# [***Sports sponsorship appears to be on endurance run***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KG-HN80-010F-K4N6-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

With business trends, nothing just keeps going up.

Except maybe in sports, where values of sponsorships, TV revenue, player salaries, ticket prices and franchise sales generally have headed north for so many years they should be bogged down in frozen tundra.

But in its annual forecast, consulting firm IEG projects sponsors will spend $ 7.21 billion in North America -- with at least 90% of that in the USA -- to buy official tie-ins to sports. That's an 11.2% jump over 2002. Says IEG's Jim Andrews, "We're really surprised."

Surprising not just because that spending hike comes amid a sluggish economy. That 11.2% increase also exceeds projected 2003 hikes in overall U.S. ad spending as well as a projected hike in spending on non-sports sponsorships. And it dwarfs the 3.7% increase in total sponsor spending in 2002.

The 11.2% hike also is surprising, Andrews says, because he'd expected the post-9/11 era to nudge sponsor spending away from sports and toward feel-good grass-roots events. Instead, sports are projected to slightly increase its share of total 2003 sponsor spending to 69%.

For perspective, consider that sports sponsors' spending total is closing in on the gross domestic product of Namibia. The CIA's *World Factbook* lists that African nation's GDP at $ 8.1 billion. But big-time sponsors such as Pepsico, which IEG ranks as the top 2002 U.S. sponsor since it spent more than $ 235 million to buy its sports tie-ins, can sometimes spend three times as much *promoting* their official sponsorship status as they paid to get that official status. So to get a more accurate picture of sponsor spending, think Azerbaijan with its $ 24.3 billion GDP.

The sports business has its brush fires, such as the odd franchise in trouble or the various college bowl games being staged although they interest almost nobody. But, as Andrews puts it, "the sports machine just keeps humming."

Go, Army: U.S. Army Col. Thomas Nickerson expects about 2,000 leads from the U.S. Army All-American Bowl, a high school all-star football game in San Antonio airing Sunday on ESPN2.

Last year's game, the first with Army sponsorship, produced 80 recruits. But the big picture, Nickerson says, is the exposure. The game, with plenty of Army logos around, will be held in "a very branded venue."

The Army spends up to $ 24 million on sports marketing annually, this year introducing a Winston Cup NASCAR team. Nickerson says flexibility is key: "When you have to recruit more than 100,000 people every year, you can't just keep doing the same things."

Spice rack: Sometimes, Olympic scandals bordering on the comical generate concerned headlines. But espn.com's *Blood on the Rings* series chronicles a real Olympic horror show. Uday Hussein, Saddam's son, has headed the Iraqi Olympic Committee since 1984 and, according to former Iraqi athletes and coaches, routinely kills and grotesquely tortures athletes. "Just being a well-known athlete can get you killed," former Iraqi volleyballer Issam Thamer al-Diwan says. Hmmm, how can that be? After all, the International Olympic Committee's "code of ethics" clearly states "safeguarding the dignity of the individual is a fundamental requirement." . . . In search engine Lycos' 2002 rankings of the most-searched sports topics on the Internet, Anna Kournikova was again (duh) the top athlete and football (pro and college) again the top sport. Football searches rose 60% from 2001. Outside of sports world rankings, the most-searched "news event"

was the 2002 Winter Olympics. . . . Cellbucks, the Toronto company marketing a service to lets fans at venues order concessions via their ***cellphones***, already has signed 11 minor league teams and one golf course and expects to add at least one NBA team this month. Howard Dolgon, owner of the Syracuse (N.Y.) Crunch hockey team, says the service appeals to fans who don't want to wait in lines or leave their seats during play. But, he says, "to order a beer by phone, when you're literally 100 feet from a concession stand, requires a whole new mind-set."

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