

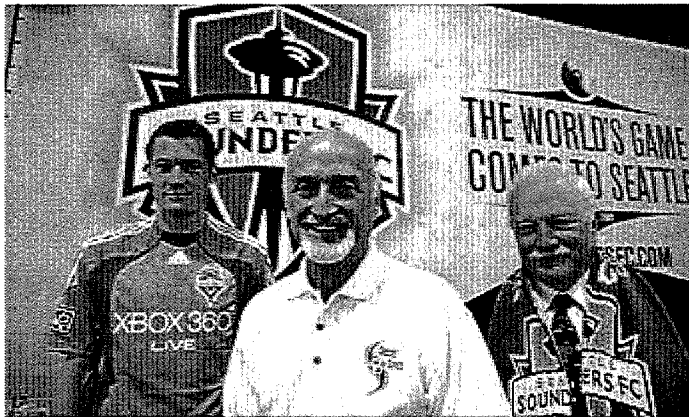
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Sounders FC to support global health partnership

Posted by Kristi Heim

Today is game day for the Seattle Sounders FC, and I'm eager to see how the team integrates philanthropic messages into its ads and announcements at Quest Field. The team supports four charities: Seattle SCORES, Boys & Girls Clubs of King County, Washington Youth Soccer and Save the Children.



KEN LAMBERT/SEATTLE TIMES

Seattle Sounders FC forward Nate Jaqua (left) stands with SPU coach Cliff McCrath, co-founder of Soccer Saves (center), and Charles MacCormack, president of Save the Children.

Non-profits are coming up with creative ways to market their messages using popular culture and commercial partners. The question is how do you distinguish between those campaigns that serve their humanitarian causes well and those that simply use the cause to polish the image of a corporate brand. Or is it possible (and ethical) to achieve both at the same time? Either way, the trend to merge brand and cause is growing. I did a short interview with Sounders forward Nate Jaqua, which my story about Soccer Saves yesterday didn't have the space to include. Jaqua, a native of Eugene, is friends with Diego Gutierrez, who asked him to be a spokesman for Nothing But Nets in Los Angeles. (Nothing But Nets is the campaign to raise money for bednets in malaria prone countries). Jaqua was traded from the Galaxy before he got started, but he told me he was very interested in ways Major League Soccer might help impoverished kids. Pop culture events such as American Idol or World Cup soccer do grab the attention of people who might not otherwise notice problems outside their own backyard. "Probably the single greatest common denominator in the world that cuts across every culture and language is sports, and the greatest global events are the Olympics and the World Cup," said Charles MacCormack, president and CEO of Save the Children. "Those are probably the one time where 3 or 4 billion people are all thinking about the same thing."

Gary Wright, who oversees business operations for the Sounders, summed it up like this:

"Kids are going to listen to an athlete, sometimes more than they might even their parents. That's not to say that's right. That's kind of reality."

http://blog.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/philanthropy/2009/03/19/seattle_sounders_fc_kick_off_w.html