

# Getting a leg up on World Cup

*Vanguard of marketers try soccer to reach Hispanics, but in the process appear to be paving way for the '94 Cup to be held in the United States*

By Pat McGeehan

**W**hen the U.S. was chosen to host the 1994 World Cup, soccer enthusiasts across the country proclaimed the second coming of soccer in America. Now that the biggest sporting event on Earth is slated to be held in the most important consumer marketplace, they preached, major corporations will beg for a chance to get in on a new soccer boom.

A dozen companies, some involved with international soccer in the past, helped finance the winning bid that will bring the Cup to the U.S. for the first

time in 1994. Among those that have kicked in cash and also have long-term sponsorship deals with Federation Internationale de Football Association, soccer's international governing body, are Anheuser-Busch Cos., Coca-Cola Co., Gillette Co. and Philip Morris Cos.

Those companies and others who provide financial support have the first option to get involved domestically with the month-long, 52-game tournament that will be held in 12 stadiums across the country.

"This is definitely the most positive thing that could ever happen to soccer in America," says Paul Stiehl, director of Washington-based World Cup

1994, which made the bid.

The U.S. Soccer Federation is determining how companies can develop their involvement without violating the rights of companies that buy official Cup global sponsorships of through ISL Marketing.

"I would assume anyone who came on board as a bid supporter would want to get involved on a larger level," says Mr. Stiehl. "We want involvement for six years," primarily for USSF's youth program because today's top young players will be 1994's Cup challengers.

But casting a long shadow over this optimism is one nagging detail: The painful histories of the North American



Soccer League and Major Indoor Soccer League have proved that few people really care about soccer in America.

Few, that is, but the country's Hispanic population. "Soccer is the No. 1 sport among Hispanics," says Jack Manning, who heads the sports marketing division of RJR Nabisco, which recently began a soccer sponsorship program.

RJR has attached its Camel cigarette brand name to a recreational tournament in Southern California, a series of seven exhibition matches featuring Olympic teams and a six-city tournament featuring top pro teams from five Spanish-speaking countries.

The program is concentrated in the Southwest and West. The only other major sponsors of U.S. soccer events, PM and Procter & Gamble Co., also focus on the same regions. With few exceptions, big-time soccer exists here only as a Hispanic

marketing vehicle.

Soccer receives little attention in the U.S. partly because its non-stop action isn't conducive to commercial TV. The only regular television coverage of soccer is a weekly two-hour broadcast on Univision, the Spanish-language network.

Susan Arthur, president of her own company specializing in Hispanic marketing, has seen soccer sponsors come and go in the past eight years.

"To appeal to the total Hispanic population, you can use a single marketing vehicle, soccer, and tailor it to 10 to 15 different ethnic groups," she says. The alternative, Ms. Arthur says, is to sponsor separate events tailored to Cubans, Mexicans, Hondurans, etc.

RJR's rival Philip Morris expanded its Marlboro Soccer Cup this year from a single event in Miami to a series of four-team tournaments in cities with large Hispanic populations, including New York and Los Angeles.

For the cigarette marketers, the primary purpose of soccer sponsorship is to increase sales after building awareness through sampling and promotional giveaways.

"Hispanics are not big couponers," Ms. Arthur says. "If it's not convenient they won't do it. They'll stand in line for an hour to get a little sample item, but they won't do coupons."

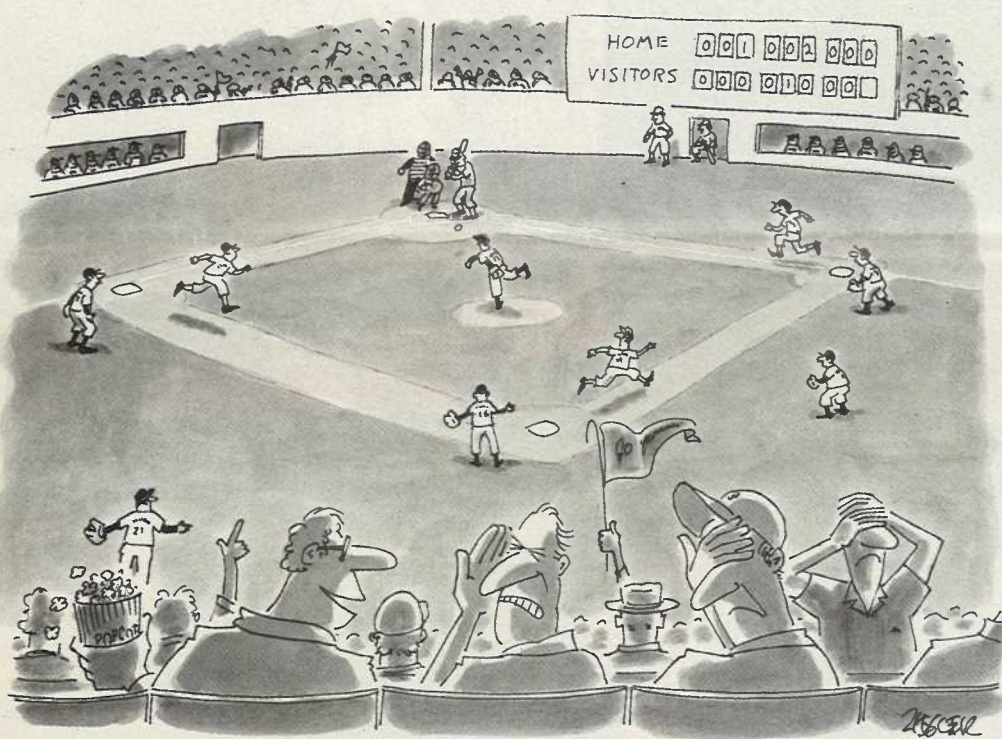
P&G's Clasico Internacional series was increased from its premiere 1987's season seven games to 10 this year. All the games were held in the West and Southwest except for games in Chicago and Miami. Most games featured the U.S. National Team, which will be the Olympic team in Seoul, against foreign competition.

Five P&G soap brands sponsored: Tide, Downy, Ivory, Zest and Dawn. Fans can turn in boxtops for half-price tickets either in advance or at the gate.

Companies are very protective of details about their strategies as they learn the ropes of soccer sponsorship. Each is testing different means of promoting its events within the Hispanic communities in various cities.

Soccer sponsorship also appeals to companies because it is relatively inexpensive. Each of the three big sponsors is estimated to spend in the neighborhood of \$1 million a year.

As interest in the Cup builds, though, expect marketer budgets to grow dramatically six years from now.



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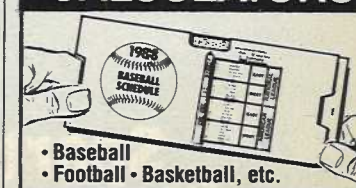
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