

ARF
**DAVID
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2020

Award Designation and Category:

Entertainment & Sports

Campaign Title:

There's No Place Like Sports

Year the campaign took place:

Brand: ESPN

Creative Agency: Arts & Letters

Media Company/Agency: Starcom

Research Company: Hart Research

Summary of the marketing challenge, methodology, insight discovered, creative execution and business impact.

In 2019, we set out to change the trajectory of the ESPN brand and build an emotional connection with fans. Audience Expansion is a company priority, and likely will be for several years to come. Female, Hispanic, and youth audiences are the primary expansion targets...

A clear opportunity presented itself in our data as we recognized a great opportunity to speak to a cohort of sports fans more directly in a story telling fashion – female fans.

Creatively, we needed to show this fans that ESPN has *what they love*. And as a brand – grounded in a recent brand audit in which we analyzed the health of our master brand and sub-brands across key audience segments – we needed to show these audiences that *we care*, and *reflect their fandom* in the way that they define it. The result was the creation of a new brand platform: *There's No Place Like Sports*

There's No Place Like Sports has been extremely effective and resides among the top of our marketing sports in terms of creative testing against key metrics such as improving perceptions of ESPN, showing fans we care, and making fans feel that ESPN is “bold.”

Consumer Insight

In order to grow perceptions of being seen as a **BOLD** and **CONSUMER CENTRIC** brand, ESPN needed to hone in on the humanity and deeper stories around sports

Marketing Challenge

Headwinds Abound: Headwinds abound with evolving dynamics around fan behaviors and consumption along with the upcoming election

- **2020 Election will be a competitor for mind share and consumption.** What we know historically happens in election years in terms of migration to cable news networks...perhaps using 2016 as the best proxy for 2020. We hold until the fact that while the country may be divided, sports brings unity and escape.

In the Age of COVID-19 the need to connect to fans was needed now more than ever:

- There's No Place Like Sports aimed to create a hopeful picture of all the wonderful and crazy things make the world of sports, a world of optimists.
- But then on March 12, when live sports came to an abrupt halt, that theme of hope and optimism took on a completely new—and much larger—meaning." It was clear that we need to pivot to a message that accounts for the times and reminds fans why we all love sports.
- From the very beginning, *There's No Place Like Sports* was purposely designed to be an ever-evolving stage for sports to showcase the timeless themes of human potential and connection. Now more than ever, we wanted to reminisce about those moments with all fans—and in acknowledging the current times, let them know that we miss it, too.

Methodology

Discovery research used to inform the brief. We performed an extensive audit of our master ESPN brand's health in multiple phases:

- **PHASE 1:** Audit and analysis of syndicated survey data from BAV across four key brand equity pillars (Differentiation, Relevance, Knowledge, Esteem), in addition to our Brand Activation Study which is a nationally representative survey on a rolling 12-month basis that is fielded by our partners at Hart Research. The tracker enables us to measure overall brand awareness, usage, and affinity across our master brand and sub-brands along with a number of key brand attributes. In our audit, we discovered the brand had faced consistent declines on Differentiation and Relevance over the last five years.
- **PHASE 2:** In order to identify the drivers of those declines, we partnered with Greenberg to talk to 91 fans (ages 13 – 54, mix of gender/ethnicity/fandom) using a variety of qualitative methods including online boards, focus groups and in-home ethnographies to understand the opportunities to bolster the brand. Our prior work was validated as we saw that driving perceptions of ESPN being a 'bold' and consumer-centric (showing fans we care) brand was core to growing brand connection. This became a central element and mandate to move these two key attributes by tapping into our storytelling and showcasing the humanity of sports.

Measuring Impact. As is the case for each of our ESPN promotional campaigns, we built a measurement framework around the two primary goals for all of our marketing:

1. Driving consumption
2. Positively impacting brand perceptions

To measure impact on consumption, ***There's No Place Like Sports* was included as part of a holistic media mix modeling project undertaken with Nielsen to quantify ESPN and ABC viewership attributable to exposure to each of our marketing campaigns and tactics.**

To measure impact on brand, **we implemented another holistic attribution modeling study with Kantar to measure impact of marketing on brand perceptions,** using an advanced methodology that

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incorporates Kantar's sample of Samba TV households to survey those exposed to TV promos, and digital tagging to identify those exposed via on- and off-channel digital, so that the appropriate control vs. exposed survey respondent groups can be identified and their brand health survey results analyzed.

All of these efforts were added on top of our creative testing and campaign reporting, including reach / impressions delivery. **Finally, comprehensive social analysis was performed ongoing to help guide and optimize messaging, content, targets, and decisions around creating a new spot in an agile manner that spoke to the current moment of missing sports during the pandemic in March.**

Creative Execution

A collaborative effort between ESPN and Arts & Letters in which we developed a campaign that elevates the humanity only on display in the world of sports. The campaign launched in September 2019, and had two distinct executions to date that have resonated with both female sports fans and all fans broadly. The goal was to showcase 'bold' through storytelling, and to connect to fans.

1. Our first version launched during the US Open and Monday Night Football, to an overwhelmingly positive reception. [View here.](#)
2. Our second piece premiered in the NFL Wild Card Game on ESPN in January. [View here.](#)

Entering 2020, we were now at an inflection point. With the current issues surrounding the pandemic and absence of live sports along with an upcoming election, it was critical to lean on a 360° always-on multi-media campaign on- and off-platform to continue the positive brand trends, and *There's No Place Like Sports* has turned out to be exactly that.

BRAND PLATFORM

A place that means something different to all of us, and yet-
if it was a story, it'd be told every night.

If it was a family, it'd be the largest family in the world.

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And if it was a country, we'd all speak the same language.
There's no place like it.
No place like your lucky bar stool, your buddy's basement shrine,
or the tattoo parlor after the Pats do it again.
No place like the streets of Chicago the night the curse was lifted
or Friday night in small-town Texas.
And nothing like the view from a kayak in McCovey or the back of a tailgate.
From the nosebleeds in the Garden or your dad's shoulders.
No other place where throwing an octopus is just another night at the rink.
Where putting on a green jacket or taking off a set of pinstripes is
extraordinary.
Where a sip of tea can change the game for an entire generation of girls.
And where ditching your dorm room for a tent isn't weird. It's an honor.
It's where we learn that anybody from anywhere can be somebody.
Where we believe in a team that's never done it
and root for a city we're not even from,
Where we still haven't seen it all.
And never will.
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE SPORTS

Business Results/Lessons Learned

There's No Place Like Sports has been one of our most successful efforts to date as we have reminded the world not only why ESPN matters, but why sports mattered.

Our creative testing studies along with our ongoing ESPN Brand Tracker survey and social listening have highlighted the resounding success of our new brand campaign and platform.

From our ESPN Marketing Impact Study, the original Fall 2019 iteration of *There's No Place Like Sports* is the **highest scoring spot that we've ever tested** in key metrics:

- Improving Perceptions of ESPN
- Making fans feel that ESPN is "Bold"

The most recent Spring 2020 'We Miss It, Too' iteration at the start of the pandemic garnered among the top scores across all of our previously tested creative in key metrics:

- Making fans feel that ESPN "understands and cares" about them as a sports fan
- Enjoyment
- Improving Perceptions of ESPN

In leveraging our nationally representative Brand Activation study in which we track monthly and quarterly movements across brand attributes and perceptions, we saw strong positive indicators as **all Key Brand Metrics reached all-time highs** in early weeks of the pandemic upon the release of our new *There's No Place Like Sports* spot. We also saw positive momentum in brand affinity across all ESPN platforms, most notably across Digital and Social Media platforms where we activated our campaign as well.

- ESPN's ability to be seen as 'Visionary in adapting for fans' has seen the most substantial gain (up +5 percentage points post-COVID)
- Bold: +4
- Innovative: +2
- Distinctive: +2

Our key activations around *There's No Place Like Sports* since the campaign launch in 2019 and during the pandemic have all driven over 90% positive

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net sentiment across social media – this ranks among the highest across our brand and sub-brand efforts across Marketing and Content.

There's No Place Like Sports

1. Laura Gentile – ESPN, SVP Marketing
2. Cary Meyers – ESPN, SVP Research & Insights
3. Flora Kelly – ESPN, Sr. Director, Strategic & Brand Insights
4. Kevin Hack – ESPN, Manager, Brand Insights
5. Lauren Keiling – ESPN, Director, Strategic Insights
6. Claudia Baim – ESPN, Assoc. Manager, Brand Insights
7. Ricky Cedrone – ESPN, Assoc. Director, Marketing Insights
8. Steven Brown – ESPN, Analyst, Marketing Insights
9. Matthew Rutigliano – ESPN, Analyst, Brand Insights
10. Seth Ader – ESPN, VP, Brand Marketing
11. Inna Kern – ESPN, VP, Media
12. Rachel Epstein – ESPN, Sr. Director, Emerging Properties & Brands
13. Peter Mulally – ESPN, Director, Brand Marketing
14. Stacey Pressman – ESPN, Director, Talent Production
15. Allie Murphy – ESPN, Associate, Director Media
16. John Lobo – ESPN, Manager, Brand Marketing
17. Christina Ryan – ESPN, Manager, Emerging Properties & Brands
18. Amanda Marcotullio – ESPN, Manager, Emerging Properties & Brands
19. Grace Bowes – ESPN, Associate Manager, Emerging Properties & Brands