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'Sponsors' ride on Sox coattails

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Shaw's Supermarket will become the first sponsor of the [Red Sox](#) [\[team stats\]](#) Radio Network after striking a three-year deal with broadcaster Entercom Communications in Boston yesterday.

If you're saying to yourself, "I thought the Sox already had an official supermarket," - you're right.

Despite Stop & Shop's status as the Sox official supermarket sponsor, Shaw's is finding its own way of cashing in on the team's cachet.

"This is just another avenue that I can get the Shaw's brand out legitimately," said Carl Jablonski, president of Shaw's and Star supermarkets.

They may still call them exclusive sponsorship deals, but rival brands are increasingly finding their way into the game, if not through the ballclub than through media partners and other platforms.

Bank of America has long been the official bank of the Sox. But Sovereign Bank is the official bank of the Red Sox cable network, NESN - 80 percent of which is owned by the team's parent, New England Sports Ventures.

Many marketers want a piece of the Sox pie - something the team and its partners try to leverage.

But as the "official" status is fragmented it's at risk of becoming diluted, said Peter Stern, president of New York-based sports marketing firm Strategic. Sponsors have to work harder to help regular sports fans see the luster of being the official team sponsor versus the team's broadcasting partner, he said.

"To a certain degree it does fragment our sponsorship category," said Joseph Goode, spokesman for Bank of America. But, Goode added, the bank gets important rights Sovereign doesn't get, including signs inside [Fenway Park](#) [\[map\]](#) and use of the team's logo.

"These different brands are trying to affiliate and associate with the Red Sox any way possible," said Sam Kennedy, senior vice president of sales and marketing for the Sox.

Still, you'd be hard pressed to find many teams outside of Boston with the clout to pull it off, Stern said. "I don't think you can do what's being done in Boston in Kansas City."

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