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EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE REPORT SPORTS EDITION



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SPORTS EDITION INTRO

Real-time relevance is redefining sports marketing. In 2025, brands are capitalizing on cultural flashpoints—from post-win athlete endorsements to direct-to-fan activations—to create timely, **emotionally resonant experiences** that drive deeper fan connection and long-term brand equity.

If you have questions about any of this content, or would like to learn more, please reach out to your GPJ account representative or Heidrun.Scholten@gpj.com

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Personalized moments power mass experiences.

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Athlete endorsements are bringing something new to the party.

01

Personalized moments power mass experiences

Brands are embracing direct-to-fan strategies that turn cross-industry consumer behaviors into personalized experiences.

At this year's British Grand Prix, spread across both London and Silverstone, F1's Aramco Aston Martin Racing rolled out its fan-first I/AM platform with **a series of activations** curated from real-time social listening and designed to reward engagement. From nail polish matching the vehicle's iconic green colorway to matcha tea servings, the team delivered bespoke moments inspired by real fan requests, at scale. Amid a tough performance season, each branded touchpoint helped shift the focus from results to relationship-building—joining a broader wave of experiential tactics across sports, where fan engagement is becoming both more intimate and strategic.

What it means

Direct-to-fan is no longer just a digital play—it's foundational to IRL experience design. Aramco Aston Martin shows what's possible when brands move beyond static fan zones into responsive, 1:1 engagement. For experiential marketers, the takeaway is clear: build emotionally-grounded, adaptable systems that visibly reflect real audience input. When fans see their voices brought to life, trust deepens, community builds, and single interactions scale into shared ownership.

02

Data-driven growth and real ROI level the playing field

Women's sports deliver long-anticipated returns— and viewers, brands, and broadcasters are buying in.

Women's sports are no longer niche; they're high-value media and marketing properties. Attendance records have shattered expectations, with 92,003 fans at a single Nebraska volleyball match, 2 billion global viewers for the 2023 Women's World Cup, and WNBA viewership up 21% YoY in 2024. Major sponsors like Nike, Booking.com, Adobe, and Ally are aligning with purpose and performance. Prime-time placements, full-scale production, and multiplatform coverage are normalizing women's sports consumption. This isn't a social movement—it's smart business, backed by data, demand, and dollars.

What it means

This shift isn't symbolic—it's systemic. Media rights are expanding rapidly, merchandise is flying off the shelves (**up 80% YoY on Fanatics**), and viewership is rivaling men's leagues. For experiential marketers, the opportunity lies in showing up early and authentically. Women's leagues offer unsaturated, emotionally resonant territory—where younger, gender-diverse, and digitally native fans are primed for connection. Brands that activate with meaningful presence can build lasting equity while helping shape the future of fan-first engagement.

03

Athletic endorsements are bringing something new to the party

Athlete triumphs are the catalysts for real-time, high-impact storytelling.

The velocity of athlete-brand collaborations has shifted to a new gear. While endorsements aren't new, the speed of their activation post-victory is. Within hours of the Wimbledon final, **Carlos Alcaraz** and Jannik Sinner were signing major deals with GetPRO and Evian, while Nike and Rolex rolled out celebratory content across platforms. Days after Super Bowl LIX, **Jalen Hurts** became the first NFL player to front a Sprite campaign, tying his on-field success directly to brand storytelling with immediacy and authenticity. These moments show how live competition can double as a real-time marketing launchpad—transforming peak emotional moments into culturally-relevant brand engagements almost instantly.

What it means

In experiential, speed is the new strategy. Athlete wins now trigger immediate storytelling opportunities—on-site, online, and everywhere in between. For brands, that means preparing flexible assets in advance and building event ecosystems that can adapt in real time. These moments aren't just about exposure—they're about inclusion. When fans experience the celebration with the brand, connection deepens and campaigns hit harder.

OUT-THERE EXPERIENCES

Drafted, dressed, and dunked by Google Pixel

Fans got the full **All-Star treatment at WNBA Live**—from AI-styled tunnel fits to Magic Editor makeovers—fans followed a tech-fueled journey blending retail, content, and courtside action through the lens of the Pixel.

Stagwell's "Sport Beach" makes waves at Cannes

Stagwell's Sport Beach returns as a one-of-a-kind hub for panels, pickleball, and pros to share the same stage—including athlete-led programming, immersive activations, courtside demos, and sports-meets-retail design.

People, brands and marketers continue to push the boundaries of physical and digital experiences, with new and creative executions popping up across the globe.

Helmet highs and crypto lows hit London

Just ahead of the British Grand Prix, **a massive F1 helmet took to the streets of London**—pairing brand presence with exclusive merch and an OOH takeover to rev up Coinbase's Aston Martin Aramco partnership.



Arby's 'steaks' their claim on the Chicago circuit

To fire up the Chicago Street Race, **Arby's curated a Big Wheel fan fest showdown**, complete with trackside branding and a 100,000 cheesesteak giveaway—turning race weekend into a full-flavor experience.

