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Going Global Brings out Best in the Business

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Going global brings out best in the business

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About a year ago, I wrote a SportsBusiness Journal column introducing the first-ever Sport Globalization Awards. It honored leagues, teams and athletes from around the world and attempted to ensure that sports business industrialists remember to think beyond the boundaries of their "home" country.

I named the awards the SMAANZies after the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ), which conducted a conference in Melbourne to show the commitment of sports marketers to think globally. Given the digital revolution that makes electronic retailing and sport distribution a 24/7/365 proposition, it doesn't hurt any of us to look at the folks moving the needle in a world without frontiers.

Without further ado, here are the 2002 SMAANZies (Sport Globalization Awards)

■ **Best sports league:** UEFA Champions League. How do you argue with a league featuring champions from Italy, Germany, England, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Russia? You don't. You learn from the leaders. UEFA is relevant to fans in more than 40 countries speaking at least 10 major languages.



■ **Best team:** New York Yankees. They didn't win it all in 2002 but in the last two years the Bombers have put together agreements with England's Manchester United and more recently, Japan's Yomiuri Giants (hoping to sign slugger Hideki Matsui). The deal with the Giants agrees to share what Sports Illustrated called "scouting reports, facilities and organizational ideas."

Runner-up: Everton of England's Football Association (FA). Everton inked a Chinese electronics sponsor (Kejian) to coincide with its signing of midfielder Li Tie, China's best soccer player. Everton had previously signed top American Joe-Max Moore and Nigerian defender Joseph Yobo.

■ **Best male athlete:** Yao Ming. The Ming Dynasty began with cover stories in USA Today and Sports Illustrated and print ads for ESPN. Doesn't matter how much Yao makes or gets to keep because 100 million viewers in China can't be wrong. Yao's post-up move opens the door for the NBA's massive marketing push in China and better serves Asian consumers across the United States.

Runners-up: Formula One's Michael Schumacher and Brazil's Ronaldo. Schumacher is so dominant in his sport, everybody wants Ferrari to carry extra sandbags during races. Regardless, the German rakes in an estimated \$80 million per year in winnings and endorsements. Ronaldo only did what much of the world expected: He led the Brazilians to a World Cup win over the Germans and made Nike look smart in the process.

■ **Best female athlete:** Annika Sorenstam. The lanky Swede notched 13 wins in 2002 and certain induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame. To many, she was more dominant than Tiger and more affordable. Endorsement deals with Callaway, Lincoln-Mercury, Ericsson, Rolex and Oakley sunglasses helped keep her visible globally.

Runners-up: Janica Kostelic and Serena Williams. Kostelic grabbed three gold medals and one silver for Croatia during the Salt Lake Olympics (the country's entire medal count) and became the first alpine skier ever to win four medals in a single Winter Olympics. Williams won the Italian and French Opens, then Wimbledon before making McDonald's debut with sister Venus and the Hamburglar.

■ **Best sports network:** NBC's Telemundo. Under-the-radar network has made decisive moves in basketball ("La NBA en Telemundo") and soccer, the world's two primary sports. Plus, it has a show with the greatest name of all time, "Sports Ya!"

■ **Best country:** South Korea. Co-hosted FIFA 2002 World Cup with Japan before hosting Asian Games in Busan in September. Gave the world golfer Se Ri Pak, Arizona Diamondbacks closer Byung-Hyun Kim (8-3, 2.04 ERA, 36 saves) and International Olympics Committee major domo, Dr. Un Yong Kim, IOC first vice president and chairman of the IOC Radio and TV Commission.

Runner-up: USA, even if it is politically incorrect for an American to pick his own country. The United States, behind Mitt Romney's leadership, staged a spectacular Olympics in Salt Lake less than six months after the 9/11 tragedy in New York and Washington, D.C. Plus, the United States provides the world with the NFL and Super Bowl, and both are followed globally.

■ **Best international sport city:** Manchester, England. Hosted Commonwealth Games in 2002 (Australia won the most medals) and will turn new stadium, built for the games, over to Manchester City football team. Has another little soccer club in town called Manchester United.

■ **Best globalization of a professional sport:** NBA. In 1984, Commissioner David Stern's rookie year, there were nine foreign players in the NBA representing eight countries. Today, the NBA has more than 65 foreign players with six (from China, Georgia/Russia, Brazil, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Yugoslavia) selected in the first round of the 2002 draft.

Runner-up: Get ready for rugby, especially with the Rugby World Cup headed to Australia in 2003.

■ **Best global event:** World Cup 2002. Massive event was staged in two countries (a first), held in Asia (a first) and the Americans played well enough to make the elite eight (a first). If the United States remains a global soccer power, this event will emerge as an even greater global standard.



■ **Best sports brands:** Philips, Microsoft, Electronic Arts, Budweiser. Philips and Nike launched an electronics deal in 2002 while sleeping giant Microsoft got serious about electronic/digital games. EA Sports continued to make games that fit most, if not all, platforms and helped keep many sports leagues viable to Generation Y. Budweiser became the official beer of the FA Premier League and was already the official beer of Manchester United and Chelsea.

■ **Best sports agency:** Bill Duffy and BDA Sports. Signed five players in the NBA's first-round draft and is currently playing a major behind-the-scenes role in the development of Yao Ming in the United States and China.

■ **Best executives:** Liu Qi, Beijing's powerful mayor and president of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Organizing Committee (BOGOC), and Lloyd Ward (USOC). Liu Qi should wield huge influence in China in the

years to come. Ward is quietly trying to influence the USOC to engage in sport outreach programs outside the United States and gender outreach at Augusta.

That's the world as I see it. There were no accounting firms involved, so the results are just as I intended. Credit is owed to international grad assistants Mark Molina (Philippines) and Adam Antoniewicz (former consultant in China) for their valuable insights.

Time to start thinking about New York's Sport Summit 2003 (and see what Mayor Michael Bloomberg is doing about NYC's 2012 bid), Madrid for the Sportaccord convention in May (where the General Association of International Sports Federations will meet) and Melbourne (because the Australians still have a pub culture and better weather in January).

Rick Burton is executive director of the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center in the University of Oregon's Lundquist College of Business.

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