

Flybe expands football sponsorships

Flybe, one of Europe's leading low fares airlines, has announced a new two-year sponsorship deal with Coca-Cola Championship team Norwich City Football Club. The Club is currently sponsored by Lotus and Proton Cars.

The multi-million pound deal will see Flybe become main club and official shirt sponsor for the next two years, with an option for Flybe to extend beyond the initial term. The deal underlines its long-term commitment to the club and to the East Anglia region.

The agreement will see the airline use its Flybe.com brand exclusively on all first and reserve team strips, which is anticipated to be available to supporters from July 2006. In addition, Flybe will reward fans with flight ticket giveaways at every home game and assist fans and the team where possible with their travel to away games.

The deal also sees Flybe making significant investment in the local community, with the establishment of initiatives such as its 'Flybe Community Cup' project. The annual scheme is devoted to the development of grass roots football and will offer schools in the local area the chance to compete in a football tournament with the final played at the Carrow Road Stadium.

These sponsorship agreement is further consolidation of the regional low fares airline's support for football across the UK, following Flybe's shirt sponsorship of Premiership side Birmingham City FC, Conference side Exeter City FC and a recent announcement that has seen the airline sign a main club sponsorship with Southampton FC. The South-West based airline is keen to establish an ongoing relationship with Norwich City FC and to reinforce its commitment to its Norwich base.

Simon Lilley, Director of Marketing, Flybe, commented: 'This is such an exciting deal for us and we're proud to be behind a club with such huge potential. The people in Norwich have been extremely supportive of Flybe so we're pleased we can give something back to the community.'

'At Flybe we are passionate about the communities we serve and

passionate about supporting football as a cornerstone of the region. As two of the largest brands in Norwich we look forward to the next few seasons and hope to see the Canaries fly up the league table!' Andrew Cullen, Norwich City Football Club's Director of Sales and Marketing, said: 'We are delighted to announce today that Flybe will be our main club and official shirt sponsor for the next two years.'

'Flybe have established a strong positive profile in football and have plenty of experience in making football relationships work. They are clearly committed to supporting the local communities that they serve, something which matters dearly to Norwich City Football Club.'

The fact that we have been able to complete a significant deal with a major national brand is in no small part due to our supporters who this year have contributed towards making Norwich City FC the best supported club in the Football League. This makes Norwich City Football Club a compelling proposition for a business and community investment and was a major factor in Flybe's decision to become Norwich City's shirt sponsor for the next two years.'

Flybe's sponsorship deal with Southampton Football Club is for three years and is similar to its deal with Norwich.

Andrew Cowen, Southampton Football Club's Managing Director said 'Everyone at the Club is delighted to have Flybe as our shirt sponsor for the next three years. Over the past six months we have been looking for a partner for our flagship commercial relationship who has close local ties and where we can both add to the others local presence. Flybe have made a significant commitment to the city in the development of both routes and infrastructure at the Airport and through their experience with Birmingham and Exeter, know how to make a football relationship work. We all hope that next season's Flybe kit is the one that takes us back to the Premier League.'

● *Flybe: 01392 366669/ Norwich City Football Club: 01603 218712/ Southampton Football Club: 02380 711972.*

Press agency signs up new sport PR deals

National press agency Sportsbeat have signed up a string of new deals for the Summer sporting season.

The agency's journalists will act as the official press agency for the JP Morgan Round the Island Race, Tour of Britain cycling and Skandia Cowes Week.

In addition, Sportsbeat are using their press contacts to help maximise Shell Helix's partnership with the Ferrari F1 team, Eurosport's coverage of the World Touring Car Championships and Aberdeen Asset Management's sponsorship of the British Seniors' Open in Turnberry.

The agency is also working alongside the Rugby Football Union communications department to provide a targeted news distribution service for this month's under-21 IRB World Cup in France.

Sportsbeat acted as the official news service for the VISA Paralympic World Cup and Brit Insurance Super Series squash earlier this year, gaining significant press exposure for both events.

The deals come after a strong first quarter for the agency, which boasts over 60 subscriber titles and specialises in maximising the often under-valued power of the UK's regional and local newspaper titles.

Sportsbeat have won praise for their extensive coverage of two of the biggest sporting events in 2006 – the Winter Olympics and Commonwealth Games.

The agency provided Olympic coverage to over 20 titles – targeting Scottish nationals and evening regional papers specific to Team GB competitors.

Their coverage was provided free to newspapers but was sponsored by official Olympic broadcaster British Eurosport, whose viewing figures eclipsed their ratings from the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens.

'Our work with Sportsbeat provided an excellent way for the channel to promote our extensive coverage,' said Matt Horler, British Eurosport's Head of Communications.

'By sponsoring Sportsbeat's specific Winter Olympic copy with our attached branding we were able to communicate our position across the UK regional press throughout the Games.'

'The 2006 Turin Games became the biggest event in terms of audience ever broadcast on the channel and this element of our communications plan no doubt contributed to that.'

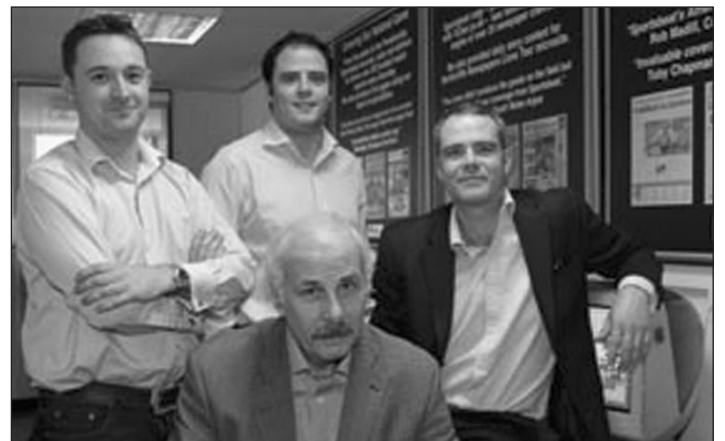
The agency's coverage from the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne was carried by over 30 newspapers including the Birmingham Mail, Scotland on Sunday and Welsh Daily Post.

The service was backed by Norwich Union, who wanted to use the Games to gain exposure for their £52m investment in UK Athletics. Stuart Wareman, Account Director at MEC Sponsorship, said: 'We used Sportsbeat for our client Norwich Union during this year's Commonwealth Games to help drive awareness of the company's athletics sponsorship in key regional press titles.'

'The creative used allowed us to communicate Norwich Union's key message of 'Preparing Champions' around an event where the company had no official rights. The results were very good and we look forward to working with them again.'

Sportsbeat's major events' coverage for the remainder of 2006 includes the FIFA World Cup, European Athletics Championships, Wimbledon, The Open and Ryder Cup.

● *Sportsbeat/News Associates; www.sportsbeat.co.uk Tel: James Parsons on 0870 445 0156.*



Sportsbeat's Commercial Director, James Parsons (far right) and Managing Editor, James Toney (far left) at the agency's London newsroom.

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by Robin Liston

**will return in the
August issue of
Sponsorship News**