



UNIT 8 – CASE STUDY

The Breakfast of Champions (and Endorsements)



Name _____

Class Period _____

**** Endorsements: A SEM Case Study ****

What began as a sponsorship of a minor league baseball franchise in 1933 has become perhaps the most successful example of the power of celebrity endorsement in developing company image and building a brand.

The 1933 sponsorship with the Minneapolis Millers brought the Wheaties brand of breakfast cereal enough success that they would partner with over 100 additional minor league teams by the end of the decade. The sponsorships provided a platform for athlete testimonials, with many players attesting that the cereal was truly "breakfast of champions." Popular athletes began to appear on the cover of the Wheaties cereal boxes in the 1930s. In addition to featuring athletes, Wheaties effectively built its brand identity by packaging the cereal in an orange box, a tradition that is still carried on today.

The campaign grew wildly in the 1940s, resulting in a boom of athlete testimonials ranging from baseball, football and automobile racing stars to broadcasters, jockeys and circus stars. In 1939, the Major League Baseball All-Star Game showcased 46 players who endorsed the Wheaties brand. The game had a total of 51 players. Shortly after the All-Star game, Wheaties sponsored a telecast of a baseball game between the Cincinnati Reds and the Brooklyn Dodgers, the first ever commercial sports broadcast on television.

Since 1939, when baseball legend Lou Gehrig became the first athlete to grace a Wheaties cereal box, hundreds of professional athletes, Olympic athletes, entire sports teams, and a few entertainers (The Lone Ranger and the Mickey Mouse Club) have been promoted.

Wheaties has also featured several prominent athletes as spokespersons over the years. Only seven individuals have achieved this honor, including Bob Richards, Bruce Jenner, Mary Lou Retton, Walter Payton, Chris Evert, Michael Jordan, and most recently, Tiger Woods.

**** Case Study Questions ****

- 1.) *Do you think the Wheaties sports marketing campaign has been a success? Why or why not?*
- 2.) *Why do you think Wheaties moved away from sponsorship and began focusing on athlete endorsements?*
- 3.) *Why do you think the brand has fewer athlete endorsements today than it did in the 1930s and 1940s?*

Information from this case study obtained online from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheaties>