

SHORTSTOP

FIFA: World's football governing body filed criminal charges against Bavaria with the South African Police Service, accusing the Dutch beer brand of conducting ambush marketing activities during a World Cup game between Netherlands and Denmark in Johannesburg. Organisers ejected 36 female supporters from the Soccer City stadium because they were wearing orange mini-dresses that were part of a Bavaria promotional campaign back in the Netherlands.

Diamond League: South Korean electronics manufacturer Samsung agreed a two-year deal to become title sponsor of the athletics event. The deal, which is worth a reported \$2 million per year, starts from the meeting in Lausanne on July 8.

WTA: Sportswear manufacturer Peak became the first Chinese company to sign as a major sponsor of the women's tennis Tour, agreeing a five-year deal to be the official shoe and apparel partner in Asia-Pacific from this summer.

GB Boxing: The British Amateur Boxing Association announced it is looking for a title sponsor for the Great Britain team competing at the London Olympics in 2012. BABA is also seeking sponsors in four other categories - "women's team partner", "community sport partner", "travel partner", and "power partner".

Ralph Lauren: The clothing brand extended its global partnership with The All England Club, the venue for tennis' Wimbledon Championships, until 2014. Under the deal Ralph Lauren will continue providing the official uniforms for on court staff at Wimbledon. The company first began making uniforms for chair umpires, line umpires and ball persons in 2006.

Newcastle Falcons: Northern Rock decided to end its 10-year sponsorship of English Premiership rugby union club. The bank said the deal "does not offer a strong returning investment and does not represent a strategic fit."

Aston Villa: The English Premier League club signed a three-year shirt sponsorship with global retail broker FxPro. Acorns, the children's hospice the club supported by having its name on the shirts, will continue to be Villa's official charity partner.



Through Getafe, Spaniards now recognise a king that is not Juan Carlos - Getty Images Sport

NO SIESTA FOR SPONSORS

Dermot Ledwith reports from last month's infinitC conference in Zaragoza and sees how Spain's major brands are pooling their sponsorship knowledge.

SPONSORSHIP IN SPORT is alive and kicking in Spain, at least on the evidence of a two-day meeting last month, when the country's main brands came together in north-eastern Spain.

The invitation-only event, organised for the fifth year running by the Madrid based sponsorship consultancy infinitC, attracted Spanish brands from Ferrari F1 team sponsor Banco Santander to retail giant El Corte Inglés.

Burger King shared the experience of their deal with La Liga's Getafe, including a strong ROI. The fast food chain's first move into club sponsorship outside of the US sees the company's mascot displayed on the inside of the shirt, so players celebrating goals can pay a unique homage to 'The King'. Another PR coup saw 'The King' appearing in the presidential box, often the main focus for Spanish TV cameras, during a game against Real Madrid.

Sanitas, a private medical insurance company and part of Bupa, explained how its relationship with Real Madrid has developed from one of supplier to sponsor to partner - in the space of five years. The process began when the club's player signings such as David Beckham turned simple medicals into international media events.

Sanitas now enjoys brand visibility during on pitch treatment and partner the club in providing treatments for its players and their families off the pitch, integrating Sanitas doctors into the club's own medical team. Manchester United has asked about the programme.

As they finish the second season of their naming rights deal with the basketball section of FC Barcelona, local insurance company Regal

spoke of a clear increase in brand awareness that led to the sale of more policies.

After a successful battle with the Spanish media to enforce the correct use of the Regal Barcelona name, the sponsor is finally reaping the benefits. It credits fortune for being in the right place at the right time, as this year's Euroleague winners currently battles to make it five out of five titles on the court.

World Champion yachtsman Pedro Campos, a former captain of Spain's America's Cup challenge and a legend in sailing circles, gave a passionate defence of sponsorship in his sport.

As head of Team Telefónica he said he sees sailing generating huge returns in terms of media value, hospitality, tax incentives and unforgettable experiences for brands seeking to partner with technology and innovation.

Japanese document imaging company Kyocera proved how sport can build brand awareness for very little outlay, detailing how sport has formed an integral part of their brand communication strategy since a 2003 name change.

In addition to being a sponsor of Atlético Madrid, the brand continues to build awareness by becoming a technical partner to events in golf, tennis, basketball and motorsport, providing solutions to their copying needs.

The experiences shared and atmosphere of collaboration amongst Spanish brands shows a sector maturing nicely. Great progress has been made since the days of one anecdote, when a famous football president demanded a club sponsor's water supply be stopped as soon as their cheque had been cashed.

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES

Sports organisations are seeing serious competition from non-sporting brands when it comes to topping search engine results, but as **Bernardo Domingues** finds out, with help, sports brands are now catching up.

AS SPORT BRANDS compete fiercely off the pitch for fans, market share, mind share and the leisure dollar there is now another share that has become equally crucial: the percentage of top internet search results.

Over 75 per cent of all visits to any website come from Google or another search engine, which explains why when you look for Manchester United shirts on Google, the club wants its official online store to come up top.

Mike Flynn, chief executive at digital agency Fast Web Media, acknowledges that the sports industry has been slow out of the blocks when it comes to search engine marketing (SEM).

Sports organisations have had other more pressing areas of interest in the digital environment, he explains.

“Clearly for sports organisations maximising the content or the rights that they own has been the major challenge over the past few years of the internet; it all has happened extremely fast. So, whilst they have been sorting out legal issues and security, other things may have been put on the backburner.”

Flynn stresses search marketing is not only about arranging with Google to come up first for specific terms and paying per click received (PPC).

“[SEM] is the umbrella ... Not just SEO; it’s PPC, internal linking structure, dealing with broken link reports. It’s the universal search, it’s many, many things. It also involves a lot of social media, and of course reputation management.”

As opposed to PPC, SEO (search engine

optimisation) deals with organic search - ensuring a website is brought up on top of certain search results pages by complying with the 300 or so criteria that search engines use to build their rankings.

To achieve this, a number of aspects come into play, such as how the content is presented and structured, where the server is located, how old a domain is and which programming language is being applied.

“I could choose Nike as great example for many areas, including digital. But their website is built with elements of [multimedia platform] Flash,” Flynn explains.

“It’s pretty basic technical know-how that search engines have a big difficulty in reading Flash. So Nike spend a lot of money on Wayne Rooney, for example, and yet, if you type in ‘Wayne Rooney’ on Google, the Nike website won’t come up.”

SEO is also about engaging with communities built around social media, to make a case around the content of a website and generate links to it, therefore showing search engines the site is relevant and deserves to be on top of results pages.

This promotional element was part of Fast Web Media’s work for the English Premier League fantasy game, in which they beat long-running, popular American football fantasy leagues to the number one search result spot for all the top keywords and phrases.

England’s bid for the 2018 FIFA World Cup also employed a search marketing agency, Reform, to maximise international traffic to the

bid’s official website. “There is an opportunity that search presents to lots of sports brands that want to have a global footprint. In search, on the Web, the world is flat,” says Reform’s managing director Amanda Davie.

It is certainly flat for users, but the SEM practitioners involved in the project had also to identify the singularities of search engines in each and every country to expand England 2018’s global Web presence to over 200 countries, increasing first-time visitors by 330 per cent over nine months.

These numbers proved the exercise to be a more cost-effective strategy than other traditional marketing channels, claims Davie.

“We had to understand how the different search engines in other markets work, how their algorithms differ.

“We needed to make sure we had local language content that was attractive to them. That is all very low cost effort when you compare it to international brand-building.”

And what if an organisation is embroiled in a crisis and does not wish its name to be brought up by specific searches?

BP bought the top Google and Yahoo! search result for “oil spill” to show a link “Learn about how BP is helping”, but there are situations in which SEO can be used too.

“A lot of companies wouldn’t have heard that there are ways of putting down negative Google results whilst staying in compliance with guidelines”, reveals Flynn.

In this case, it is not about finishing first, but making sure your opponent comes last.