baseball workout condensed into a 20-minute film and currently has more than 102,000 views. Cespedes garnered the attention of the baseball clubs and became a highly-sought prospect. Cespedes' exposure in America was swift, and social media and the web had a great deal to do with it. YouTube might be the new way to get noticed by the right people (Nowak, 2012).

The MLB is using social media to reach out to a younger demographic and engaging the fan to make it less of an old man sport. Athletes have begun to use it to get noticed by club teams or gain significant fans within in the sport. The MLB is using social media as a solution in an innovative way.

NBA

The National Basketball association (NBA) has made social media an integral part of the league's day-to-day operations. The NBA just surpassed 100 million combined followers and likes on Twitter and Facebook. That number includes the official league, team and player pages, and is up from 63 million at the start of the season. Half of the NBA's players (220 and counting) are on Twitter, from LeBron James to Dwight Howard. Shaquille O'Neal and Steve Nash were both named among Time magazine's top

Twitter feeds. Each team is responsible for its own social media efforts. The league then has its own staff that works on strategy, oversees the NBA social media accounts and attends select games and events. The league monitors relevant trends, and NBA social media personnel shoot off explanatory emails to its staff (Ortiz, 2012).

The NBA staff runs much like a small news organization. The staff meets every morning and decides what sponsor tweets need to go out, what news needs to be covered and how to cover the most recent event. They use a small team to cover the events, usually two individuals on site and two back in the office. Of the two that cover the event, one takes on-the-court photos and videos while the other roams the crowd. Their only pieces of equipment are smart phones. The two back in the office monitor trending topic and collect statistics. There is a constant line of communication between the two. This type of content creation and social media use makes the fan feel like an insider. To make sure fans are engaging the NBA is constantly creating conversations based on trending topics. The NBA monitors their data on how its social media is received, and adjusts accordingly. This led them to create new Twitter accounts, @NBASStatsCube and @NBAHistory, for statistic and history fans. The league wasn't concerned it would cannibalize its main feed; instead it sees these new feeds as ways to serve different audiences (Fiefer, 2011).

The NBA focuses on content creation and giving a behind the scenes insider look into the league. The players tweet a wide variety of information from fashion advice to work-outs they have most recently done. Most importantly, the players actively tweet and

engage with their fans. The NBA has a strong social media brand and lessons can be taken from them.

MLS

With the European leagues being more popular among soccer fans and most American sport fans following the major three sports of baseball, football and basketball, Major League Soccer has a visibility problem. Few teams in the MLS are using social media well to attract an audience. The majority of MLS takes advantage of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. The Seattle Sounders overwhelmingly lead in Facebook fans with over 173,000, while the Los Angeles Galaxy lead the league in both YouTube and Twitter followers. The Galaxy's 32,272 Twitter followers were well much more than MLS' own 20,511. The athletes that are followed the most tend to be the ones that have come from the European league like David Beckham and Thierry Henry (Savino, 2011).

Social media has spurred more coverage and conversation around the league. Fans often follow the game with Twitter feeds up. The instantaneousness of social networks provides the present-day soccer fan with a nonstop barrage of up-to-the-minute scores, news, goals and gossip from around the soccer world (Francis & Shaw, 2011). Much like track and field, the Internet has filled the gap in information for the MLS. Sport writers that cover the sport have their own blogs and are able to get stories out that would normally not be published in major publications.

NHL

The National Hockey League (NHL) might be considered one of the smaller brands in the American sport leagues but it is not lacking in engagement on social media. The NHL Twitter account has quickly risen to over 350,000 followers. The NHL Facebook account has over 250,000 fans plus tons of unique media (photos, videos and more) (Garland, 2011). Over 11.5 million people have 'liked' NHL brand pages with the Pittsburgh Penguins, Detroit Red Wings, Boston Bruins and Chicago Blackhawks leading the league with over 1 million fans each (Matheson,2012). All 30 of the teams have active social accounts scheduling tweet-ups and meet-ups with fans. Relevant fan experiences and pervasive marketing drive fan activation and, particularly around big moments like the Winter Classic or Stanley Cup Playoffs, fan acquisition (Leggio, 2011).

The NHL All-Star Game is a perfect example of how the league engaged fans with social media. The NHL actively engaged its fans via Twitter during the All-Star Game. The NHL would ask relevant questions pertaining to the game using its Twitter account. Then, its followers had a chance to answer. If the user answered correctly, they would be randomly entered to win an NHL-related prize. The NHL used a similar tactic during its annual Winter Classic event, but instead used the hashtag #WinterClassic. Again, the NHL had one of its premiere events trending, which was very important as it contended with the Orange Bowl and Rose Bowl, two other marquee New Year's Day sporting events. Along with Twitter, the NHL also got fans engaged with the Winter

Classic by incorporating Facebook. The league partnered with NBC to create a unique integration of broadcast TV and social media (Deluca, 2011).

In September of 2011, the NHL announced its policy to regulate how players, coaches and other league stakeholders use social media. This included an element that was a social media ‘blackout’ that will last from two hours before the game until post-game media interviews are completed. This has affected how social media is being used but appears to have not negatively affected their social media (Pearson, 2011).

The NHL uses social media a touch point for their tech-savvy fans. They have built around the strong tradition that the older teams hold and the enthusiasm of the younger teams. They want athletes interacting with the fans to raise the visibility of the sport. Social media has made the NHL more visible on the local level in these cities and towns.

Current Sponsor Strategy for Track and Field

Sponsors do not completely ignore social media and running has a very active social media aspect. Nike, Brooks, Saucony and other brands maintain large fan pages and Twitter accounts. They post regularly with quizzes and previews of their product. Retailers and fans alike interact on their page and hashtags are used along with their campaigns. Unlike league and teams, shoes are their product and not their athletes. The pages tend to lack information about their sponsored athletes.

Two examples of how sponsors are currently incorporating elite runners into their social media are Saucony and Brooks. Saucony has over 105,000 fans on Facebook and

10,000 followers on Twitter (@Saucony). Their community manager of their Twitter account, Sean Robbins, regarding the strategy for incorporating elite runners, said:

“It's no different from the overall strategy with athletes; to inspire runners. When elite runners are on the roads and track, they have the opportunity to attract fans with their performances and persona. When fans want to know more about what makes an athlete tick, they now have the opportunity to hear directly from them through social media. As a brand, we can elevate athlete stories that we think can inspire a broader audience.”

He goes on to say that:

“What an elite runner says and does in the social media space can enhance their image, but just like any person with a job, it can hurt them as well, so we also ask them to be careful. It's a symbiotic relationship so keeping it positive and real is the way to go. We don't require a specific level or type of participation, because then it wouldn't be real. From time to time we'll notify our athletes of a digital promotion or campaign we're running, and if they offer the time it takes to get involved with their social media accounts, it is a huge plus, but not a requirement. First and foremost comes their performance, so again, giving them social media requirements outside of that could run the risk of getting in the way.”

Brooks is another example of a company that is actively using social media in their marketing efforts. Their Brooks running fan page has over 105,000 fans and 20,000 followers on Twitter (@Brooksrunning). Their community manager, Joel Ballezza says the organization keep tabs on their elite athletes by following them on twitter and that:

“We expect our athletes to train and race strong; so that is where we focus on energy and know that our elite athletes have limited time for promotions. When they are available, we enjoy including our athlete's creative contribution and stories in our social media campaigns and other marketing promotions.”

Current sponsors are looking for elite runners to contribute but do not want it to take away from their training. The sponsored athlete can step in and use social media to

help the brand they are representing. The brand will spread it through their social media networks and both the athlete and brand can leverage it for their benefit.

American sport leagues are leveraging social media to meet sponsors and fans' needs. They are using different methods but play to their target market and increase fan engagement. All leverage the stars of their sport and their fan bases. They want to make the fan a part of the experience and with an authentic voice make them feel like they have an insider's view of their sport.

Chapter 3: The Sponsor & Elite Athlete Relationship

Brands have a long history of sponsoring athletes. These athletes become the face of the brand and if done properly the two are instantly connected. Athlete sponsorships allow an immediate link between a brand and the sport. Numerous researchers have described the benefits of pairing an athlete with a brand. Three major benefits of adopting endorsements for a brand: increased awareness, image building and athlete testimony. Brands hope that the emotional ties that fans have with the athlete carry over into the brands they endorse (Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006).

A large amount of money is spent annually on athletes in the hope of improving the bottom line. Nike alone spent over \$1.4 billion in 2003-04 on celebrity endorsements (Shuart, 2007). These athletes are known to the public for their achievements in the sporting arena. As the number of sporting events increases, some celebrity athletes have become popular endorsers in advertisements. This occurs frequently in Olympic years (Kim & Na, 2007). The athlete of course receives money, gear and media attention. It appears that the athlete gets the better end of the deal. In this chapter, the sponsor and athlete relationship will be examined and the reasons why brands sponsor athletes will be discussed.

Why Sponsors Benefit from Sponsoring Athletes

Research on how sponsorship works in the mind of the consumer have not directly looked at any theoretical explanation for sponsorship; instead they examine individual and environmental factors believed to influence recall and recognition of the

sponsorship (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005). An example of such research is if the brand can be recalled by simply seeing the athlete. Questions that are answered are questions such as; do consumers as a whole immediately associate an athlete like Michael Jordan with Nike or Hanes?

Most research on consumer-focused sponsorship assumes an associative memory model that includes whether the consumer has brand awareness or brand recall when it comes to the sponsorship and if the athlete shapes the brand image (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005). It looks to see if keywords associated with athlete cross over to the brand such as “strong”, “honest”, or “hard-working”. A definition of this brand awareness that is often used is: "Brand awareness relates to brand recall and recognition performance by consumers. Brand image refers to the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory" (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005). When it comes to research on sponsorship, most work focuses on improving brand awareness and recall. Research tends to focus around a few major aspects or idea of sponsorship when it comes to brand awareness.

Low-Level Processing

In many models of persuasion there is a lower level of processing. Two such models are the Heuristic-Systematic model and the Elaboration Likelihood model (ELM). In the first model, the lower-level processing is called Heuristic model, in which people use inferential rules or schemas to form judgments or make decisions (Severin & Tankard, 2001). In the ELM model there are two routes: the central route and the

peripheral route. The peripheral route is the lower level processing route. The receiver of the message does not expend the cognitive energy to evaluate the arguments and process the information in the message and is guided by peripheral cues (Severin & Tankard, 2001). In both the models, the cues can include the style, format of the message, attractiveness of the speaker, credibility and the mood of the receiver.

Brands leverage this lower level processing by taking advantage of the positive peripheral cues that the athletes provides like attractiveness or credibility. In a study, Olson and Thjomoe examined sponsorship conditions with low involvement and limited processing, and contrasted brand-name only conditions to peripheral route conditions. They found that participants formed a favorable attitude with just a mere exposure to brand and a more favorable attitude when they processed on the peripheral route (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005).

A more recent study by Shuart looked to measure effectiveness of spokespersons using three attributes that fall within the lower level processing: attractiveness, perceived expertise, and credibility. Survey takers were asked if they would purchase a product (fictional) based on the athlete who endorsed it. The product in this case was a fictional sports drink which provided a good match with all the athletes used. The results confirm the belief that someone known as both a hero and a celebrity will prove to be the most effective spokesperson for a product (Shuart, 2007). Brands can boost their brand image by simply having a trust-worthy, credible sponsored athlete with a style that matches the brand. These sponsored athletes that already have established themselves with these traits

use peripheral cues to persuade consumer to have a favorable view of the brand via lower level processing.

Matching and Congruence

The most frequently investigated theoretical concept related to the improved processing of sponsorship is the idea of fit or match between the brand and athlete. It would appear not to benefit either if the athlete did not represent what the brand stands for. This fit is part of congruence theory and “Congruence theory suggests that storage in memory and retrieval of information are influenced by relatedness or similarity” (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005). This theory deals specifically with the attitudes persons holds towards sources of information and the object of the source’s assertions (Severin & Tankard, 2001). An example of this is that it would make more sense for an elite runner to be sponsored by a running shoe brand than an insurance brand.

Many times brands mismatch sponsorship, only basing their assumption on the celebrity or athlete’s popularity. Brands typically use a Q-score to match themselves with a spokesperson. A Qscore is “a metric that measures familiarity and appeal of brand among a particular group. A higher score means more familiarity and appeal of the brand or spokesperson” (“Qscores”,).

Congruency has been shown to be important. In a study by Kim and Na, participants were asked what their attitude was towards a brand based on a spokesperson. A fictional athlete was created and products that matched or didn’t match were used. The

findings showed participants evaluated an endorsed product more favorably when the fit between the celebrity athlete endorser and the endorsed product was congruent. Furthermore, participants in the high concept of congruence condition evaluated the endorsed product more favorably than those in the low concept of congruence condition only when the fit between the celebrity athlete endorser and the endorsed product was incongruent (Kim & Na, 2007).

A New Zealand study found similar results. Based on a survey of the general public in New Zealand, this study uses both Ohanian's source-credibility scale and a constant-sum scale to help brand managers, player's agents and advertising practitioners select good celebrity athlete-product fit. Four New Zealand athletes (two males and two females) and several products were included in the test. The results showed that attitudes towards the brand were more favorable when the brand and the athlete matched (Charbonneau & Garland, 2006).

The congruency theory helps fine tune the sponsor and athlete relationship. A sponsor needs to choose an athlete that fits with their brand to better capitalize on the athlete. The better the fit the more favorable the attitude will be with the consumer. Instead of choosing a popular celebrity, a sportswear company should instead look towards an athlete that represents their values.

Balance Theory and Meaning Transfer

Balance theory has been used to explain how a spokesperson can change an attitude towards a brand. The balance theory deals with the way an individual organizes attitudes toward people and objects in relation to one another within her or his own cognitive structure. Individuals are constantly trying to get to a balanced state where they can exist without tension or strife (Severin & Tankard, 2001). So if the individual has a positive outlook or relationship with a spokesperson, they are likely to change their attitude towards the brand they represent to match. A sponsorship would be unbalanced and create strife if a consumer liked the spokesperson but not the brand.

Another theory seeking to explain image and sponsorship considers meaning transfer. This implies for sponsorship that "meaning" moves from the sponsored athlete to the sponsor's product when the two are paired and then to consumers in their roles as spectators or participants. The theory is concerned less with the mechanism of the pairing process and more with the movement of meaning (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005). In essence the qualities of the athlete would move to the brand.

These two theories basically state that sponsors should pick athletes that match with what they want their brand image to be. The qualities of a sponsored athlete can transfer over to sponsor. Also, the sponsor can gain more of an audience if they pick the right athletes to sponsor by using the balance theory.

Identification

The social identification model states a social group can be defined as two or more individuals who share a common social identification or perceive themselves to be members of the same social category. Group membership is seen as a cognitive process by simply answering “who am I”. This makes up a person’s social identity (Severin & Tankard, 2001). In their study of college alumni, Mael and Ashforth (1992) showed how organizational and individual antecedents influence organizational identification with the alma mater, and how in turn, organizational identification is lined to support for the organization (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005).

Outside the context of elite athlete sponsorship but within sport, social identity theory has been used to explain sports team identification (or fans of sports teams) and its positive social and self-concept consequences. In a study of adults attending a college football game, it was found that favorable purchase intentions were related to team identification, and were more common when such intentions were perceived as a group norm. In other research, the prestige of a sports team was shown to influence one's identification with that team and which influences key sponsorship outcomes such as sponsor recognition, attitude toward sponsor, sponsor patronage, and satisfaction with sponsors (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005).

Identification can come into play much like it does with sport teams. Many fans are loyal to certain athletes and if athletes can learn how to gain such loyal followings, they can become assets to their sponsors. Individuals that identify themselves as a fan of

an athlete are more likely to make purchases and looked favorably upon a brand that sponsors them. Sponsors can also foster this by making limited editions of athletes' jerseys or gear.

While it seems that the athlete gets the better end of the deal when it comes to the sponsor and athlete relationship, theory supports that in fact both sides are benefiting. Sponsors and brands can benefit from the image of the athlete and how they appear to the public. An athlete that aligns with the brands goals and image can transfer their qualities to the company and convince an audience of that brand image. A well-matched sponsor-athlete relationship can benefit all those involved.

What Makes Elite Runners Attractive to Sponsors?

Based on the theories stated previously, it is apparent why sponsors would want to be associated with the right athlete. Besides the fit, what do sponsors look for in an athlete? Is it all about performance or is there something more?

The basic principle behind a sponsorship is that a business, such as a group of private lenders for mortgages, provides the athlete with money to train and to live in exchange for promotional consideration. Just like collegiate athletes who play football, basketball or baseball as well as other sports, runners who compete on the track and in cross country can and do become professional athletes. There are a number of indicators for those who will turn elite. First of all, a collegiate distance runner who earns All-American honors in one or several national finals of track or cross country events and/or

runs one of the top times in the country for a particular event, has the potential to become a professional runner. While talent and potential are certainly factors in pursuing this path, equally important traits are desire, determination and motivation (“RunPro”).

While all these on the field attributes are important there are several off the field that are just as important. The marketability of the athlete is important. Brands should look for athletes that have: personality, physical attractiveness, uniqueness or unique personal background, role model qualities and a relationship with fans. David Beckham is a perfect example of an athlete having a personality, the looks and a relationship with fans that strongly appeals to brands and products (Conway, 2011). It is not necessary for athletes to have all the listed off the field attributes but a combination of good performances and those attributes makes for the perfect mix.

Athletes can use social media to work on their off the field attributes. Engaging with a community of fans through Twitter, Facebook or blog can gain the athlete a larger following. Sharing their personal story through those same mediums can display their personality and their uniqueness. In general, an active social media presence can contribute to their marketability.

Sponsors & Expectations of Social Media Use by Elite Runners

When it comes to use of the social media by athletes it is not a main concern for sponsors. Sean Robbins from Saucony explains how social media can play into sponsorship:

“The main attributes looked at in an athlete are their performances, visibility and how well they align with the brand. Their social media presence can certainly enhance their visibility, so yes, it is considered. There's no magic formula to how much it is considered, but when a brand is signing someone to represent them, it's definitely a plus if that person has their own dedicated fan following and the savvy to know how to market themselves.”

He also goes on to explain how surprised he is by the lack of use by elite runners,

“I will say, I'm surprised by how few elite runners know the level of good will they can earn from a sponsor with small efforts like taking pictures of their gear when it arrives, or complimenting their favorite products from the brand. If a company is at all social media savvy, these things get picked up, passed around and forwarded to executives. I'm not saying those little things necessarily get you a better contract at the negotiating table, but they do get you noticed in a positive light, which can't hurt. I stress elite runners in that statement, as sub-elite runners and triathletes seem to be more inclined to pull every lever they can to market themselves not just to their fans, but to their sponsors as well.”

Brooks takes a different approach when sponsoring athletes and how their social media use plays in. Joel Ballezza explains, “We sponsor athletes who we think have an inspirational story and who love our products. We do enjoy sharing their successes with our fans through social media”.

Different brands take different approaches when sponsoring athletes but one fact can be certain, good social media cannot hurt when searching for a sponsor. It shows potential sponsors an athlete's personality and can garner an athlete a loyal fan base which they can leverage. Many theories suggest that a good fit between a brand and athlete can benefit both parties and enhance them. Social media can be leveraged too by both parties on behalf of the athlete to engage with an audience and to transmit a brand image.

Chapter 4: The Sponsorship Process

Sponsors are attracted to athlete spokespeople for several different reasons, including fit, loyal fans, expertise and attractiveness. The right athlete can enhance a sponsor's trustworthiness with the public and the attributes of the athlete can be move to the sponsor. So if sponsors are looking for the right athlete, how does the athlete gain sponsorship?

Chris Layne is the managing director of Total Sports Management, a firm that manages several elite runners. According to him, the first step for an athlete seeking a sponsorship is to retain an agent: "The easiest route is to land with an agent that has a relationship with each of the shoe companies. Certainly there are variables that will impact the possibilities (age of athlete, current level of performance, event, etc.)." The agent will then shop the athlete around to find the best fit. Choosing the wrong agent can lead to turmoil; Sanya Richards-Ross (400m Olympian) ended up having to take her agent to court over financial issues (Gaffigan, 2011). The agent acts in the best interest of the athlete. Of course, different brands have different strategies for picking athletes. For Nike, a successful Olympic final is one in which they have "a swoosh in every lane". Meanwhile, brands like New Balance or Puma are looking for the athlete that will win ("Big Olympics"2012).This chapter will take a closer look at how a few elite runners garnered sponsorship within the sport and the barriers to sponsorship that athletes have to face.

Jenny Barringer Simpson

Coming out of college, Jenny Barringer Simpson was the LeBron James of the running world. By the time she was a junior at the University of Colorado, she had set NCAA records in the mile, 3000 meters, and 5000 meters indoors, 1500 meters, 3000 meters steeplechase and 5000 meters outdoors. She also set the American record in the steeplechase at the 2009 World Championships with a time of 9:12:50, finishing 5th overall. While primarily a steeplechaser, she ran 3:59.90 in the 1500 m at the 2009 Prefontaine Classic. At the time of the event, this performance made her the third-fastest female 1500 m runner in U.S. track and field history (“Bio of Jennifer Simpson”). She returned for her senior year and continued to perform at a high level in cross country. Unfortunately, she suffered a panic attack in her last collegiate race, the 2009 NCAA Cross Country Championships, finishing 163rd.

Despite her last performance, Barringer Simpson was still a highly-coveted elite runner with several brands looking to sponsor her including Nike, Saucony, Brooks, Under Armour and New Balance. New Balance came out the winner. Simpson turned down a more lucrative offer from Nike for she liked how “when you wear the New Balance logo, you become part of the New Balance family.” She liked that New Balance was an American-based company and toured the factory. At the factory, all employees wore T-shirts with her image emblazoned on the front and the words “Making shoes for Jenny B.” on the back. New Balance’s strategy of quality over quantity made her feel respected and needed and won her over. New Balance has continued to highlight

Barringer Simpson, naming a training shoe after her. The partnership has paid off for both parties. This summer, Barringer Simpson won the 2011 IAAF World Championship in the 1500m in her purple and yellow plaid New Balance spikes (“Big Olympics Gamble”, 2012).

Meb Keflezighi

At the age of 36, Meb Keflezighi found himself without a shoe sponsor. His longtime sponsor, Nike, had dropped him and he was having a difficult time getting into elite marathons. At the time, Keflezighi had a marathon personal best of 2:09:15, a mark he set when he won the ING New York City Marathon in 2009. He is the former USA 10,000m record holder (27:13.98), and has won multiple American titles on the track, in cross country and on the roads. In 2004 at the Athens Olympics, he won the silver medal in the marathon (Monti, 2011). Nevertheless, he was considered washed up or too old by many in the industry.

“It was pretty depressing at times,” said Keflezighi, talking about the time period. “Somebody didn’t believe in me” (Longman, 2012). But, somebody was ready to take a chance on him. Skechers, a brand that is usually not associated with running, wanted to make their entrance into the running market and decided to take a big leap by sponsoring Keflezighi. Skechers worked with Keflezighi to create the perfect running shoe for him (Eder, 2012). Keflezighi was what Skechers needed to enter into the market. Keflezighi ended up winning the 2012 USA Olympic Marathon trials in a personal best of 2:09:08

and will go on to compete in the 2012 Olympics (Longman, 2012).

Hanson-Brooks Project

What happens if you are a mid-level elite runner without a coach or sponsor?

There are a few training groups and club teams set up across the nation that are sponsored by a brand. One of the more successful is the Hanson-Brooks group based out of Rochester, Michigan and sponsored by the shoe company, Brooks.

In 1999, Kevin and Keith Hanson, two brothers who owned a couple of small running-shoe shops in suburban Detroit, got fed up with the state of American distance running. They bought a house and invited promising local athletes to live there and train full time (Barcott, 2011). The training group caught the eye of Brooks in June of 2003. At the time, Brooks did not sponsor individual athletes, so the group was a perfect fit. By August 2003 the team became officially known as the Hansons-Brooks Distance Project. The group's breakthrough came at the 2006 Boston Marathon, when Brian Sell finished fourth, and other Hanson men finished 10th, 11th, 15th, 18th, 19th, and 22nd. It was the best showing for Americans in a major marathon in decades, and it led to the auto company Saturn signing on as a major sponsor (Galvin, 2007). Brian Sell would go on to finish third at the 2008 Olympic Marathon Trials and represent the U.S. at those Games. Hanson-Brooks' most recent success is Desiree Davila, who finished second at the 2010 Chicago Marathon in 2:24 and also finished second in the 2012 Olympic Trials. She will represent the U.S. this summer (Barcott, 2012).

Brand sponsorship can both occur individually and at the group level in the world of running. What it boils down to is whether the sponsor is willing to take a risk on an athlete. Many times this risk is a success. There are barriers to this sponsorship that keeps many brands from sponsoring runners.

Barriers to Sponsorship

Logo Rules

One of the many reasons that runners have a difficult time finding sponsors is because of the current logo restrictions. Currently, elite runners can display their shoe company logo along with a second logo of a sponsor. Compared with triathletes or even NASCAR, this is significantly less. This change only came around due to a meeting back in December 2011. At the USATF (United States of America Track & Field) annual meeting, a group of elite athletes, shoe company representatives and higher-ups in the organization discussed current uniform logo rules (Gerweck, 2011). Currently, athletes are only able to have two logos on their uniform or body. Unlike other sports, elite runners earn little cash from competition and have to rely heavily on sponsors and the lack of display space cuts down significantly on the type of sponsors they can attract. Meanwhile, the events they are participating in are printing large sponsor names across the bibs of the athletes. It appears that the athletes are getting the short end of the deal.

This issue first began to gather steam at the New York Marathon in 2010. Lauren Fleshman, a former USA 5,000 meter champion was stepping up to the marathon

distance for the first time. She applied a temporary tattoo of her own company, Picky Bars, to her arm. Moments before the race, she was forced to scrub the tattoo from her arm. Her response of course was, “It’s crazy you don’t own your own skin,” she said (Longman, 2011). These events brought together athletes. Led by Olympian Nick Symmonds, athletes organized under the group “I’m tired of USATF and IAAF crippling our sport” and were supported by the Track & Field Athletes Association. A large contingent of these athletes attended the annual meeting. During the meeting, the shoe company representatives became angered over the use of social media and stormed out. The current president of USATF, Stephanie Hightower, closed the meeting (against meeting protocol) and was not too kind to some attending the meeting. The change to two logos did come from the meeting. Elite runners appeared pleased. Lauren Fleshman, a professional runner said having only one sponsor puts a lot of pressure on athletes. The faltering economy, she said, means “the world’s best athletes can be one bad race or one bad season away from having half their income taken away.” An additional sponsor “could make it easier [for us athletes] to make a life,” she added (Germano, 2011). Although, two logos was a small victory, it is still significantly less than what triathletes, cyclist and Nascar drivers are allowed.

Lack of Visibility

Another major barrier for elite runners is the lack of visibility in the American sporting world. Marathons and track meets are not widely broadcasted and when they are they do not attract a large audience. By just taking a look at the Nielsen rating of the most

elevated running events, conclusions can be drawn about the visibility of the sport. The USA Indoor Championships on ESPN drew an average of 586,000 viewers. The Olympic Trials Marathon in January on NBC drew an average of 1,100,000 viewers. The day of the 2011 World Championships when Usain Bolt competed on NBC drew an average of 1,752,000 viewers (Letsrun, 2012). Compare the amount of viewers of these events to those of any of the other major leagues in the U.S. In the MLB, Opening Day in March had on average 12,488,000 viewers. The 2011 World Series between the Texas Rangers and the St. Louis Cardinals spread over seven telecasts had 16,645,000 viewers. The 2011 NBA Finals between the Miami Heat and Dallas Mavericks had 17,340,000 viewers over six telecasts. The NFL kick off game for 2011 between the New Orleans Saints and the Green Bay Packers had 27,124,000 viewers. The Super Bowl of the 2010 season between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Packers had 54,850,000 viewers (Master, 2011). Just by looking at these numbers, it is easy to see that the sport of running has significantly less visibility on television than other sports.

Lack of visibility also comes from the amount an elite runner competes in races during the year. Take American marathoners for example. They usually compete in two major marathons a year (fall and spring) and a few tune-up races. Track and field athletes will compete in enough races to qualify or to get a standard for championship races. This usually ranges from two to ten races a season (IAAF.org). The rivalries that used to dominate track and field seem to have disappeared. Races between rivals now seem to only happen at championship events. Take for example, Usain Bolt versus Tyson Gay

which is considered one of the biggest rivalries in track. The two did not meet before the World Championships last year (Layden, 2011). This lack of competition and dodging of rivals lowers the visibility of elite runners. When athletes compete on a consistent basis, it is more likely that their names will be known. There is not enough time for the public to forget.

Measuring Return on Investment

The biggest problem across the board when it comes to sponsorship of athletes is measuring the return on investment (or ROI). Measuring sponsorship effectiveness is not straightforward. Brands desire concrete data to evaluate their investment. Determining a success of a sponsored athlete is not that simple. A major reason for the difficulty of measuring ROI is that it is nearly impossible to separate the effects of any sponsorship from other advertising carried out. Brands often gain other direct and indirect benefits from their sponsorship initiatives that are even more difficult to quantify. The two most commonly-cited reasons for entering into a sponsorship agreement are increasing public awareness of a company or brand, and changing the company's or brand's image, although there are several others. These reasons are not easy to measure financially (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1999).

Attempts have been made to measure ROI by equating stock prices with how much an athlete has been in the news. These attempts have been inconclusive on whether there is an impact of athletes on the stock prices. Researchers attempted this type of

analysis using LeBron James and Tiger Woods and only found a link with news mentions between Tiger Woods and stock prices (Cohoon, Extejt & Melton 2007).

Another source often used is SQAD. SQAD is recognized as the industry standard media cost forecasting source for national TV, Spot TV, Hispanic Spot TV Plus, Spot Radio and the Internet (WebCosts®). SQAD provides reliable media cost data to advertising agencies, media buying companies, advertisers, television and radio stations, cable companies, program syndicators and Internet publishers. Besides just media cost, SQAD can predict how much a mention on television or internet cost, which can be used to estimate how much an athlete sponsorship is worth.

At best these measurements give approximation of return on investment. These measurements cannot measure a change of brand image or increase public awareness. Perhaps the best way to measure if athlete sponsorship is working is by having the target audience a survey on company's image and if the athlete is linked to the brand. Setting affective and behavior type goals at a beginning of sponsorship partnership will allow the brand to measure the effectiveness of the sponsorship.

Gaining a sponsorship can be difficult for an elite runner, especially with the current barriers that stand in the way. Keeping a sponsorship can be even harder if performances begin to slip. An elite runner can attract or keep a sponsor by showing the brand how well they fit, have a loyal fan following and become a trustworthy source on running. The next chapter will explore how social media can meet these standards.

Chapter 5: Social Media Strategy for Elite Runners & Sponsors

Brands seek out athletes to sponsor based on several factors. Theories suggest that brands should look at the athlete's credibility, personality, physical attractiveness, uniqueness or unique personal background, role model qualities and a relationship with fans or loyal fan base. With elite runners there are several barriers to sponsorship, including strict uniform logo rules, lack of visibility of the sport and difficulty in measuring return on investment.

Social media can overcome these boundaries and enhance the qualities that brands look for in sponsoring athletes. Elite runners need to highlight their marketable qualities. Sponsors need to incorporate elite runners into their advertising and marketing campaign to better take advantage of the sponsorship partnership. The suggested strategies that follow will help elite runners and sponsors use social media to achieve goals.

Strategies for Elite Runners

Elite runners trying to attract sponsors should keep in mind the goals they are trying to accomplish with social media. These goals can be different on a case-to-case basis, but elite runners should focus on growing their fan base, creating a strong relationship with their fans and telling their unique story. A large fan base could attract sponsors and telling their unique story or perspective will allow sponsors to see if the athlete is the correct fit for the brand.

Any athlete, when first starting with social media, should decide what networks they want to leverage. Every social media platform has its advantages and disadvantages. Currently, for gathering a fan base, elite runners should look into Twitter and Facebook just for the number of users on both networks. Blogging is also a very good option for telling a story. Other niche networks like Pinterest, G+, LinkedIn and others can be good fits for personality. Each of these accounts needs to be run as a professional athlete and not a private individual. This means setting up a fan page for Facebook, getting Twitter verified if possible, and so on. These profiles should be filled out as completely as possible, highlighting the elite runner's achievements and unique story.

Growing on these social networks will first happen by simply publishing content and reaching out to the community the elite runner already has. Second, the elite athlete needs to follow the brands and other users that are within their field. Also, adding themselves to athlete directories and finding hashtags to use within running can add users. Reaching out to running media to link to the accounts or reach agreement for them to host the blog can do much to spread the word about an elite runner being on a social network and can also add to the fan base.

Quality of content and engagement are also very important in keeping a fan base and spreading the elite runner's story. People follow athletes to learn more. Content based on current training, news and glimpses of the runner's personality will be reasons fans continue to follow elite runners on social media channels. A blog can become the centerpiece of content creation. Blogs can host videos and other forms of media, and

allow for greater customization. Building awareness of the elite runner is just not sharing content produced by them. It is also about asking for content from others. Asking for input gets more people engaged and sharing ideas across their networks (Spredfast, 2011). Good quality content that interests the fan base is more likely to be shared and it could eventually pass on to a sponsor.

Best Practices for Elite Runners

It used to be easy to be an elite runner; all athletes had to do was train and win races. Now, with a 24-hour news cycle and the digital age, elite runners need to do a little more to engage with fans and boost their personal brand. Social media can help. Using social media correctly can gain an athlete a great fan following that could eventually lead to them being picked up as a spokesperson of a brand. To execute the social media strategies, it is suggested that elite runners implement the following best practices.

Twitter

Twitter is a great way elite runners can have their fans keep up with the day-to-day. One-hundred forty characters do not take too long to compose. Pictures, thoughts and links to news stories can all be easily shared. It is the athlete's personality so let it shine through. Here are some Twitter best practices for elite runners:

- Use Hashtags- Hashtags link to longer conversations and the right hashtag can put you right in the middle. Great hashtags are creative, and the best ones compel followers to join the conversation by tweeting with them.

- Interact with their Followers- Elite runners' followers are following them for a reason, to hear their ideas and look into their everyday lives. Twitter is a great way to engage with their fans when they have some downtime. It doesn't take any time to set up a Q&A just mention it and start answering away.
- Break News- Shaq told the world he was retiring through Twitter. Elite runners' fans are their biggest supporters so what better way to announce news than to people who care?
- Use shorten links- Shortening a link in bit.ly will cut down the character count and let elite runners track to see how many people click.
- Take pictures- Humans are visual. People love to see glimpses of elite runner's life and pictures do that perfectly. It isn't too hard to take one now with a camera phone (Twitter for Athletes).

Facebook

- Set up a fan page- Elite runners do not need their followers as friends. There are just certain items that need to be kept private. It is also recommended to fill out the timeline with milestones that were significant to their athletic career.
- Share pictures & news stories- More and more people are getting their news from Facebook rather than other outside sources so if there was a great article on the elite runner in Sport Illustrated, post it to Facebook. Since Facebook does not have a character limit, athletes should comment about the article. If they have

great photos from behind the scenes or a photographer has captured a great one, there is nothing better than sharing.

- Hear fans' opinions- Using polls is a great way to interact with fans and lets the elite runner set the discussion topic. Elite runners might quiz fans on personal trivia, like where you grew up, or just see where they draw their inspiration.

Blog: A blog is great place to share thoughts. A well-written blog that is regularly updated can go far in gaining fan support.

- Share Your Voice: This is not a paper for English class; blogs should actually share what elite athletes are doing with their real opinions included. Here, they can expand on their day-to-day life. Fans would love to hear what they think about the last competition or what the elite runner's hopes and dreams include.
- Double Check: Elite runners need to put their best foot forward by always double or triple-checking their spelling and grammar.
- Update Regularly: Fans don't want to wait six months for a new blog post. They will lose interest.

Effective social branding leads to sponsorships. Most importantly, elite runners need to remember to engage with their community. Once they have sponsors, keep them happy by spreading the word about them. They should include the sponsor in their Facebook Timeline, Twitter profile image and background graphics and feature them on their blog. They also need to make sure they are following any social media rules set by the league,

their coach and agent.

Strategies for Sponsors

Sponsors pick athletes to sponsor based on the principle that the attributes of spokesperson transfers over to the brand and enhances it. Current strategies by these sponsors do not have the athlete incorporated into the overall social media campaign. NBA, MLB, MLS, and NHL all highlight the athletes and their personality. These leagues also give a voice to the fans to actually communicate with the athletes and make an impact on how their sport is covered.

The larger lesson is that the athletes and the engagement that occurs is as important as selling product and can actually increase selling the product. The sponsored athlete should not be an afterthought or footnote in overall strategy. Giving the athletes the right tools and the opportunities to participate sponsors can leverage the image of the athlete and build stronger relationships with the fans. Sponsored athletes should have access to a smart phone, social CRM tools and a mentor for the social media space. Leveraging the fan base and athlete's image can enhance the brand image. This can be especially important in less visible sport. Fans are turning to online and social media not as an alternative to watching a game or event in person or on television, but as a way to enhance the experience

There are various ways to highlight the athlete-sponsor relationship over social media. First, incorporating the logo into the social networks will bring the brand to the forefront of the athlete's fan base. This could be adding a milestone to a Facebook

Timeline highlighting the relationship between the brand and athlete. The brand could also send images for profile pictures, backgrounds and other images with their branding. Linking the brand with athlete is important in a sport where visibility is low.

Creating content to post on a brand's page incorporating the athlete is important. Much like the NBA, brands should give behind the scenes looks of their athletes in competition. The NBA uses smart phones and laptops for social media coverage that includes videos, photos and live tweeting. Having a social media manager for the brand or even better, having a social media manager just for the athletes who is able to go out to one or two of the meets and follow the elite runner, would give fans of the sport and fans of elite runner access to athlete like never before. Also, capturing the elite runner using the brand's product would also create exposure. Brands should also incorporate elite runners with product reviews or testimonials. Sending an athlete a product before it hits the market, having them write a review or video tape a review on the product, would take advantage of the elite runner's expertise and fan base. Elite runners can also help their sponsor by simply taking photos of the gear they received and posting it on their social networks can go a long way for the brand.

The MLB "Fan Cave" created much buzz around the league. While brands might not be able to hire two die-hard fans to watch every single running event and record their thoughts or be able to produce high level video content on a weekly basis, they can take the idea of athlete interviews and do it on a smaller scale. Hosting a Twitter chat (or other

social media type chats) with a sponsored athlete would leverage the athlete's fan base and would produce content for the brand's web page.

The NHL regularly holds contests over their social media networks. Using the athlete's social network to hold contests to give away free gear would help incorporate the elite runner into the brand's strategy. Even holding a contest which pits sponsored athletes' fan bases against one another would create activity and push the brand forward. Fan bases can be a very a strong group and pitting a fan's loyalty against another's could draw traffic. The NHL also does a good job with meet-ups via social media. A great way to adapt this to running is to have a sponsored athlete host a group run in the area they are in (rather than their normal training grounds), or in an area they are in to compete. A meet and run would be a great way for them to meet their fans, represent the brand and create connections without taking up too much of their time. It would be advised for the brand to send along free gear to give away.

Another barrier that social media could help solve is measuring the return on investment of a sponsored athlete. One of the simplest ways would be to assign a check-out code for each athlete. When a consumer purchases a product online from the brand, they could enter the athlete's code before checking out. Also, tracking their click through rates for the social media they have posted could give a better idea of ROI. Social media and the Internet are full of analytic tools that social media managers could better use to see if the investment in the athlete is worth it.

Conclusion

Now is the perfect time for track and field as a low-profile sport to gain exposure. Strict uniform guidelines have athletes looking for more creative ways to garner sponsors and still be able to train and compete. Social media presents an attractive and creative method for elite athletes to please sponsors. Elite runners face barriers to gaining sponsorship, but with the rise of social media these barriers can be overcome. Logo issues, visibility and return on investment issues can all be addressed through social media. Sponsors and elite runners can leverage social media to fully utilize the relationship. Elite runners should focus on engagement and building a fan base. Sponsors should work on incorporating athletes into their larger digital strategy to leverage the elite runner's fan base and qualities. As social media continues to evolve, so will its use in advertising campaigns and sponsorship.

Appendix

Interview with Sean Robbins (Saucony)

Below is the transcript of the interview with Sean Robbins who is the head of Saucony's online community.

Cara Hawkins: Do you take in consideration how active an athlete is on social media before sponsoring them?

SR: The main attributes looked at in an athlete are their performances, visibility and how well they align with the brand. Their social media presence can certainly enhance their visibility, so yes, it is considered. There's no magic formula to how much it is considered, but when a brand is signing someone to represent them, it's definitely a plus if that person has their own dedicated fan following and the savvy to know how to market themselves.

CH: What is your strategy for incorporating elite runners into your social media?

SR: It's no different from the overall strategy with athletes; to inspire runners. When elite runners are on the roads and track, they have the opportunity to attract fans with their performances and persona. When fans want to know more about what makes an athlete tick, they now have the opportunity to hear directly from them through social media. As a brand, we can elevate athlete stories that we think can inspire a broader audience.

CH: What are your expectations for elite runners when it comes to representing you on social media?

SR: That they are genuine, positive and respectful. What an elite runner says and does in the social media space can enhance their image, but just like any person with a job, it can hurt them as well, so we also ask them to be careful. It's a symbiotic relationship so keeping it positive and real is the way to go. We don't require a specific level or type of participation, because then it wouldn't be real. From time to time we'll notify our athletes of a digital promotion or campaign we're running, and if they offer the time it takes to get involved with their social media accounts, it is a huge plus, but not a requirement. First and foremost comes their performance, so again, giving them social media requirements outside of that could run the risk of getting in the way.

I will say, I'm surprised by how few elite runners know the level of good will they can earn from a sponsor with small efforts like taking pictures of their gear when it arrives, or complimenting their favorite products from the brand. If a company is at all social media savvy, these things get picked up, passed around and forwarded to executives. I'm not saying those little things necessarily get you a better contract at the negotiating table, but they do get you noticed in a positive light, which can't hurt. I stress elite runners in that statement, as sub-elite runners and triathletes seem to be more inclined to pull every lever they can to market themselves not just to their fans, but to their sponsors as well.

CH: What are some of your favorite ways that elite runners have used social media?

SR: Nick Symmonds auctioning the space on his shoulder to display someone's twitter handle during races is one of the recent notable uses. Outside of the stunts though, I really appreciate when an athlete gives you a behind the scenes look at their training, pre and post racing, and seems to have a sense of appreciation for it all. There's something enjoyable about someone who understands what a unique position they're in to be in the spotlight, if only for minutes at a time, and give you a window into their life while also handling it with class. I think that's why runners like Kara Goucher, Ryan Hall, Bernard Lagat, etc get such universal respect. Not only have they performed on the big stage, but they approach everything with a sense of a responsibility and humility and people love them for it.

Another great use I see that I hope is an emerging trend is retired elite runners starting social media accounts. For the older generation the technology may not come as naturally, but it allows them to connect with the community and stay relevant even when running alone can't earn a paycheck anymore. Fans can follow the everyday triumphs and struggles of someone who at one point was a hero, but is no longer performing at an elite level, and that's pretty intriguing. One example is the Dick Beardsley Twitter account:

CH:Do you think social media could bridge the gap between elite runners & recreational runners?

SR: Yes, I think social media, used correctly, can make an elite athlete more relatable. In an individual sport with relatively smaller dedicated fan bases, that's huge, because it gives athletes the channel to make personal connections with fans.

Interview with Joel Ballezza (Brooks)

Below is the transcript of the interview with Joel Ballezza who is Brook's online community manager.

Cara Hawkins: Do you take in consideration how active an athlete is on social media before sponsoring them?

Joel Ballezza: Not at this time. We sponsor athletes who we think have an inspirational story and who love our products. We do enjoy sharing their successes with our fans through social media.

CH: What is your strategy for incorporating elite runners into your social media?

JB: We follow and like all our sponsored athletes on Facebook and Twitter so we can keep up with their day-to-day successes.

CH: What are your expectations for elite runners when it comes to representing you on social media?

JB: We expect our athletes to train and race strong, so that is where we focus on energy and know that our elite athletes have limited time for promotions. When they are available, we enjoy including our athlete's creative contribution and stories in our social media campaigns and other marketing promotions. A recent social media marketing example that comes to mind is when Desi Davila, a Brooks athlete and member of the 2012 US Olympic Marathon team, shared an unboxing video with us when we first launched our PureProject line of shoes last fall. See <http://youtu.be/0RA0V4JOwF0>. We

then posted this video and shared it with our audience. This was a great way to announce a new product and feature an elite athlete

CH: What are some of your favorite ways that elite runners have used social media?

JB: Fans love learning training tips and regular day-to-day updates from these celebrity athletes. Chrissie Wellington, a four-time Ironman World Champion is fantastic about sharing updates on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/chrissiesmiles>. By retweeting her content, we can highlight her great posts and it takes just a moment. During a visit last fall, we used social media to promote a meet-up with Chrissie in Seattle.

Interview with Chris Layne

Below is an interview with sport's agent Chris Layne of Total Sports Management.

Cara Hawkins: So let us start with the basic information, how does an athlete go about finding a contract?

Chris Layne: The easiest route is to land with an agent that has a relationship with each of the shoe companies. Certainly there are variables that will impact the possibilities (age of athlete, current level of performance, event, etc.)

OTRT: What can they do besides run fast times to present themselves as an athlete worth investing in?

CL: While marketability is important, the bottom line is performance. I've seen very few cases where an athlete is signed and they're not performing or young enough and showing the potential to perform

CH: What is your role as agent during the contract negotiations and how does this change as the relationship continues?

CL: The role is to simply keep the athlete's best interest first and foremost in the process. We're trying to maximize the bottom line and also find a good fit based on the athlete's needs, event, position in the sport.

CH: Is there anything that you urge your athletes to do to better market themselves?

CL: It never hurts to be proactive, do interviews (the right ones!), be visible in a positive light on social network mediums, keep your nose clean, be charismatic on the field of play. Not everyone is concerned with being marketable; you get certain athletes that just want to perform however.

CH: How important is it to craft athletes into household names to the sport?

CL: Extremely important, this sport is struggling when it comes to visibility and being in the mainstream media. Our higher powers need to really think about how they can reinvent the sport, otherwise we're all going to continue to be in a constant struggle

CH: What are some unique problems with being an agent of a track and field athlete compared to the other sports?

CL: I don't have experience in other sports, but I would imagine our travel schedules. We're at 90% of the events with clients, overseas, for 2-3 months, and then an additional window of time domestically before the European season. I think the other misconception is there's tons of money in this industry, I compare what we do to minor league baseball, and there aren't many of us that would be doing this if we didn't love the sport of track and field.

CH: As an agent, you are on the other side of the sport of track and field, what are some actions that could be taken to better the sport?

CL: A big picture overhaul. We need to look at each event closely, decide if we need to be going the route we're going. Too many variables in track and field. It's like a 5 ring circus, the general public can't keep up I'm afraid.

CH: Finally, what have you learned as an agent that can be applied to the rest of the sport?

CL: Contrary to what most think, I think the good managers are some of the most organized entities in track and field. I would like to see the sport come together more, and it might be happening on a small scale, but overall, the stereotype will always be there.

Works Cited

- 2010-11 high school athletics participation survey. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.nfhs.org/>
- (2011). Olympics will be "twitter" games says boa chief . *BBC Sport* , Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/ol/mpics/16442778>
- 2011 marathon, half-marathon and state of the sport reports running usa. (2011). Retrieved from runningusa.org/node/76115
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Berret, T. (1999). Sport sponsorship as distinctive competence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 33(3/4), 250-274.
- Barcott, B. (2011, December 28). She can do it!. *Runner's World*, DOI: www.runnersworld.com/cda/microsite/article/0,8029,s6-239-569--14169F,00.html
- Bennett, S. (2012, February 12). *The history of social media (1978 2012)[infographic]*. Retrieved from http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/social-media-history_b18776
- Bearne, S. (2009, January 15). London 2012 unveils social media strategy *New Media Age*,

Bio of jenny simpson. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<http://iaaf.org/athletes/biographies/letter=s/country=usa/athcode=200448/index>.

ml

Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. (2008). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship.

Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, (13), 210–230.

Charbonneau, J., & Garland, R. (2006). The use of celebrity athletes as endorsers: views

of the new zealand general public. *International Journal of Sports Marketing &*

Sponsorship, July(2006), 326-333.

Cphoon, L., Extejt, M., & Melton, M. (2007). Is it in the name, or in the game? can news

affect firm value? a case for athletes sponsored by nike, inc. *Journal of Business*

& Economics Research, 5(6), 1-8.

Cornwell, T., Week, C., & Roy, D. (2005). Sponsorship-linked marketing: Opening the

black box . *Journal Of Advertising*, 34(2), 21-42.

Conway, C. (2011, February 15). How to choose the right athlete to endorse your

brand. *Sports Networker*, Retrieved from

<http://www.sportsnetworker.com/2011/02/15/athlete-brand> endorsements/

- Cianfrone, B., & Zhang, J. (2006). Differential effects of television commercials, athlete endorsements, and venue signage during a televised action sports event. *Journal of Sport Management*, (20), 322-344.
- Dan, A. (2011, September 09). Baseball hits a home run by integrating social media with content and art. *Forbes*, Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/avidan/2011/09/29/baseball-hits-a-home-run-by-integrating-social-media-with-content-and-art/>
- Deluca, J. (2011, February 1). Nhl all-star game: Social media engages fans during broadcast. *Bleacher report*, Retrieved from <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/593127nhl-all-star-game-social-media-engages-fans-during-broadcast>
- Drell, L. (2011, October 08). How the nfl is dominating social media. *Mashable*, DOI: mashable.com/2011/10/18/nfl-digital/
- Eder, L. (2012, January 16). Meb Keflezighi & Bob Larsen: the gamblers. *RunBlogRun*, Retrieved from <http://www.runblogrun.com/2012/01/meb-keflezighi-the-gambler-by-larry-eder.html>
- Feil, S. (2012, January 30). The social side of sponsorship sports marketers take aim at activating fan engagement. *Adweek*, Retrieved from <http://www.adweek.com/sa/article/social-sidesponsorship-137844>

- Fiefer, J. (2011, May 06). Rules of engagement, from the nba social media war room. *Fast Company*, Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/1757355/rules-of-engagementfrom-the-nba-socialmedia-war-room>
- Flores, G. (2011, August 01). Gold mining. *FN: Footwear News*, 67(28), 61-18.
- Francis, S. & Lalas, G. (2011, August 23). Soccer almanac: How social media spurs the soccer chatter. *MLSsoccer*, Retrieved from <http://www.mlssoccer.com/soccer-almanac/news/article/2011/08/22/soccer-almanac-how-social-media-spurs-soccer-chatter>
- Gaffigan, A. (Producer) (2011, April 21). Sanya richards-ross on agent contracts, battling illness and injury, and going for the double. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from womentalksports.com/.../sanya-richards-ross-on-agent-contracts-battling-illness-and-injury-and-going
- Galvin, J. (2007, June 27). The hansons-brooks distance project. *Runner's World*, Retrieved from <http://www.runnersworld.com/article/0,7120,s6-243-297—11971F,00.html>
- Garland, D. (2011). How the nhl has risen to the top of social media \ being entrepreneurial. *The Rise to the Top*, Retrieved from <http://www.therisetothetop.com/interviews-guests/rise-44-nhl-risen-top-social-media-entrepreneurial/>

- Germano. (2011, December 5). Athletics¶ olympic year sees new events, sponsors *MarketWatch*, Retrieved from http://articles.marketwatch.com/2011-12-05/general/30688305_1_sponsors-new-rule-iaaf
- Gerweck, J. (2011, December). Athletes, officials clash over logo restrictions at usatf annual meeting. *Runnging Times*, DOI: runningtimes.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=24672
- Hutchins, B. (2012). The acceleration of media sport culture. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(2), 237-257. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2010.508534>
- Kim, Y., & Na, J. (2007). Effects of celebrity athlete endorsement on attitude towards the product: the role of credibility, attractiveness and the concept of congruence. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, July(2007), 310 320.
- KUANG, C. (2012). With fuelband, nike aims to crush jawbone up and overhaul nike . Fast Company, Retrieved from <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1665872/with-fuelband-nike-aims-to-crush-jawbone-up-and-overhaul-nike>
- Layden, T. (2011, June 9). Struck down by bolt in 2008, ga\ guns for gold again at 2012 games. *Sports Illustrated* , DOI: [sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2011/Zriters/tim_la\den/06/09/ga\inde\[.html](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2011/Zriters/tim_la\den/06/09/ga\inde[.html)

Leggio, J. (2010, September 21). 100 brains: Nhl's michael dilorenio on social media and the 2010-2011 season. *ZDNet*,

Letsrun. (2012, March 15). *2012 track & field by the tv numbers*. Retrieved from <http://www.letsrun.com/2012/television-0316.php>

Lobby, M. (2010, August 10). Social media making running cool again *Running Times* ,Retrieved from <http://runningtimes.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=20360>

Longman, J. (2011, December 31). As sponsorships dwindle, track officials loosen the rules for athletes. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/01/sports/track-officials-loosen-sponsorship-rules-for-athletes.html?pagewanted=all>

Longman, J. (2012, January 14). Busy, pain-filled comeback pays off as keflezighi wins to make u.s. team. *New York Times*

Malik, O. (2009, April 22). *with myspace changes, a social networking era ends*. Retrieved from <http://gigaom.com/2009/04/22/with-myspace-changes-a-social-networking-era-ends/>

Masters, S. (2011, April). *State of media 2011 in sports*. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/ceobroadband/state-of-the-media-2011-year-in-sports-11339432>

Medal winners . (2008). Retrieved from <http://content.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/beijing/medals.aspx>

Michaelis, V., & Weir, T. (2008, August 22). Chinese plan proves good as gold. USA Today .Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/beijing/2008-08-22-chinagold_N.htm

Monti, D. (2011, August 01). Meb keflezihi signs with skechers. *Competitor Running* , Retrieved from http://running.competitor.com/2011/08/news/meb-keflezihi-signs-withskechers_34073

Nguyen, L. (2011, August 12). [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://corp.klout.com/blog/2011/08/top-ten-football-players-with-klout/>

Nowak, J. (2012, January 06). Social media connects fans, players alike. *MLB.Com*, DOI: mlb.mlb.com/news/article.jsp?ymd=20120106&content_id=26276830&vkey

Olympian Nick Symmonds auctions space on his shoulder to call attention to sponsorship rules. (2012, January 18). *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/olympian-nick-symmonds-auctions-space-on-his-shoulder-to-call-attention-to-sponsorship-rules/2012/01/18/gIQA5BGw8P_story.html

Olympic sponsors make the running in social media. (2011, November 09). *Marketing Magazine* , DOI: marketingmagazine.co.uk/«/Social-Monitor-Olympic-sponsors-runningso

Ortiz, M. (2011, April 25). Nba's successful social media strategy the envy of other sports leagues *ESPN*, Retrieved from

[http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=burnsortiz/110425_nba_social
media_sportC](http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=burnsortiz/110425_nba_social_media_sportC) =nbac«

Pearson, M. (2011, September 29). Take a page from nhl's social media playbook. *The Globe and Mail*, Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-managing/leadership/«/article2183358/>

Qscores. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.qscores.com

Reinhardt , D. (2011, August 30). How social media is changing the nfl. *TechNewscast*, DOI:technewscast.com/technology/tech-buzz/how-social-media-is-changing-the-nfl/

(Runner's world media kit. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.runnersworld.com/mediakit/>

Runpro. (n.d.). Retrieved from

http://www.runpro.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=2

Shuart, J. (2007). Heroes in sport: assessing celebrity endorser effectiveness. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, January(2007), 126-140.

Spredfast. (2011). *Social media pocket guide*. Retrieved from www.spredfast.com

Rudd, C. (2011, November 03). Strands to cut fitness unit., *Corvallis Gazette-Times*.

Retrieved from http://www.gazettetimes.com/news/local/article_afee6572-05e71e1-8635001cc4c002e0.html

Savino, C. (2011, April 18). Business off the pitch: Social media and mls - a perfect match?. *Goal*, DOI: goal.com/«/business-off-the-pitch-social-media-and-mls-a-perfect-match

Severin, W., & Tankard, J. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods and uses in the mass media*. (5th ed.). New York: Pearson.

Spence, E. (2012, January 06). London Olympic games ban volunteers from social media. *Forbes*, DOI: forbes.com/sites/ewanspence/2012/01/06/london-ol\mpic-games-ban-volunteers-from-social-media/

The big Olympics gamble . (2012, January 29). *Boston Globe*. Retrieved from http://articles.boston.com/2012-01-29/magazine/30669590_1_shoes-new-balance_nike

Twitter for athletes. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://dev.twitter.com/media/twitter-for-athletes>

Wasserman, T. (2012, January 12). How two 'cave' men brought major league baseball into the social media age. *Mashable*, DOI: <http://mashable.com/2012/01/12/mlb-fan-cave-socialmedia/>

Wertheim, J. (2011, July 04). Tweet smell of #Success. *Sports Illustrated*, 115(1) 20-21.