

NBA PROPOSAL TO PUT ADS ON JERSEYS DRAWS FLAK FROM FANS



The dynamics of generating revenue in professional basketball are shifting. According to the Sports Business Journal, the NBA is on the verge of confirming its intentions of putting advertisements on players' jerseys. The decision has drawn considerable flak from fans and players, Board of Governors confirmed that, "The sticky issue will be debated, if not voted on, at the next board of governors meeting in April. It's a touchy topic, one that involves balancing some of the most influential league constituencies and addressing some thorny questions." What fans are peeved about, is that the Board has not taken the fan on board and find the idea revolting and jarring. Even though they may earn millions, it may amount to brand abuse and a sell-out to corporate marketing trends, which could dilute the very essence of the great game. The deluge of criticisms from all quarters, mainly players and fans, has met with strong defense by the NBA. They feel that every revenue stream should be explored. Moreover, they argue, nobody says anything about soccer teams all over the world, having ads all over their jerseys. Racing cars have ads plastered on every inch of space available, "Nobody bats an eye-lid because it's been an expected norm for decades." Fans anguish, "we've never had ads on jerseys before, why start now? How distracting an ad would be, when your favorite player is breaking down a defense, or streaking to the rim for a gravity-defying dunk?" NBA's foray into this area of advertisements is seen as a betrayal of fan's sensibilities. The money that the NBA would rake in would surely not be used to reduce the price of the, insanely expensive tickets, for the games. More and more fans are reluctantly, watching games from the comfort of their homes, unable to afford the tickets. In spite of the fans reservations, it is inevitable and expected that the Board will vote in favor of advertising on jerseys. The one thing that will be vociferously discussed is "What is it worth?" A study by Horizon Media estimated that, "a brand logo across the middle of an NBA team's jersey occupying 3.5 percent of the TV screen would produce \$31.18 million in exposure value." Fans are calling it a violation and trespassing into sacred space and say it is akin to removing the American Flag from the White House and replacing it with a Flag carrying a corporate logo. One only hopes, that when the whistle blows and the game commences, all the protests, griping and grievances will fade away. One prays that with the fresh flow of income from a previously untapped source, the economy of the game will improve, the game will prosper and restraint and moderation will overtake greed and covetousness.

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