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Marketing/Sponsorship

NBA still doing some interesting deals on the homefront, too

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THE LEFTON
REPORT
TERRY LEFTON

After being continually pestered by those touting the NBA's declaration of manifest destiny in both Europe and Asia, we felt the need to verify that there is still a healthy domestic business for the league. We're assured there is, and while we aren't confusing the era of LeBron, Kobe and Dwyane with the golden age of Larry, Michael and Magic, recent stateside deals give some off-court momentum to the season

that starts on Tuesday.

Toyota, signed late in the 2005 season, is back for another two years as an NBA corporate sponsor. The league was hoping to also lure media heavyweight **General Motors** into the fold, but was unable to land that deal. Toyota's renewal includes a cause-related program called "Project Rebound" that ties the car brand to projects including court refurbishments and the creation of Learning & Play Centers in 15 markets. Toyota continues to have major presence at the All-Star Jam Session, including presenting sponsorship of the All-Star practice.

Elsewhere across the category, **AutoTrader.com** renewed its media-rich sponsorship with the league, while new sponsor **Wrigley's** is fashioning a promotion for early 2008 that will put NBA logos on tens of millions of gum packages.

The NBA has attracted advertisers with new inventory. **State Farm** has become ubiquitous at larger sports venues, and its hunger for space to hang its logo will extend across 15 NBA courts this season. Through **ANC Sports Marketing**, State Farm bought stanchion signage being used in NBA arenas for the first time this season and sold by teams. It has exclusive position in Atlanta, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Oakland (Warriors), Los Angeles (Clippers), Miami, New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, San Antonio, Sacramento, Seattle and Toronto.



State Farm has stanchion signs in NBA arenas through deals with 15 teams, including Dallas.

That's enough to get State Farm billboards on most "SportsCenter" broadcasts, but the signage will come down during national NBA broadcasts.

ANC pioneered the incremental signage play in college hoops venues and will have more than 50 such collegiate deals during the coming season. The insurer will also have rotational courtside signage in Chicago, Detroit, Phoenix and Houston, said **David Bialek**, president of ANC Sports Marketing.

► **COMINGS & GOINGS:** **Andrew Stroth**, CSMG executive vice president of player marketing, has left the company after more than two years, during which time he cut deals on behalf of **Dwyane Wade**, **Donovan McNabb** and **Matt Leinart**. **Bill Sutter**, a CSMG board member from **Hopewell Ventures**, which owns just under half of the Chicago firm, said, "This is not a retreat. Marketing will continue to be an essential part of our future growth" with executives **Nova Lanktree**, executive vice president of marketing services, and **Chris Thorne**, senior vice president of business development, heading that

area. ... At **The Hartford**, **Dave Lafrennie** moves into the newly created position of assistant vice president/director of sports marketing and strategic alliances, reporting to Michael Johnson, vice president of advertising and brand management. Lafrennie has been with The Hartford since 2001 and will direct the company's golf sponsorships, along with the NCAA, Paralympics and the Basketball Hall of Fame, which includes The Hartford Hall of Fame Showcase hoops tournament. ... United Football League Chief Executive **Bill Daugherty** and COO **Jon Brod**, both former NBA executives, have left the UFL after a year at the startup. Brod is now working for the investment group of UFL investor **Tim Armstrong**, **Google** president of advertising and commerce, North America, overseeing sports and nonsports affairs. No word on where Daugherty is heading. UFL Commissioner **Michael Huyghue** is promising to bring in new executive talent with NFL experience soon.

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