



Field Report: Super Bowl and Daytona 500

In the days leading up to the Pittsburgh Steelers' Super Bowl win, a roster of blue-chip brands were ready for full-contact event marketing in Detroit. EM landed in the Motor City for a tour of the NFL Experience at Cobo Center and the Motown Winter Blast, which lined some of the streets near Ford Field. Brands like Prilosec, Snickers, Southwest Airlines, Sprint Nextel, and Xerox had ID on football-themed games at the NFL Experience—and DTE Energy and Meijer sponsored activities in the Blast—but without much other company-specific activation.



Two weeks later, the engines were revvin' at the Daytona International Speedway. Many of the familiar NASCAR sponsors were back for the festivities preceding the Great American Race. Some companies brought their old vehicles rewrapped to hype different brands; some brought their portfolio of brands together under one roof. And others found unique ways to extend their presence beyond their tractor-trailers.

SUPER BOWL AOL

The presenting sponsor of the NFL Experience had easily one of the most unique displays. Consumers could take pics in kiosks and watch as they were displayed on large projection screens throughout the exhibit. An ambassador led a football-themed trivia contest, pulling contestants onto a small stage and soliciting help from the crowd; winners walked away with branded t-shirts. The brand also offered Internet access on several laptops throughout. Agency: Blue Flame Marketing, Norwalk, CT.

BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP

The brand brought back its bright yellow 18-wheeler with a fully functional store inside. A long line of kids and adults lined up outside to create bears with Super Bowl XL-exclusive accessories. The brand wisely promoted nearby retailers—a large number of locals were at the event—on signage outside the truck. Agency: Barkley Evergreen & Partners Sponsorships & Events, Kansas City, MO.

BURGER KING

The brand scored with a paper football game—kids of all ages could test their finger-flicking skills against real, live football stars, including Reggie Brown, DeMarcus Ware, and Richard Seymour. The brand had a prime spot in the center of the hall, and to add to the buzz, ambassadors handed out branded orange foam fingers to the crowd. To the left of the display, consumers lined up to take pics with Baltimore Ravens cheerleaders and the King mascot that has appeared in BK advertising since 2004.

CADILLAC

In addition to several vehicle displays throughout Cobo, Cadillac had a dedicated stand where reps snapped photos of consumers posing next to one of Caddy's new vehicles. One was a CTS with decals highlighting a Sports Car Club of America Pro Racing sponsorship. After the point-and-shoot action, consumers got a card with the web address for a microsite where they could

pick up the photo.

THE CAMPBELL SOUP CO.

Brought back the Armchair Quarterback. Consumers tested out chili and a variety of other Chunky comestibles, and leaned back in one of two cozy recliners to throw a football through a target. Consumers could pick up coupons as they left the exhibit. Agency: Gigunda Group, Manchester, NH.

CANON

Pretty simple: Consumers could pose for a photo while holding a Super Bowl XL helmet and a football. While they waited for their prints, tables of Canon's cameras and other products were there for them to check out.

COMCAST

The Comcast display didn't seem to draw much of a crowd—the brand brought a branded moving truck, outfitted with products that Comcast offers with its cable packages, including DVRs. Although the vehicle was cool, the brand could have benefited from more interactivity or a better tie-in with the NFL.

THE DETROIT NEWS

The hometown newspaper sponsored the Down and Out Run. (Memo to brands: Think twice next time somebody asks you to get on board with an activity or event called “down and out.”) Consumers ran a deep route, just like a wide receiver, and had to dodge opposing dummy bags to make the catch.

DIET PEPSI

Befitting its rookie season as Pepsi's lead NFL brand, Diet Pepsi backed the Rookie Challenge. Visitors attempted to throw a pass to a cardboard player cutout with a netted hole under its arm to catch successful passes. (We wondered why they didn't use a version of the football-playing Diet Pepsi machine that starred in the brand's NFL TV ads.) Separately, the flagship Pepsi brand returned as sponsor of a Punt, Pass, and Kick activity for fans.

FEDEX

Once again sponsored the Quarterback Challenge. Consumers had to hit a moving target while avoiding a rushing defense. Beyond its own footprint, the shipper offered on-site shipping service, with a stand just outside the fan fest's official memorabilia store, so fans could send their souvenirs home instead of carrying them around all day.

FORD

At the Motown Winter Blast, Ford created a Family Fun Zone, which included interactive games (in one, consumers could toss a football at a target and walk away with a branded mini football), plus free rides in a Model T at scheduled times. The brand also brought in a slew of speakers to talk to families in a dedicated area inside the footprint—Magic Johnson was on the schedule for later in the afternoon when we stopped by. Consumers interested in Ford vehicles could pick up product literature or talk to brand ambassadors at an information desk.

GATORADE

As consumers left the Gatorade-sponsored Training Camp, they could pick up samples of the Fierce Grape flavor. In addition, the brand sponsored the Clinic field, where throughout the week consumers could learn about football from various tutorials, competitions, and demonstrations.

GENERAL MOTORS

Went all out at the Winter Blast, with three big tents and the General Motors Ice Garden, which featured 35 ice sculptures lining the street near its exhibit. One of the tents featured several vehicle displays, with ambassadors on hand to answer questions. Another housed the GMC Quarterback Tryout, where consumers could test out their passing ability, while video cameras

captured the action for viewing in the other tents. The third, a Cadillac MVP setup, showed off Cadillacs plus Sports Illustrated covers from all 39 Super Bowls; and guests could have their picture taken for a mock cover of SI. (Caddy was the exclusive advertiser in a Super Bowl special edition of the magazine mailed to subscribers that week.)

IBM

Sponsored a large theater that featured a video of famous football clips. Football fans lined up outside of the theater to catch the action. Signage around the theater touted IBM business consulting services.

MOTOROLA

Inside Cobo, visitors could play Madden NFL '06 while wearing Motorola-branded headsets, test their play-by-play announcer potential with a green-screen video experience (reps took about 10 minutes to produce a keepsake DVD with the audio and video). But the real action was at the Winter Blast, where the brand set up a beach in the middle of chilly Detroit. Consumers got "lei'd" when they walked into the tented display. With heaters blasting, the temps inside were pretty warm (at least when the doors weren't open), making it a hot spot among the Winter Blast displays. Consumers watched beach volleyballers play in a sand pit, and professional surfers rode waves on a Flowrider wave machine. When they weren't watching the action, consumers could check out the brand's Bluetooth products. Agency (Winter Blast exhibit): Leader Enterprises, Roswell, GA.

PIZZA HUT

The brand used its mini footprint for maximum sampling—and consumers bit, lining up to try out the new Cheesy Bites Crust. The version of Jessica Simpson's "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" used in Pizza Hut ads—with modified lyrics highlighting the product—served as the soundtrack.

REEBOK

The brand sponsored the NFL Locker Room, designed to give consumers a feel for the real thing. The exhibit featured mock lockers for players in the big game, plus plenty of Reebok gear. In addition, Reebok aligned itself with The Run to Daylight exhibit, where fans could test their 40-yard dash time against four opponents. We watched several participants collapse (some more artfully than others) on a padded mat at the end of the track.

SAMSUNG

The brand drew consumers in by doing more than just showing off products. An 80-inch plasma screen and other TVs were loaded with video games, including Madden NFL '06 for Xbox 360. There was a constant stream of traffic through the exhibit—the brand's proximity to the food area didn't hurt. Ambassadors handed out NFL-themed pins as consumers left the exhibit.

TOPPS

When EM stopped by, a line stretched all the way around the exhibit for a chance to "step into the shoes of a halfback" (less smelly than it might sound), and run through an obstacle course. There was also a Quick Release activity—the velocity of participants' throws were recorded and compared to that of NFL quarterbacks.

U.S. AIR FORCE

Brought back its Cross Into the Blue mobile tour, which features a theater aboard a big rig, showing a three-and-a-half-minute video that highlights jobs within the service. As consumers left, ambassadors handed out branded pins.

VISA

Consumers lined up to show off their post-touchdown choreography in the Visa End Zone Dance, a green-screen video activity. Once they did the dance—and trust us, there were some very creative dances—they received cards that pointed them to a web site where they could retrieve

the clip. Also sponsored the Fly for Six, where would-be football stars received a handoff and maneuvered through obstacles before diving into the “end zone,” which was actually a padded mat.

WILSON SPORTING GOODS

The brand made what first seemed like a pure sales opportunity a much more interesting experience with a mini football factory, where consumers could watch footballs being assembled. The factory showed the whole process, from sewing the panels together to laser-printing a name onto the skin.

DAYTONA 500 CROWN ROYAL

Returned with the two 40-foot-by-40-foot purple tents that debuted last year, but new activities inside replaced the racing museum theme of 2005. After having a driver's license scanned through a tablet PC (which also served as registration for the Society of the Crown loyalty program), guests could step inside and check out a Polaroid photo op with Crown Royal models and a giant purple and gold throne. Also new was a stage where consumers could record videos about their love for Crown Royal. Doled plenty of swag, including Crown Royal barbecue kits and aprons, playing cards, luggage tags, and duffle bags—which would have been handy to tote all the other Daytona freebies. Agency: U.S. Concepts, New York City.

GILLETTE

The setup was just another stop in Gillette's mega splash around its new Fusion razor. At a mobile grooming lounge, brand ambassadors snapped fans' photos and uploaded the images onto a screen to show how each guest would look with different hairstyles and facial hair, and then emailed the photos to the victim. Groomers were also on hand to provide shaves, using the hot new razor, while reps doled Fusion t-shirts and buttons. Agency: pierce promotions and event management, Portland, ME.

HERSHEY'S

A bright blue tractor-trailer doubled as a stage for an emcee who worked the crowds. Games like the Hershey's Kissables Toss-able Contest and the Hershey's Kissables Hug-able Contest got fans excited, as did the Kissmobile and photo ops with the Kissables-sponsored Busch Series car. (Kissables also was title sponsor of the Busch Series race that weekend.) Brand reps reportedly handed out more than a million samples of Kissables, Reese's Cups with Caramel, Ice Breakers Ice Cubes gum, and Hershey's Milk Chocolate, and the area was packed all weekend. Agency: Keystone Marketing, Advance, NC.

TYLENOL

Twenty-four brand ambassadors dressed in Team Tylenol pit crew uniforms zipped around the track in eight customized Tylenol Turbo Carts (pimped-out golf carts), distributing 80,000 Tylenol Rapid Relief Gel samples and scratch-and-win cards. Fans with winning scratch cards had to visit the Team Tylenol Trailer; about 230 claimed prizes including Victory Lane passes, passes to the radio booth, track merchandise certificates, and other premiums. Agency: U.S. Marketing & Promotions, Torrance, CA.

UNILEVER

If you stopped by the 200-foot-by-50-foot Ultimate Chargers exhibit (the moniker comes from the nickname for the Unilever-sponsored car in the big race), you didn't go hungry. Nine brands combined to put out a smorgasbord worthy of your local Costco. There were salads (Wish-Bone), biscuits with spread (Country Crock), nutrition bars (Slim-Fast), steak (Lawry's), cornbread (Hellmann's), and pizza sticks (Ragu). Then, visitors could grab a Lipton decal for the chance to win prizes if they were spotted by Lipton brand ambassadors throughout the weekend. Also on board were Wisk, with a custom-made video game that challenged competitors to get their cars the dirtiest; and Snuggle, for a photo op with the brand's bear mascot. Agency: Bulldawg Marketing, Mooresville, NC.