


Marketers finally discovering the value of the NFL's new LT

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THE LEFTON
REPORT
TERRY LEFTON

In terms of balancing athletic prowess with off-field exposure, we've long felt that San Diego Chargers running back **LaDainian Tomlinson** was shortchanged.

Apparently, some marketers may have felt so as well, because as the NFL season starts, the multitalented Tomlinson is appearing in no less



LaDainian Tomlinson is appearing in several national campaigns, including one for Nike.

than six national TV ads.

Nike, which launched the signature cross trainer "Scream LT" kids shoe, features the Chargers running back in two ads; there are also two current ESPN "SportsCenter" ads with Tomlinson, an ad for a football game from **Fisher Price**, and a soon-to-be released spot from **AT&T** in which Tomlinson appears with **Deion Sanders** pitching an array of AT&T products and services.

Alan Zucker at **IMG** represents Tomlinson for marketing deals.

■ **BRUIN BRANDING:** After a disappointing 2005-06 season that saw the Boston Bruins finish out of the playoffs, the NHL team has a new GM, a new coach and now a new tag line, with "Hub of Hockey" replacing last year's "It's Called Bruins" tag.

The new campaign, which like last year's is from **SME Branding**, New York, will hit the Boston market this week in the form of print, radio, outdoor, online and TV ads with the goals of branding and selling tickets.

Clearly the campaign is based more on geography than on-ice performance, echoing past location-based branding efforts from other NHL teams, such as the Detroit Red Wings "Hockeytown," the Minnesota Wild's "State of Hockey" and the Nashville Predators "Smashville."

"The Bruins are New England's winter team — we wanted to remind people of that," said Bruins executive vice president Charlie Jacobs, "and with less than 10 players returning from last year's team, it was important to put our heritage in play. But the fans I run into every day remind me that no matter how good our branding campaign is, the campaign that really matters is the one on the ice."

■ **READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL AT RETAIL?:**

Seeking incremental distribution for its seemingly ubiquitous line of licensed products, the NFL has forged a series of new retail alliances.



Pottery Barn has acquired a license for boys' bedding products, including sheets and duvet covers. The new line will grace the cover of the Pottery Barn Teen catalog in late September. If successful, the alliance could lead to a deeper relationship with Pottery Barn parent **Williams-Sonoma**. We eagerly await the Oakland Raiders-branded soufflé pan.

In the mass merchandise channel, **Target** is featuring seven NFL licensees as part of a large tailgating display that will be featured at 1,100 stores beginning this week. Licensees involved include **Wilson**, **Jansport**, **Igloo** and **North Pole** outdoor equipment.

■ **GASSING UP: Gulf Oil**, long a sponsor of MLB clubs, has fashioned a network of five NFL team sponsorships. The regional gas retailer has deals with the Pittsburgh Steelers, New York Giants, New York Jets, New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles. The deals, negotiated by agency **Strategic**, New York, include season tickets, hospitality, and Web ad inventory; the New England deal also has stadium signage. A six-week retail promo across the network of teams offers fans suite tickets.



Pottery Barn is home to NFL boys' bedding.

■ **FURTHER COUNSEL:** Dallas-based **Schlegel Sports Group** is about to add a third team to its roster with its pending purchase of the Class AAA Tacoma Rainiers, and principals there are looking to offer some of their sports management expertise to other franchises. SSG President **Mike McCall**, a former New Jersey Devils and **Mandalay Sports** executive, said his organization will offer a wide range of consulting services, from franchise acquisition and facility construction to assistance with ticketing and sponsorship concerns.

“The dynamic you see across the industry when successful individuals in a particular business buy into sports is that they think they can instantly translate their success from one business to another, and that just isn’t true,” said McCall, as SSG also owns the NAHL Texas Tornado and part of the AHL Iowa Stars. “Owning and running a franchise day to day is so time consuming, organizations often lose sight of what they should be doing, particularly at the minor league level. You should be offering great entertainment and value every night. We think we can help with that.”

Terry Lefton can be reached at tlefton@sportsbusinessjournal.com.