

A NEW DAWN FOR BASKETBALL IN CHINA

Infront Sports & Media has a long-term partnership with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) for the marketing of the CBA Professional League. It is delivering tremendous results, as basketball moves into number one position as China's favourite sport.

A big success

Basketball is a big success story in China. Its men's and women's national teams are amongst the best in the world and the sport has the support of millions of fans. The joint-venture between Infront and the CBA, which has now been running for four years, manages all commercial rights of the CBA League and clubs – a partnership that is proving the catalyst to realising the full potential of this vibrant league.

An in-depth role

In China, roughly 40% of the country's children regard basketball as their favourite sport. This is a positive sign for the future. Not only is the CBA League the fastest growing and most popular Chinese sports league and the largest sports league in Asia, but the future is bright as more young people are encouraged to take up basketball as a result of national team success and more effective promotion of the sport at every level.

Infront's role involves many aspects

The CBA League now consists of 18 teams. Infront's role involves every aspect of promoting, marketing and developing the CBA League, including grass roots programmes and player representation:

- The marketing of all commercial rights
- The technical development of CBA clubs
- The upgrading of television production quality and distribution
- The promotion of games
- Raising international awareness of Chinese basketball
- The development of the new media platform
- Projects at youth and grassroots level
- Player development and representation

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Raising popularity

Basketball is now the most popular sport to watch on television in China, according to CCTV-5. In particular, the CBA League is currently the most popular indigenous sports programming on television – every game is now shown live on television in China. Among the achievements are:

- A tremendous growth in the television viewing audience. This soared to 421 million in 2006/2007 and eased back in the pre Olympic season (2007/2008) to 346 million, because of competition from pre-Olympic programming, but has resumed growth at a record 591 million in 2008/2009.
- TV viewing for the 2009 All-Star Game weekend was at the highest level to date at over 16 million and the 2009 CBA Finals were watched by over 31.5 million cumulative viewers (four matches).
- Stadium attendance is up, with 1.69 million spectators over the season (+ 70% compared to the previous season).
- New media is taking off – the 2009 CBA All-Star online ballot involved 3.5 million votes.
- The CBA website reached 65 million page views in January 2009 and is predicted to reach 900 million over the full year.

The strongest sponsorship platform in China

The CBA League offers an exciting marketing opportunity for sponsors looking for a strong national platform in China. It appeals to the young, upwardly mobile, middle-class Chinese consumer, whose consumption levels are five to six times greater than the national average. Optimistic, fashion-oriented and brand-conscious, these are the present and future of basketball in China. Basketball is “cool” and its heroes embody the values that young people want to emulate.

As a result, sponsorship is growing. International brands such as UPS and Tissot have joined big domestic brands, such as China Mobile, to take advantage of China’s most effective domestic sponsorship programme. The package of rights is strong. The geographic spread is impressive. Teams are strategically located in the key cities of China. With an extended season – from May to October – combined with fan-based activities, the opportunities for exposure and impact have been prolonged from six to 11 months each year.

Further extensions are possible, similar to the immensely successful “Basketball Hero” grass roots project developed with China Mobile. This program, which was developed in conjunction with the educational ministry focused on teaching the fundamentals of the sport to kids all over the country. It lasted four months, covering 400 schools in 20 cities throughout China and reaching over 80,000 students.

Synergy with Team China Basketball

As a result of Infront’s existing and parallel role with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), there is a unique opportunity for broadcasters and sponsors to focus on Chinese basketball as a dynamic product, taking advantage of the synergy between Team China and the CBA League, helping to put Chinese basketball on the world map and exploiting its potential to the full as a great way to reach Chinese consumers.

Helping players to develop

The development of China’s sports talent is vital to the country’s long-term and continuing success at the international level. Infront has recognised this and therefore formed an exclusive joint-venture with a premier basketball athlete management company in the US - Excel Sports Management - to establish a most professional basketball athlete representation business in China. Its objective is to increase opportunities for Chinese players and athletes to gain experience abroad and give international stars more scope to play in China, while also providing a professional service that can link stars and sponsors for promotional purposes.

Infront is the exclusive marketing partner of the CBA League.