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This Week's News

T-Mobile adds three years to NBA deal

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T-Mobile, one of the NBA's most active sponsors, has renewed its league rights for an additional three years.

The nation's fourth-largest wireless service provider has been a league sponsor since 2005. Since then, it has supported the league with big media buys, including title rights to TNT's NBA halftime show. According Nielsen Monitor-Plus data, T-Mobile had \$11.9 million in national TV spending from November 2007 through April 2008, the most among NBA advertisers.

T-Mobile's NBA-themed creative has made the already larger-than-life Charles Barkley even bigger and put Dwyane Wade's star into orbit, bringing to market a Wade-branded version of the Sidekick mobile device. The brand also titles the NBA's rookie of the year award. On the WNBA side of the house, T-Mobile is now presenting sponsor of that league's MVP award and voting.

"T-Mobile is an ideal sponsor in terms of their commitment to full activation," said Larry Weil of Weil & Associates, San Antonio, who has not worked with the company on its sports sponsorships. "The breadth and depth of their support is everything a property could want out of a sponsor, and the renewal is proof that the NBA is building business for them."

T-Mobile's sports marketing agency is Wasserman Media Group.

In other NBA corporate partnership news: Nothing makes a property marketer happier than re-signing a lapsed sponsor, and the league has done just that, bringing back the milk processors. The same consortium of processors, which call themselves the Milk Processor Education Program, underwrote an impressive rookie platform with the NBA from 2000-05. Linking with milk gets the NBA in front of the kids that the league's marketers covet. This time around, the milk marketers will use not only rookies, but a young, fairly established NBA star and a WNBA newcomer. Chris Paul of the New Orleans Hornets and Candace Parker of the Los Angeles Sparks are expected to appear in TV, print and online ads for milk.