

STREET & SMITH'S
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Sponsorships have been touted by one insurance company executive as adding appeal to an industry category that is "inherently dull," yet the real challenge is to make an insurance company's alignment with a property sufficiently relevant to engage consumers.

Some insurers are trying to do this through very targeted sponsorships focused on specific groups. Geico's promotion of its motorcycle insurance via sponsorships of the Bikes for Tykes motorcycle rally and Las Vegas Bike Fest, and State Farm's college night title sponsorship at the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo promoting renters and auto insurance are two examples.

Other companies are attempting to use national sponsorships in a broad approach to reach consumers. State Farm's NFL sponsorship, Allstate's partnership with the U.S. Olympic Team and Nationwide's PGA (Nationwide Tour) title sponsorship are examples. These major sponsorships may, in part, be a response to the entry by large financial service firms, such as Bank of America, into the insurance industry.

All the large insurers like to have exclusivity with their partnerships, and at the "major league" level, owning your own space in the sports market becomes exceedingly difficult. Consider that while The Hartford and State Farm each has the official standing of NCAA Corporate Partner, Geico and Allstate have created a major presence in college sports of their own.

In this regard, kudos to Allstate for creating a new sponsorship space and gaining excellent visibility with its "Good Hands" field goal net sponsorship at 50 NCAA football programs.

Grade: B+