

N.B.A. teams devise new ways to fill seats

Vincent M. Mallozzi

In an effort to fill seats during difficult economic times, many N.B.A. teams are hoping to lure new fans with incentives.

Perhaps no other team has enhanced its marketing game the way the Nets have. They are offering ticket buyers free jerseys, complete with the names of their favorite players — and their favorite opponents.

The Nets are promoting a 10-game plan that includes tickets to see the Los Angeles Lakers, the Boston Celtics, the Cleveland Cavaliers, the Miami Heat and the Orlando Magic. Any fan who buys at least two tickets for the 10-game plan (minimum 20 tickets) will receive a reversible jersey from each of the five marquee games, one side featuring the name of a Nets star, like guard Devin Harris, and the other featuring the name of a marquee opponent: Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, Shaquille O'Neal, Dwyane Wade, Dwight Howard, Vince Carter, Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce or Ray Allen.

"I don't think it has ever been done before," said Chris Granger, the N.B.A.'s senior vice president for team marketing and business operations. "I don't think any team has ever given premium items as part of a promotion that highlights someone from another team."

Brett Yormark, the president and chief executive of the Nets, said the team could only profit by aligning itself with visiting stars.

"We cater to the casual N.B.A. fan, that's our core audience," Yormark said. "So when you think about every arena selling opposing player jerseys at the concession stands, and when you think about attendance always being greater when you have the key matchups and the best players in town, why wouldn't you do it? It gives the fans another added benefit, not only to embrace their favorite local player, but also a member of the opposition that they also came out to see."

Wade, the Heat's star guard, called the concept "totally awesome."

Wade added: "It's a very unique idea. It takes a confident organization to give their fans merchandise associated with players from other teams. I look forward to the day when we're in town and I get to see all those Wade reversibles out there."

Nets center Brook Lopez was asked if the reversible-jersey promotion was a blow to the egos of him or his teammates.

"Not at all," he said, laughing. "I can speak for most of the guys who think this is a very cool promotion. I think it will actually help all the teams involved, and it's a great way to bring enthusiastic fans to the games and raise the energy level in our arena."

In other N.B.A. cities, marketing officials are stretching their imaginations to persuade fans to stretch their entertainment dollars. Miami has a promotion called All You Can Heat, which caters to fans who are interested in buying partial-season ticket plans. Based on what an announcement on the Heat's Web site calls an "à la carte philosophy," fans can pick and choose any six games. They can also "customize their fan experience" with one of a handful of activities, like taking a photograph at center court, participating in postgame free-throw shooting or receiving a customized Heat jersey.

In Dallas, anyone who buys "select full-season ticket package" receives a free ticket to the 2010 All-Star Game, which the Mavericks will host.

In Philadelphia, the 76ers are running a Back 2 School promotion: four tickets to the home opener, two backpacks, two T-shirts and two hats for \$75.

The Detroit Pistons are offering three options: the Big Game Plan, 12 marquee games for the price of 9; the Weekend Plan, 12 weekend games for the price of 9; and the Economy Plan, 16 games for a minimum of \$225.

In Indiana, the Pacers were offering the first 100 fans who buy full- or half-season tickets a chance to meet the first-round draft pick Tyler Hansbrough.

Granger said that the N.B.A. was able to "find out what interests ticket buyers," through a recent survey of about 30,000 fans across all 30 N.B.A. cities.

"We basically asked all of those fans, What experience would you like to have over and above buying tickets to the games?" he said. "As a result, there's clearly an array of very cool, very access-oriented products out there that we haven't had in the past."

New York Times, New York, Aug. 30th 2009, Sports, online.

A utilização deste artigo é exclusiva para fins educacionais