

Sports & Entertainment Spotlight

Sports & Entertainment Spotlight: The Steady Evolution of Athlete Endorsement and Sponsorship Markets and the Latest Household Names to Join the NFT Craze

By Joshua Bloomgarden on 8.5.21 | Posted in Sports & Entertainment Spotlight

Some of this week's highlights include:

- Emerging trends are showing signs of change in the sponsorships and endorsement markets. A segment once largely overlooked, athletes in the LGBTQ+ community are finally ringing in the big endorsement deals. Female athletes are also being wooed by smaller, up-and-coming brands that are willing to be more flexible with the individuals' needs and preferences, including increased involvement with new product development and opportunities for equity in the business.
- NFTs continue to boom – but is it just a fad? Perhaps not so, as Coca-Cola, MasterCard, NARS Cosmetics and more celebrities continue to jump on the bandwagon. And did we mention that NFTs literally rocketed out of this world?
- While the Tokyo Olympics is projected to lose record amounts of money, two Hollywood starlets, Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Garner, are seeing green after each signing big production and film deals.

As a friendly reminder, if there are topics you'd like to see featured, please feel free to contact me at josh.bloomgarden@foster.com.

Endorsements, Sponsorships & Investments

[What Kris Wu's Fall Says About the Future for Brand-celebrity Relationships in China](#)

August 4, 2021 via Vogue Business

“Traffic stars” — personalities with large online followings, whose association with a brand brings the brand traffic and sales — have become an integral part of China’s fashion business

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landscape. These celebrities act as a spotlight, bringing attention to the brands they're working with. But what happens when that attention turns negative?

Everything You Need to Know About Travis Scott's Cactus Jack x A24 Collaboration

August 3, 2021 via i-D Vice

Travis Scott is a bit of an enigma. Through Cactus Jack, his record label and creative brand, the hip-hop mogul has dabbled in everything from Fortnite to McDonald's to Dior, pushing boundaries and setting the pace for a generation's artistic innovation. Now, Travis is well and truly in his bag, entering his auteur era by launching a new partnership with cult film studio A24.

From 'Kiss of Death' to Competitive Edge: Out Athletes Finally Score Big Endorsements

August 3, 2021 via NBC News

U.S. soccer star Megan Rapinoe has signed deals with Nike, Samsung, Visa and a slew of other big-name brands. Gold medal-winning British diver Tom Daley is endorsed by Adidas. And U.S. basketball player Breanna Stewart inked a deal with Puma for her own signature shoe. They are among the record number of openly LGBTQ elite athletes competing in the Tokyo Olympics — [at least 180, according to Outsports' latest count](#) — and they are also among those who have snagged a piece of the [estimated \\$60 billion sports sponsorship market](#).

Major Sponsors Are Losing Elite Female Athletes to Smaller, More Flexible Firms

August 1, 2021 via Seattle Times – Business (subscription may be required)

A growing number of top women athletes, including Simone Biles and former Olympians, have been choosing to strike new types of deals with smaller activewear brands instead of traditional sponsors like Nike.

Top 10 Celebrities Who Make the Most on Instagram

July 30, 2021 via Inquirer

A pandemic emerges and majorly affects all of us in so many ways, but it seems like Instagram is one of the few lucky ones not affected negatively by the virus. While most of us stayed at home during those gloomy days of quarantine, Instagram is one of the most visited apps and shovels its profits. Same thing with the celebrities on Instagram.

McDonald's Announces New Meal Collab With Rapper Saweetie, Building on Wildly Successful Musician Collabs

July 29, 2021 via News Break - Top Stories

Launched in late May and officially concluded on June 20, the BTS Meal followed a history of big-ticket star collaborations between McDonald's and buzzy parts of pop culture. And on July 29, McDonald's announced the next celebrity to receive a meal treatment: 28-year-old Californian rapper Saweetie, whose song "Best Friend" with Doja Cat went platinum this year.

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Sunisa Lee's Olympic Gold for Team USA Could Be Worth One Million Dollars

July 29, 2021 via Sportico – Business (subscription may be required)

Team USA gymnast Sunisa Lee took home the gold medal in the women's all-around on Thursday, July 29, a victory that some marketers say could come with a seven-figure financial windfall for the 18-year-old star, who just shot her marketability into the stratosphere.

Eagles First Round Pick DaVonta Smith Takes Equity Position in West Chester Tech Company as Part of Endorsement Deal

July 29, 2021 via Biz Journal - Northeast News

Philadelphia Eagles first round draft pick DaVonta Smith has received an equity position in a Chester County technology company that specializes in building and protecting personal and corporate brands on social media. As part of the deal, Smith will also become a brand ambassador for LifeBrand.

How Simone Biles' Sponsors Reacted After She Withdrew From Some Olympic Events

July 28, 2021 via CNN Top Stories

Simone Biles' sponsors offered statements of support Wednesday, July 28, following her decision to pull out of Thursday's individual, all-around gymnastics competition at the Tokyo Olympics.

A Taxonomy of Celebrity Alcohol Brands

August 4, 2021 via Gawker

From Casamigos to Brody Jenner's canned tequila soda: does tequila taste better if it was produced with the investment and/or under the "creative direction" of a famous person? What about wine? Is vodka good for you if a celebrity says it complements their active lifestyle?

Five Celebrities Who Own Franchises

August 4, 2021 via 1851 Franchise Magazine

It's no secret that many celebrities venture into the world of business as extracurricular activities outside of their primary claims to fame. Although most celebrities attempt to start their own brand, some turn to franchise ownership instead, taking advantage of brand name power and a built-in support system.

Film & TV

Scarlett Johansson vs. Disney: How Should Talent Be Paid for Streaming?

August 3, 2021 via Los Angeles Times (subscription may be required)

It's the biggest show in Hollywood: "Suing With the Stars." After Scarlett Johansson filed her

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blockbuster lawsuit against Walt Disney Co. over the online release of “Black Widow,” much of the entertainment media’s focus quickly turned to the war of words between the popular actress’ representatives and the world’s most powerful entertainment company.

DirecTV Spinoff Should Heat Up NFL Sunday Ticket Rights Chatter

August 2, 2021 via Sportico – Business (subscription may be required)

AT&T has closed on the deal to spin off DirecTV as a standalone entity with an assigned enterprise value of \$16.3 billion. Per terms of the deal, which will see AT&T retain 70 percent of the new pay-TV entity — the private-equity firm TPG Capital is paying \$1.8 billion for a 30 percent share of the new company’s common stock — the telecommunications giant will assume up to \$2.5 billion in net losses generated by DirecTV’s extant NFL Sunday Ticket contract.

Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine Sold to Blackstone in Deal That Values Women-Centric Studio at Reported \$900 Million

August 2, 2021 via New York Daily News

Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine has been sold in a deal that values the female-focused production company at a reported \$900 million. Known for such hits as HBO's “Big Little Lies,” Apple TV's “The Morning Show” and Hulu's “Little Fires Everywhere,” Hello Sunshine was acquired by a firm funded by private equity giant Blackstone Group and run by two former Disney executives, Blackstone said Monday, August 2.

Tokyo Olympics Primed to Lose \$30 Billion With No Way to Recoup Losses

July 30, 2021 via New York Post

Each Olympic Games since 1960 has overrun its budget by 172 percent on average, according to a University of Oxford study. However, economists believe the Tokyo Olympics will cost around 400 percent more than its original budget. Most of it will not be able to be recouped.

FIFA Loses Court Bid to Revive Probe of Blatter Over Media Rights Deal

July 30, 2021 via MENAFN - Top Stories

A Swiss court has rejected world football body FIFA's bid to revive a criminal probe against its former president, Sepp Blatter, over a 2005 deal with the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) to sell World Cup broadcasting rights.

The Video Game Industry Is Bracing for Its Netflix and Spotify Moment

July 30, 2021 via Protocol - Top Stories

Subscription services are coming for the game industry, and the shift could shake up the largest and most lucrative entertainment sector in the world. These services started as small, closed offerings typically available on only a handful of hardware platforms.

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SEC Officially Invites Texas and Oklahoma to The League After Unanimous Vote

July 29, 2021 via News Break - Top Stories

It's official: Texas and Oklahoma have invitations to join the Southeastern Conference. The league's presidents and chancellors voted unanimously to invite Texas and Oklahoma into the SEC effective July 1, 2025. The invites went out late Thursday, July 29, afternoon following the vote.

Jennifer Garner Signs Film Partnership Deal With Netflix

July 29, 2021 via News Break - Top Stories

Get ready for more of the Torres family! Jennifer Garner has inked a multi-film deal with Netflix that will allow the actress to star in and produce feature films for the international streamer. Included in that deal is a sequel to her hit Netflix family movie Yes Day.

Music Biz

How Future Proof Is the Current Evaluation of Music Copyrights?

August 4, 2021 via Music Business Worldwide

Recently, the UK Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Committee spoke loud and clear: the distribution of wealth in the music industry must change. Songwriters and artists should get more. Streaming platforms and major music rights holders would earn less as a result.

Condé Nast and Universal Music Group Partner to Combine Their Video Reach

August 3, 2021 via Brand Week - News and Features

On August 3, Condé Nast announced it has partnered with Universal Music Group to launch Condé Nast Certified Video Plus (CNCV+), providing advertisers access to both audiences through one offering. Universal Music Group reaches 150 million monthly active users and ranks number one in the entertainment-music category.

Label's Counterclaim Axed in Fight Over Mexican Band's Music

August 3, 2021 via Bloomberg Law - News Top Stories (subscription may be required)

A Los Angeles record label failed to thwart a music rights management company's copyright infringement claim because both parties appear to co-own rights to music by a popular Mexican band, a California federal court said.

Primary Wave Officially Acquires Major Stake in Prince's Estate

August 2, 2021 via Digital Music News

About seven weeks after receiving a \$375 million investment from Oaktree Capital

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Management, Primary Wave has officially acquired a major stake in Prince's IP – including the legendary artist's masters, publishing rights, likeness, and more.

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)

First Music NFT in Space Orbits Earth

August 3, 2021 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

A digital file containing a piece of classical music became the first music-based NFT to orbit Earth in a space launch. On Wednesday, July 28, Nanoracks LLC and Artemis Music Entertainment came together to blast a digital recording of Claude Debussy's "Clair de Lune" into space.

Mila Kunis' 'Marijuana Kittens' Sold as NFT and Sold Out in Just 35 Minutes

August 2, 2021 via Green Entrepreneur

Mila Kunis leads the project 'Stoner Cats', an animated series for adults that deals with the story of five cats who by using medical marijuana, by accident, become more sensitive. Viewing this cartoon requires owning one of the 10,420 NFTs that were auctioned on July 27. However, the pressure to access the show caused chaos to unleash that same day on the Ethereum Blockchain network.

From the Senate's Infrastructure Bill Proposal to Record Trading Volume for NFTs: Five Key Things That Happened in Crypto This Past Week

August 2, 2021 via CNBC

Bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency by market value, extended its rally into the weekend. It surpassed \$42,000 on Sunday August 1, which was its highest since May. But its price since leveled, and as of Monday, August 2 morning, is trading at around \$39,800.

Porsche to Auction Exclusive Design Sketch as an NFT

August 2, 2021 via Automotive World

Between August 2 and 6, 2021, collectors and Porsche fans will have the opportunity to purchase at auction an exclusive design sketch by Peter Varga, Director Exterior Design, via the U.S. platform SuperRare.

Major Beauty Brand NARS Joins NFT Craze

August 2, 2021 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

The popular beauty brand NARS joins the growing list of brands and public personalities within the fashion and beauty industry to take advantage of the NFT hype. Over the weekend, NARS beauty launched its first ever series of NFTs.

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Alex Ovechkin the Latest NHL Superstar to Launch an NFT

July 30, 2021 via ESPN - News

Fresh off a new contract with the Capitals, Ovi is getting into the non-fungible token game in August.

Mastercard Debuts Program for Cryptocurrency and Blockchain Startups

July 30, 2021 via Westfair Online

Mastercard has created a new version of its Start Path initiative: A global startup engagement program focused on supporting startup companies in the digital asset, blockchain and cryptocurrency markets. The first companies selected to participate in this program include two American operations involved in creating investment platforms.

NFTs: New York Knicks Fans May Commemorate NBA Season With 3D NFT Tickets, Which Launched on Sweet Platform

July 29, 2021 via Crowdfund Insider

The New York Knicks are commemorating the 2020–2021 season with a collection of five Limited Edition 3D NFT Tickets and that collection launched on Sweet on July 27th.

DeFi and NFTs Are Now Crypto Venture Capitalists' Favorites

July 29, 2021 via Benzinga

Decentralized finance (DeFi), nonfungible tokens, and companies involved with them are apparently the favorites of cryptocurrency venture capital firms.

Coca-Cola to Host First NFT Auction

July 29, 2021 via SmartBrief - American Beverage Association

Coca-Cola launched its first campaign involving NFTs for International Friendship Day on July 30 when it auctions off the Coca-Cola Friendship Box containing NFT versions of Coca-Cola collectibles to support the Special Olympics.

If Done Right, NFTs Offer Brands an Invaluable Tool to Reach Fans

July 29, 2021 via Sportico – Business (subscription may be required)

At times over the past six months, it's felt like people have been asking the same question about NFTs: Are they here to stay? While some recent offerings may have tried to capitalize on the trend as a cash grab, and much of what is being sold today will lose value or even become "digital trash," NFTs are not a fad.

Right of Publicity

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Cleveland Guardians Trademark Might Be Stuck in Roller Derby Jam

August 2, 2021 via Sportico - Law (subscription may be required)

The Cleveland Indians may have committed — as they say in roller derby — an “illegal procedure” while rebranding themselves as the Cleveland Guardians. The baseball franchise, which intends to make the name swap after the season ends in October, isn’t the first sports organization in Cleveland to claim the Guardians name.

Student-Athlete Endorsement Deals Come Charging Out of the Gate

July 29, 2021 via Moneywatch CBS

Boost Mobile and Fresno State women's basketball twins Haley and Hanna Cavinder. Smoothie King and Louisiana State University and quarterback Myles Brennan. 1-800-Got-Junk and Kansas University hoops star Mitch Lightfoot. Companies large and small have wasted no time finding college athletes for sponsorship deals, just weeks after the NCAA granted them the OK to do so.

UFC Aims to Slam Online Pirates With Tougher Federal Copyright Law

July 28, 2021 via Sportico – Law (subscription may be required)

UFC 264, headlined by Dustin Poirier defeating Conor McGregor, generated as many as 1.8 million pay-per-view buys, with revenue in the ballpark of \$125 million. Less measurable is the extent to which online piracy — the illegal downloading and distribution of copyright material — took potential revenue away from the UFC and its fighters.