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Firm takes brands beyond the stadiums at college campuses, into intramural events

BY MICHAEL SMITH

STAFF WRITER

Major brands such as Pontiac, Kodak, Norelco and Xbox have put money behind intramural sports on college campuses as their newest form of sports sponsorship.

American Collegiate Intramural Sports, representing more than 200 colleges and universities, has aggregated the intramural and promotional rights on those campuses and turned it into a sports property that sells a variety of sponsorship levels and activates mostly through experiential marketing. ACIS runs intramural championships in flag football and basketball, as well as fitness events.

Pontiac has signed on this season as the title sponsor for ACIS championships at close to \$1 million. Other presenting sponsorships, such as those purchased by Kodak and Norelco, go for mid-six figures a year, while a lower level of sponsorships

are in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range annually.

"The attraction is the college audience that's really hard to reach," said Chris Hornberger, advertising manager for Pontiac. "We're trying to get our products in front of the students in more of a natural format, right there on campus."

ACIS was founded by Ian Leopold, who recently was featured on CNBC's "The Big Idea" to talk about how his economics professor at Hobart College gave his senior thesis an F. Leopold then turned his thesis on how to monetize a resource guide for college students into a \$10 million-a-year business.

From the college resource guide, which sold local advertising, was born the idea for ACIS, which gives advertisers a national platform to reach an estimated 1 million college students through intramurals and other on-campus activities

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PONTIAC ADVERTISING MANAGER

over the course of a school year.

Pontiac, one of the most prevalent advertisers in the college space, including its "Game Changing Performance," considers the intramural sponsorship a separate platform from its college sports sponsorships. While Pontiac can throw a Ludacris concert for 60,000-plus fans at Centennial Park in Atlanta during the Final Four because it's an NCAA Corporate Champion, that official status doesn't get the brand on campus.

Leopold said sponsors get signage in

recreation and fitness centers, on-campus sampling and promotional rights, and branding on banners and various displays at intramural events, among other assets.

"We look at the intramurals as a totally separate program," Hornberger said. "It's more for experiential marketing and interacting with the students to get the product in front of them. We get a fair amount of leads from ACIS, but it's more for awareness, not so much that we'll see a sale from a lead in three months."

Kodak, a first-year sponsor with ACIS, plans to demonstrate its EasyShare inkjet printers on more than 100 campuses beginning next month. Xbox 360 will reach students by holding a "Campus Challenge" competition on EA Sports' NCAA Football '07 video game. Others such as Jelly Belly Sports Beans and Gold Bond will offer sampling throughout the campuses.