

# STREET & SMITH'S SportsBusiness JOURNAL

## Marketing/Sponsorship

### Baseball season's near, and team sponsors are warming up

Published January 19, 2009 : Page 10



THE LEFTON  
REPORT  
TERRY LEFTON

In the dead of winter, here are some Major League Baseball club deals to help warm the heart of any team sponsorship marketer and remind us that MLB's Opening Day is less than three months away.

It's always news when a team flips beverage partners and such is the case in Cincinnati, where the Reds have displaced **Pepsi** for **Coke**. Pepsi has held beverage rights at Great American Ball Park since it opened in 2003, and its relationship with the Reds dates back more than decade. But the most recent manifestation of red vs. blue sees Coke coming on board for a five-year deal, with broad-based exclusive beverage rights that include soft drinks, isotonic, juice and energy drink rights. Initially, Coke, **Diet Coke**, **Coke Zero** and **Dasani** will be sold at the park.

Both parties were unwilling to speak about pricing, but one agency source said it was a low-seven-figure-per-year deal. Coke will activate with a still-to-be-determined Reds player and it also gets pass-through rights for restaurant and retail partners, with sweepstakes that will give away vouchers for Reds tickets, Cokes and hot dogs at select games. The Reds also hope to use the new Coke tie to generate cup promos and the like with local quick service restaurants.

With the deal, Coke also purchased a full suite at Great American Ball Park, while the iconic Coke ribbon will be the featured signage atop a new high-definition scoreboard being built at the Reds home. Coke is also planning a recycling campaign at the park.

"Our brands are a good match because of the 'red theme' we share, and we hope to use Coke's reach to attract some additional business," said **Bill Reinberger**, Reds vice president of corporate sales, adding that sponsorship sales are pacing a few points ahead of last year. "Every deal takes longer, so it's all about cultivating relationships and having a lot of patience."

For what it's worth, the addition of the Reds to Coke's portfolio makes it 16-14 Pepsi in terms of MLB team deals. However, a few deals are still in play and the Baltimore Orioles' affiliation with Coke is an odd one since there are no pouring or marketing rights included. "Cincinnati's an iconic team brand in baseball and that's really why we wanted them, because we think of ourselves that way also," said **John Cordova**,



GETTY IMAGES

**Great American Ball Park will be Coke territory, thanks to a new five-year deal.**

Coke's director of sports transaction management.

While the New York Mets have yet to sign a partner for the elusive and cash-strapped auto category, the team has filled its gas category at Citi Field. Longtime Mets sponsor **Gulf Oil** has signed a six-year deal that will give the same kind of impressive and oversized signage display in left field that the gasoline retailer has in Citizens Bank Park and Fenway Park. The low-seven-figures-per year pact includes signage behind home plate as well as along the first- and third-base lines.

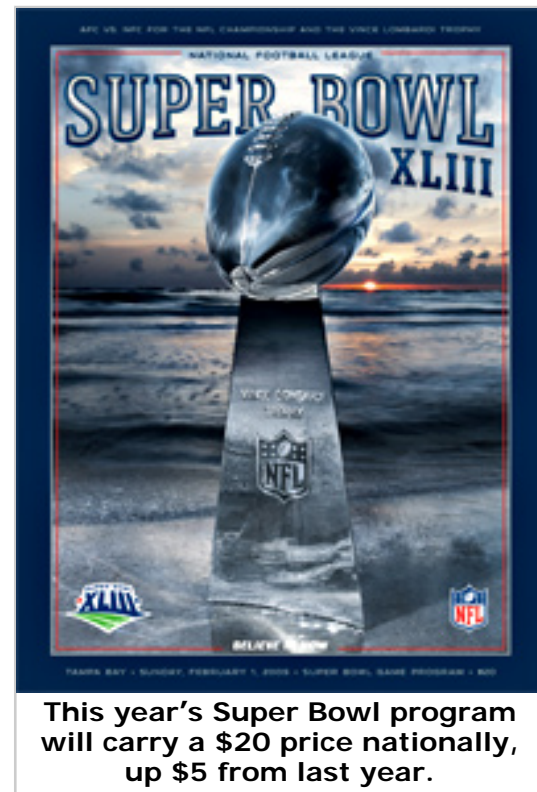
Gulf, a Mets corporate patron for more than a decade, will leverage its rights with a sweepstakes offering Mets tickets and merchandise, and will stage an annual Gulf Oil Day at Citi Field. Gulf has about 450 stations in the New York area and more than 1,900 overall.

**Peter Stern's Strategic**, New York City, is Gulf Oil's longtime sponsorship agency.

➤ **PRICIER PAGES:** At 240 pages, the official program for Super Bowl XLIII is about the same size as last year's. It will carry about the same amount of advertising pages, roughly 95-100, and the print run will still be close to a million copies. But this year's Super Bowl program has increased in price from \$15 to \$20 for the national version and from \$20 to \$25 for the hologram cover, which is an in-stadium exclusive. Not that we have ever heard anyone complain about the cost of anything once they are in the Super Bowl city.

**H.O. Zimman**, now in its seventh consecutive year as publisher, has the programs printing in Wisconsin the night of the NFL Conference Championship Games and adds the pages with team-specific information as the championship games end. They are trucked down beginning on Monday to the home cities of the two teams competing and to Super Bowl site Tampa and are available by the Thursday after the conference championships, with **FMI** providing distribution.

Naturally, much of the advertising is from NFL corporate sponsors, with **Cadillac** taking the back cover position again. H.O. Zimman Associate Publisher **Adam Scharff** noted the relatively heavy concentration of media companies advertising, including CNN, Fox News, Turner, HBO, Spike TV and DirecTV.



"Given the economy, we're happy with the ad support," said **Craig Ellenport**, senior editor for **NFL.com/NFL Publishing**.

➤ **COMINGS & GOINGS:** A victim of the Arena Football League's 2008 holiday layoffs has secured a full-time gig, as **Mike Loparo** has surfaced at the new Cowboys/Yankees/Goldman Sachs joint venture, **Legends Hospitality Management**. He has been named as GM of concessions at the new Yankee Stadium, reporting to Senior Vice President **Mike Phillips**. Loparo had been with the AFL since 2004, when he was hired as the indoor football league's first vice president of consumer products. He held various licensing jobs at the NFL during a 12-year stint there. The Yankees grossed about \$70 million in annual food and retail sales at the old Yankee Stadium under former concession rights holder Centerplate. ... Pepsi Director of Sports Marketing **John Stamatis** is leaving the beverage/snack food conglomerate to help manage a company that owns a Pepsi-sponsored property. Stamatis has signed on as vice president of marketing and partnerships at **Alli**, the NBC- and MTV-owned group that



**Stamatis**

owns the Dew Tour, the Free Flow Tour, AST China, and manages other events, including the Maloof Money Cup skateboard competition, the AMA Motocross Championships and the King of Wake wakeboard series. Stamatis will start after Super Bowl XLIII and head all marketing, communications and sales, while reporting to Alli President **Wade Martin**. Stamatis has been with Pepsi for more than seven years. His departure follows the installation of **Jeff Dubiel** as Pepsi's sports marketing chief in November.

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