

# Exit Versus, enter the NBC Sports Network

BY JOHN OURAND

STAFF WRITER

Versus officially will turn into the NBC Sports Network on Jan. 2.

The name change, which has been rumored for much of the last year, is timed to coincide with NBC's broadcast of the NHL Winter Classic and the run-up to NBC's February telecast of Super Bowl XLVI.



**New brand for the NBC Sports Network (top) links it to the new look for NBC Sports division (bottom).**

"Our goal is for anyone who sees the name or logo of one of our assets to immediately connect with NBC Sports," said NBC Sports Group Chairman Mark Lazarus. He will officially announce the name change today at the Television Critics Association tour in Beverly Hills, Calif.

NBC's other sports channels will not be part of this rebranding. Golf Channel will keep its name, which already has been integrated into NBC's golf telecasts ("Golf Channel on NBC").

The regional sports networks also will keep their Comcast SportsNet names, though Lazarus said most of the channels' on-screen graphics will evolve to eventually take on the look and feel of the NBC Sports Group.

It's still not clear whether the RSNs will ever change their name to add the NBC brand. Many of the channels have multiple owners, making a name change not as easy as the one at Comcast-owned Versus.

As part of the Versus rebrand, the NBC Sports Group also is updating its logo, making its peacock larger and using new fonts for NBC Sports.

The first big sports event to feature the new NBC Sports logo will be the Jan. 2 Winter Classic, featuring the New York Rangers and the Philadelphia Flyers at Citizens Bank Park, followed by an NFL wild-card playoff game on Jan. 7.

"These rebranding efforts are a major step toward a complete strategic alignment of all our platforms and businesses," Lazarus said.

## Correction

A story in the July 25-31 issue left out part of the name of business development firm RK Capital Partners.

# Tecate goes big on boxing promo

BY BILL KING

SENIOR WRITER

When executives from Tecate heard that Golden Boy Promotions had matched Floyd Mayweather against breakout star Victor Ortiz during Mexican Independence week in Las Vegas, they responded with an idea that would magnify the fight's impact in their most important market, Southern California.

They would plan a concert for a 5,000- to 6,000-seat venue in Los Angeles, air the pay-per-view telecast there, and either give away or discount tickets as part of a massive retail promotion.

Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer suggested something even larger: A Staples Center fight featuring rising Mexican star Saul "Canelo" Alvarez, followed by Mayweather-Ortiz shown on the arena's video screens, all wrapped in a festival featuring two well-known Mexican music acts. Fans in Vegas would see the Alvarez fight on screens at the MGM Grand. Pay-per-view buyers and closed circuit viewers would get both.

The Mexican brewery jumped at the idea, agreeing to run its typical national retail promotion around the Vegas fight, but also launching its largest program ever in Southern California. So did HBO, agreeing to seat broadcast crews at both fights, something it has never done for a pay-per-view. And so did Staples Center owner AEG, which liked the idea of an Alvarez fight, paired with a Mexican-themed music event, backed by the marketing support of Tecate.

"With Los Angeles now more than half Hispanic, this is an important date here," Schaefer said. "Having that date, having the right fighter, having the right sponsor partners, led by Tecate, which are going to put together a Southern California activation which is unheard of . . . You will see, this is going to be most heavily promoted



Last year, Tecate held a fan fest leading up to a fight between Shane Mosley and Sergio Mora.

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boxing event of all time."

In many ways, Mayweather's Sept. 17 fight against Ortiz is an ideal peg for Tecate's annual blowout promotion celebrating Mexican Independence Day. Mayweather remains the sport's most-watched fighter. Ortiz is a breakout star of Mexican descent.

The one shortcoming, from the sponsor's perspective, is that in order to generate a large enough purse for Mayweather, promoter Golden Boy must put the fight in Las Vegas, where higher ticket prices will generate a larger gate. While a Vegas fight is ideal for entertaining, Tecate's retail promotion likely will generate higher sales, more trials and greater conversion when built around a fight in Southern California, which accounts for about 35 percent of its U.S. business.

"Our first thought was, why don't we make the Mayweather fight in L.A.?" said Felix Palau, vice president of marketing for Tecate. "But when you do the economics, it's very difficult for L.A. to compete. That's

when this new idea came up. Let's make another fight in L.A. That increases the ability to promote a bigger concept locally. We're taking that and putting it on top of what we already do nationally to make a really big event."

Tecate has committed to supporting the promotion with more than \$800,000 in radio, TV and outdoor advertising in Southern California alone.

For the first time, Tecate will extend its popular rebate program — long a cornerstone of the pay-per-view events it sponsors — to a live event, offering coupons redeemable for a \$20 rebate on qualifying ticket purchases for the fight and concert at Staples. The rebate will be featured at promotional displays in 10,000 grocery outlets and liquor stores across Southern California.

It also will run its usual national promotion, with coupons for rebates up to \$20 on the pay-per-view available in about 8,000 stores nationally.

# Sprint to sponsor Notre Dame football game

BY MICHAEL SMITH

STAFF WRITER

Notre Dame has signed Sprint to be the presenting sponsor of its game against Maryland at FedEx Field this season, marking the first time the school has sold a presenting position on its annual neutral-site contest.

The Fighting Irish have been playing a neutral-site game each year since 2009, when they faced Washington State in San Antonio. Notre Dame took on Army last year in the first college football game in Yankee Stadium.

But Notre Dame Sports Properties, the multimedia and marketing arm of the university, wasn't selling presenting sponsorships to those games. It wasn't until last summer that Scott Correia, the president and general manager of the property, suggested that a presenting sponsorship for the game would be a unique addition to the school's inventory.

Correia liked the idea of giving a sponsor the opportunity to activate in a market outside of South Bend, Ind., where the school is based. The pro stadiums where the neutral-site games are being played also give Notre Dame more flexibility to promote a

top sponsor with signage and air time on the video board. Notre Dame Stadium does not have a video board.

Other Team Notre Dame members — the highest level of sponsorship the school offers — will have some limited activation opportunities, such as hospitality and lighter exposure on the video board. The Team Notre Dame sponsors, in addition to Sprint, are Gatorade, Coca-Cola, Adidas, Xerox and McDonald's.

"One of the big things we promote about being a partner with Notre Dame is the national platform we offer," Correia said. "Now we're able to take a sponsor into new markets that weren't previously available."

Sprint, whose CEO, Dan Hesse, graduated from Notre Dame, was well into discussions about a Team Notre Dame sponsorship last year when the Irish added the presenting sponsorship to the mix. The agreement was made in time for both sides to roll the presenting sponsorship into the same deal as the Team Notre Dame sponsorship. The deal wasn't done in time for the 2010 season, so this year's game became the first presenting deal. Hesse has said that Sprint's target market is shifting in the direction of college students.

Sprint agreed to a two-year deal on the neutral-site games that include the Nov. 12 contest against Maryland at FedEx Field and next year's Oct. 6 game against Miami at Chicago's Soldier Field. Both games will be broadcast by the Irish's network partner, NBC.

"We're partnering with a national brand that is synonymous with excellence, and this enables us to extend the reach of our exclusive marketing agreement into two major markets, D.C. and Chicago," wrote Tim Considine, Sprint's director of marketing and sports sponsorship, in an email.

The administration of those games will be treated like a home game for Notre Dame, so it will be able to offer a full package of assets, including hospitality, significant mentions on the video board and public address announcements, and placement of the logo on tickets, communications and any other game-related collateral. The Irish do not sell presenting sponsorships for their games in South Bend.

Terms of the deal were not available, but Team Notre Dame sponsors typically spend in the low to mid-seven figures combined for sponsorship with the school and required advertising spending on NBC.