

Should Sponsorship be Allowed in Sports?

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In numerous sports events, it is easy to notice lots of sponsorships. Typically, there are billboards around football pitches during matches. The majority of sponsors are global and multi-national companies, such as Nike and Adidas. Different sponsors offer different forms of sponsorship, mainly products or merchandise, such as drinks and clothing. Some sponsors require the sponsored to sign contracts or fulfill obligations, namely advertisements. Sponsors usually sponsor clubs or individual players. They find their targets based on some criteria, including achievement, ability, popularity and image.

Actually, there are both positive and negative impacts of sponsorship. Sportsmanship is crucial in sports while sponsorship is equally essential because both sponsors and the sponsored can get what they need through giving and taking sponsorships. There are several benefits of sponsorship.

For sponsors, they promote their merchandise so more and more people know about their products. For example, Yonex sponsors the All England Open Badminton Championships and is a partner of the Badminton World Federation which organizes the World Championships. About 80% of competitive players use their racquets as it is the preferred choice amongst professionals. This influences the general public. They believe that Yonex is better and they will buy Yonex's racquets. Gradually, profits of the company will soar.

Moreover, the reputation of the sponsoring company is boosted. If the sponsor chooses a spokesman whose image can match that of the company, it benefits the former. Take Liu Xiang, the world record holder of the 110-metre men hurdles, as an example. In the

advertisements for the Pacific Century Cable and Wireless (PCCW), the last sentence Liu Xiang says is, “The only one you need to surpass is...YOURSELF!”. It spreads an encouraging message and it implies that PCCW provides better service. Meanwhile, Liu Xiang builds up a positive image and more and more people get to know him. So, sponsorship benefits sportsmen too.

Furthermore, the sportspeople or athletes will perform better because some sponsors will provide new innovative merchandise to enhance their performance. In 2006, Sharapova signed a lifetime endorsement deal with Prince Sports Inc., a longtime sponsor of Sharapova. She currently plays with the O3 white racquet. It enhances the player’s performance as the quality of sports gear is superb and guaranteed.

At the same time, the fame of the sportspeople soars. That means they will be more famous if they are chosen to be spokesmen of famous companies: so it helps to create a positive image through advertisements. Of course, as athletes appear frequently on television, an increasing number of people get to know them. The above shows that sponsorship is beneficial to both sponsors and the sponsored.

However, drawbacks also exist, which mainly affect sports people. Training time will be reduced. Usually, there are certain conditions if athletes accept sponsorship. Sportspeople have obligations like advertising. For instance, as for David Beckham’s sponsors, Adidas, Pepsi and Gillette might even encourage Beckham to exploit the potential of the US soccer market. So, he is busy all the time. On 27 November 2007, David Beckham was kept busy traveling to Sydney as he combined sponsorship obligations with training. It took him 22 hours to get there. It means the training time was shortened. Previously, Beckham’s coach openly expressed his dissatisfaction about the busy bee, Beckham.

Besides this, the freedom of sportspeople is limited. They cannot

show their preferences in public. If a player is sponsored, he has obligations to fulfill. Maybe he needs to drink a specific nutrient filler which is not tasty, in public. Take the example of David Beckham. As he is the spokesman of Adidas, he needs to advertise a lot and keep a positive image. He cannot risk any scandals or legal disputes which might soil the image of his sponsorship. Therefore places where Beckham can go are limited. It is better for him to go between home and the football pitch, but not bars or discos.

Sponsorship brings both advantages and disadvantages to sponsors and sportsmen. In my view, sponsorship should be allowed in sports because it is a kind of incentive and reward for sportspeople. As a number of them are not wealthy and they have undergone extremely harsh training, sponsorship shows how valued they are. In other words, their hard work is recognized and appreciated. So, sponsorship should be allowed in sports.