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**Level:** Grades 4-6

**About the Author**

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**Lesson Plan**

**"He Shoots, He Scores":  
Alcohol Advertising and Sports**

**Overview**

In this lesson, students explore the ways in which companies use sporting events and athletes to sell products and influence consumers – especially young people. The lesson begins, on Day One, with an "I love sports" show and tell that provides students the opportunity to discuss the sports they love to play and watch, and the values and attributes that make sports an important part of a person's development. After the show and tell, students integrate their feelings about sports into a classroom display of words, images and artifacts. On Day Two, students discuss words and images relating to sports and compare them with the ways in which advertisers – particularly alcohol advertisers – use these associations to sell products. Students also examine two case studies: beer advertising at the 2002 Winter Olympics and a controversial series of Molson commercials featuring the popular sports commentator Don Cherry. As an extension activity, students conduct a survey of ads that appear during a televised sporting event.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will demonstrate an awareness of:

- the positive attributes associated with sports and athletes
- the ways in which advertisers use sporting events to influence consumer habits and attitudes
- how advertisers create positive associations with a brand by linking it to sports
- how alcohol companies use sponsorship of sporting events and athletes to promote products
- their own attitudes towards alcohol advertising during sporting events
- the negative consequences of drinking
- the regulations that govern alcohol advertising
- the issues surrounding the targeting of youth by alcohol companies

## **Preparation and Materials**

- Read the teacher backgrounder Alcohol Advertising and Sports
- Have construction paper and art supplies on hand for "sports words"
- Prior to class, tell students you will be having an "I love sports" show and tell. Ask them to bring in a magazine picture, souvenir, piece of clothing or piece of equipment that is associated with their favourite sport, team or athlete.
- Photocopy the overheads Racing and Don Cherry and Molson's Bubba o' Beer
- Photocopy and distribute the Letter to Parents and Sports and Advertising TV Survey for Day Two's homework assignment

## **Procedure**

### **Day One**

#### **Class Discussion**

Ask students:

- How many of you like sports?
- What sports do you play?
- What sports do you watch?
- How often do you watch sports?

#### **Sports Show and Tell**

As students share their sports items, have them talk about what they like about the athlete or sport they have chosen. Have recorders write down some of the words and phrases kids use to describe their favourite athletes or teams.

Once students have finished, hand out construction paper and markers and have students make signs based on the "sports words" that were provided. (Two examples might be "sports are fun" or "go team go!".) On a classroom bulletin board, combine these signs with the sports pictures and memorabilia students have brought to class to create a display under the title: "Kids Need Sports."

### **Day Two**

#### **Class Discussion**

Look at the sports words and pictures on the board. Ask students:

- Would you agree sports help kids to develop positive values?

- What are some of the values we learn through sports?
- Like kids, advertisers also like sports. Can you think why?
- Think about the sports you watch on TV. What kinds of products do you see advertised?
- What about companies that sponsor sporting events and teams – is this a kind of advertising?
- Sponsoring is a type of advertising that's more sneaky than a regular commercial. Can you think of some of the ways companies advertise during sporting events? *(Answers may include: signage at games, logos on uniforms, brands on racing cars, stadium names, analysis of games in sponsored, pre- and post-game shows, and so on.)*
- Are the products advertised mainly for kids or mainly for adults?
- Why might an advertiser want kids and teens to see ads for adult-oriented products such as a car or electronic equipment? *(The youth market is worth billions of dollars to advertisers. Every year, North American kids between the ages of 9 and 14 spend a total of \$1.7 billion of their own money and influence more than 10 times that amount in family spending – advertisers call this the "nag factor.")*
- What about ads for adult products that are harmful to kids, such as alcohol? Have you ever seen such ads when you're watching sports on TV?
- What kind of alcoholic beverage do you see advertised most often? *(In both Canada and the U.S., just four brands of beer account for 58 per cent of all alcohol advertised during sporting events. During an average hour of sports programming, children see 1.5 ads for alcohol.)*
- Why would alcohol advertisers want to link their products with sporting events? *(Have kids review all the positive words they associate with sports. Alcohol marketers hope that by pairing their products with winning athletes and teams, consumers will make similar associations with their products. Kids see more ads for alcoholic beverages during televised sporting events than any other kind of programming.)*
- Do you think alcohol companies intentionally target kids and teens when they use sports to promote their products? *(No matter what they say, the reality is that alcohol companies need new drinkers to replace adult drinkers who die. At the very least, companies hope continued exposure to their brand will foster loyalty at an early age, so when young people do start drinking, they'll choose their products. Also, the industry needs problem drinkers and underage drinkers as they consume a significant proportion of the total amount of alcohol consumed.)*

- Do you think kids and teens understand they are being marketed to when companies use sports to promote their products?
- Why might child development experts be concerned about alcohol advertising during sporting events? *(Research has found that young kids' exposure to alcohol advertising is related to higher drinking expectancies, as well as greater consumption. Children are most likely to model behaviour they perceive to be desirable, realistic and rewarding; pairing drinking with positive aspects of sports reinforces these perceptions. Children who are exposed to sponsored sporting events are likely to associate brands and logos with professional athletes. Research has concluded that youngsters develop awareness of alcohol at an early age in part because of exposure to alcohol advertisements and sponsorships.)*

Showing commercials during sporting events is one issue. What about alcohol ads featuring sports celebrities? (Put the Racing overhead onto the projector.) Here are two magazine ads that feature sports celebrities.

- What sports attributes do these beer companies want consumers to relate to their beers?
- What words and images reinforce these messages?
- Both these ads are presented as tributes to athletes. What dominates the ad – the athlete or branding for the beer?
- Would either of these ads appeal to young people? What elements would appeal to youth?

### Case Study #1

Now we're going to look at a television ad that featured a popular sports celebrity who is not an athlete – "Rock 'em, Sock 'em" coach Don Cherry. (Place Don Cherry overhead onto the projector, covering the CRTC Code.)

Ask students:

- How many of you know who Don Cherry is?
- How many of you have watched Don Cherry on TV?
- Have any of you seen these ads? (If yes, ask if they can recite the "Beer, Beer, Beer" jingle. Most who have seen the ads will be able to do this.)

In 2003, sports celebrity Don Cherry appeared in a series of commercials for Molson's mini-kegs called "Bubbas." These mini-kegs featured his pet dog Grapes and were "dressed" in Cherry's flamboyant suits – complete with his trademark "thumbs up."

As a well-known Hockey Night in Canada commentator, owner of a Junior "A" hockey team, and producer and host of the popular "Rock 'em, Sock 'em" hockey videos, Don

Cherry is a well-known Canadian sports figure.

These ads were challenged by a Toronto public school trustee, who claimed they violated the CRTC's codes against using children's role models to advertise alcoholic beverages. (The CRTC is the regulatory agency that governs radio and television content in Canada.)

Molson's response was that these ads were intended for adults, that Don Cherry was a role model for adults, and that kids between the ages of 12 and 17 made up less than 5 per cent of their viewing audience (which, at close to four million viewers, translates into approximately 200,000 kids.)

Initially, Advertising Standards Canada approved the ads, but later decided that this ad did contravene the CRTC Code.

Let's take a look at what the Code has to say. (Review the Code at the bottom of the handout.) Let's apply clause (d) to the Don Cherry ads.

- Is Don Cherry a person who is well known to minors?
- Has he achieved success as a sports celebrity?
- Is he a person who might appeal to or influence minors?
- If you were a regulator responsible for alcohol advertising, would you permit this advertising campaign?

When it comes to sporting events, alcohol companies argue that sports are considered adult programming and that they have every right to advertise to adults. However, sports programs are also tremendously popular with kids.

- Should adult products that are harmful to kids be permitted to be advertised on TV during sporting events?
- Should adult products that are harmful to kids be permitted to be advertised on TV at all? (Tobacco advertising is not permitted on TV.)
- Are there some sports that kids are more likely to watch than adults? (For example, sports such as WWE wrestling and extreme sports – both sponsored by Molson Breweries in Canada – have great appeal to adolescents and teens.)
- Should alcohol companies be permitted to sponsor events such as these?

### **Journal Entry**

In your journal, respond to the statement: "Athletes and sports celebrities have a responsibility to their fans to be good role models." Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

## Case Study #2

In 2002 a group of health organizations and advocacy groups tried to stop the U.S. beer company Anheuser-Busch (makers of Budweiser beer) from sponsoring the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. (Anheuser-Busch paid \$50 million for these rights.)

As part of their campaign, the Utah Alcohol Policy Coalition forwarded a resolution to the Olympic Organizing Committee. In their resolution they pointed out that:

- Alcohol is the most widely abused drug used by youth
- Alcohol leads to over 85,000 deaths each year in the U.S. (7,000 in Canada)
- Alcohol use in youth is directly related to poor school performance, rape, drowning, fights, assaults and vandalism
- The glamorization of alcohol through advertising sends mixed messages to young people
- The spirit of the Olympics is a family-oriented activity that promotes family values and athletic excellence
- The young athletes who compete in the Olympics provide role models for kids and teens

The Coalition suggested that:

1. No beer tents or low-cost alcoholic beverages be provided at the games
2. Beer advertising at the games be confined to a well-defined commercial area
3. Anheuser-Busch be limited to advertising that does not appeal to youth or young people
4. The Salt Lake Organizing Committee and the U.S. Olympic Committee acknowledge that alcoholic beverages have no place in the Olympic experience, a sporting event that promotes the highest ideals and the ultimate of athletic achievement to youth throughout the world.

Despite the efforts of this group, Olympic organizers permitted alcoholic beverages to be promoted and sold during the games. (One result of this was a riot involving 6,000 to 8,000 revellers who had been partying in the Olympic "Bud World" facilities.)

## Writing Assignment

Pretend you are a member of this coalition. Think about everything we've discussed in this unit about sports and kids and advertising, and write a letter to the Olympic Committee stating why you think alcohol advertising should not be permitted at the Olympic games.

## Extension Activity

### Advertising Survey

Research indicates that parents can play a significant role in the impact of alcohol advertising on children. When parents co-view ads and programs with children, without commenting on content, this can actually reinforce the media messages presented. On the other hand, parents who actively watch and discuss sports programming with kids help them develop more balanced perspectives on the relationship between alcohol and sports. This activity is intended to act as a catalyst to promote discussion and active co-viewing.

Over the next week, watch a sporting event on TV. While you're watching, keep track of:

1. The products that are advertised during commercials
2. The products that are advertised through "sneaky ads" (Remind students to look at titles, for instance, "Molson's Hockey Night in Canada," logos on uniforms, sponsored pre- or post-game shows, signage, and so on.)
3. The number of commercials for alcohol that appear

For this assignment, it's recommended that an older member of your family watch with you. (Distribute the Letter to Parents and Sports and Advertising TV Survey.) See if you can spot more sneaky ads than they do!

Once the assignment has been completed, take up and discuss answers with students.

## Alcohol Advertising and Sports

There's little doubt that when it comes to sports, kids and teens are major league fans, outdoing adults in loyalty to the teams they love. A U.S. study conducted in 2001 found that 93 per cent of young people between the ages of 8 and 17 view sports on TV, and close to one third use some kind of sports media daily (TV, videogames, magazines, newspapers, the Internet or radio). And it's not just boys who are fans. Although they consume the greatest amounts of sports media (97 per cent), at 89 per cent, the girls aren't far behind.<sup>1</sup>

Given the interest and passion young people bring to the sports they play and watch, it's easy to understand why there are ethical concerns when companies for adult-oriented products, such as alcohol, use sports to reach audiences.

Alcohol companies are also huge sports fans. In 2003 the alcohol industry spent more than \$540 million to place nearly 90,000 ads in sports programs on TV in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> In fact 60 per cent of all alcohol advertising on television occurs during sporting events.<sup>3</sup>

**Labatt shows its team spirit through the sponsorship and support of many different professional and amateur sports.**

Labatt Web Site

In both Canada and the U.S., beer companies focus much of their advertising expenditure on sports – just four brands of beer account for 58 per cent of all alcohol advertised during college sporting events.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Budweiser spent more than 80 per cent of its television advertising expenditures on sports programming in 2001, 2002 and 2003.<sup>5</sup>

Companies that produce malt beverages – also a popular choice with youth – are the leading non-beer sports advertisers – although other types of alcohol are increasingly joining in. For example, Captain Morgan Spiced Rum, which spent very little on sports TV advertising in 2001, spent over half a million dollars on advertising during televised sporting events in 2002 and close to \$900,000 in 2003.<sup>6</sup>



2003 Grey Cup Game

Then there's the relationship between alcohol advertising and "big ticket" sporting events. In its study of alcohol advertising on sports television in the U.S., the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) found "significant amounts of advertising dollars" spent on high-profile events. For example, in 2003, the Super Bowl took in \$29.6 million in alcohol advertising, and \$21 million was spent on NCAA basketball tournament games.<sup>7</sup> CAMY also found that, like fans, advertisers have favourite sports, with soccer games featuring the most ads for alcohol (one out of every 12 ads), followed by hockey games, professional basketball games and post-game programming, professional baseball and soccer.<sup>8</sup>

From an industry perspective, this is a sound investment. Alcohol promotion through commercials in sports programming or sponsorship of sports teams and events provides companies with tremendous exposure – before, during and after an event. It creates positive associations between drinking and the traits associated with athletes and teams: strength, loyalty, endurance, success, health, vitality, fun, fitness and speed. Promotion of youth-oriented events such as

snowboarding, extreme sports and biking create an aura of "coolness" around a product – and grab the attention of a new generation of future drinkers.

The alcohol industry's use of sports to reach consumers has not gone unnoticed. According to a survey conducted in 2003 by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), 77 per cent of parents believe the beer companies that advertise during sporting events know their ads will appeal to kids and teens.<sup>9</sup> Sixty-five per cent agree that beer companies *intentionally* use sports to reach and advertise to underage drinkers.<sup>10</sup>

Researchers have concluded that the more often a child sees an alcohol ad, the greater the likelihood he or she will develop positive expectations about drinking.<sup>11</sup> This effect is magnified when these ads are paired with programs that kids and teens enjoy. Typically, children who watch sporting events on television are exposed to 1.5 alcohol ads per hour.<sup>12</sup> (This figure doesn't include alcohol promotion through signage at sporting events or sponsorship of professional and college teams, sporting events, or sports TV and radio programs.) Boys in particular respond more positively to ads for alcohol that are embedded within sporting events than for alcohol ads in other kinds of programming.



A second influence on children's interpretations of media messages about alcohol is how they watch television with parents. When parents view ads and programs with kids without commenting on content, this can actually reinforce the media messages presented. Parents who actively watch and discuss alcohol advertising in sports programming with kids help them develop more balanced perspectives on the relationship between alcohol and sports. However, research shows that the average parent co-views with little or no discussion about media messages.<sup>13</sup>

Like commercials, sponsorship gives alcohol companies the opportunity to develop positive associations with their products.

The CSPI study concludes that "sponsorships ... attempt to link the company with perceived winners or heroes; the biggest stars in a sport, the most winning team."<sup>14</sup>



Sports sponsorships are multi-million dollar investments, and they ensure that company brand names and logos are prominently featured during sporting events – an influential form of advertising that may be less obvious to parents and kids. Unlike Canadian laws prohibiting tobacco sponsorship, there are no laws in Canada or the U.S. that prohibit alcohol

companies from sponsoring athletic teams and events. However, there has been considerable concern expressed in the U.S. regarding sports sponsorship by alcohol companies – especially in athletic venues that have youth audiences and involvement.

According to the CSPI survey, 72 per cent of parents stated they would support a ban on alcohol ads on televised college games.<sup>15</sup> And before the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, the Utah Alcohol Policy Coalition and other concerned organizations collected thousands of signatures in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the beer company Anheuser-Busch from sponsoring the Olympic Games. As one representative from Utah's PTA put it, "The Olympics are the ultimate athletic experience. Alcohol ads send a mixed

**I'm not really even a beer drinker, but something about turning on a football game really makes me want a cold one. It's been naturalized into me by ads that imply beer makes sports more fun or heals when my team blows it.**

University student Thea Domber  
The Rocky Mountain Collegian  
November 17, 2003

message to youth that the ultimate fun is what they see in the ads."<sup>16</sup> One physician puts it more bluntly: "Mixing sports with alcohol is always a bad combination, but mixing alcohol with the worldwide, youth-oriented Olympics no doubt is the worst mix of all."<sup>17</sup>

Advocacy groups have had mixed success in limiting national alcohol sponsorships, but public opinion has influenced alcohol company sponsorship of local and municipal sporting events. However, in the United States, 80 national, state and local groups have joined the CSPI in launching a "Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV" that seeks to prohibit alcohol advertising in televised college sports.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Kids Are 'Major League' Consumers of Sports Media; 93% Report Use," press release, July 19, 2001. Statistical Research Inc.

<sup>2</sup>"Alcohol Advertising on Sports Television 2001 to 2003," 2003. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth <<http://camy.org/factsheets/index.php?FactsheetID=20>>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> "Summary of Study Findings: Sports, Youth & Alcohol Advertising Study," November 12, 2003, p. 2. Center for Science in the Public Interest <<http://camy.org/factsheets/index.php?FactsheetID=20>>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Moreau and Erica Austin, "Effects of Advertising and Sponsorships in Sports and Children's Expectations about Alcohol," 2000, p. 4. Washington State University.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

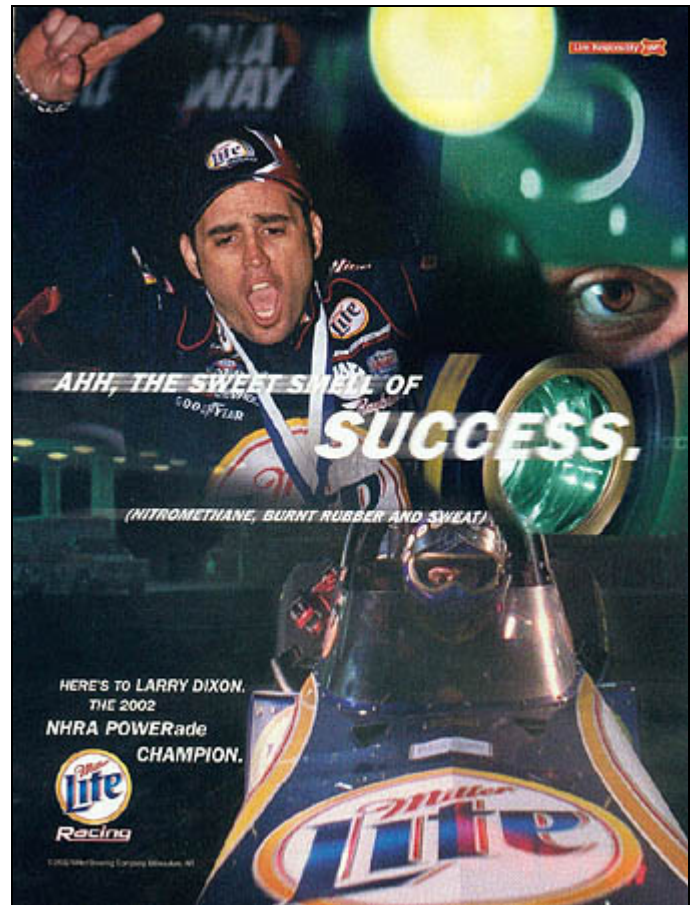
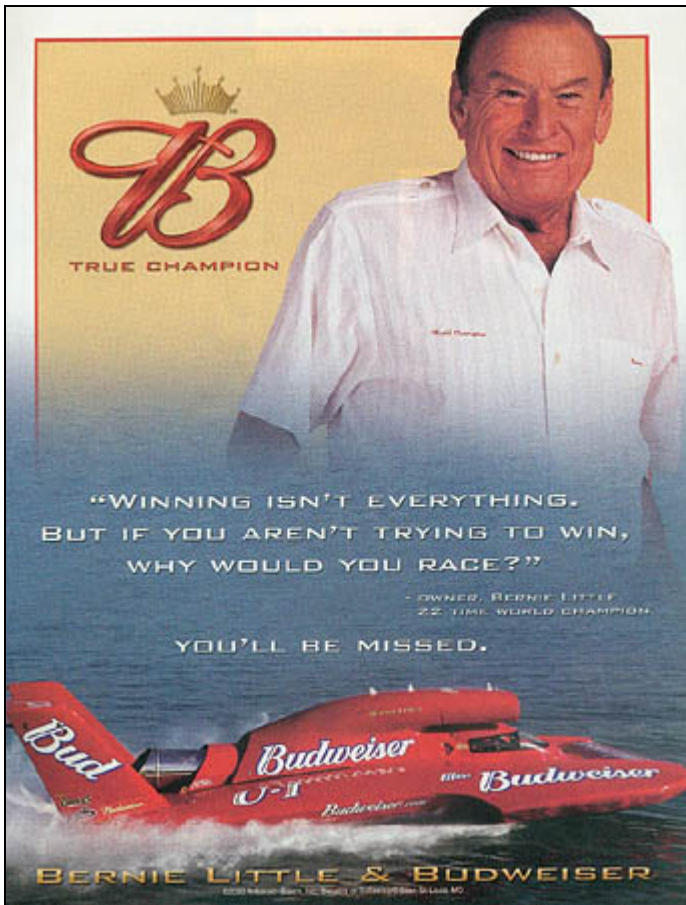
<sup>15</sup> Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> "Activists Resist Beer-Soaked Winter Games in Salt Lake City," Center on Alcohol Advertising.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Coaching Legends Help Launch 'Alcohol-Free Sports TV' Effort." press release, November 12, 2003. Center for Science in the Public Interest.

## Alcohol Advertising and Sports: Racing



## Alcohol Advertising and Sports: Don Cherry and Molson's Bubba o' Beer



### CRTC Code for Broadcast Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages

Clause (d):

Commercial messages for alcoholic beverages shall not contain an endorsement of the product personally or by implication, either directly or indirectly, by any person, character or group who is likely to be a role model for minors because of:

- a past or present position of public trust
- special achievement in any field or endeavour
- association with charities and/or advocacy activities benefiting children
- reputation or exposure in the mass media

Dear Parents or Guardians,

As part of our unit on alcohol advertising, we are looking at how alcohol companies use sports and sporting events to promote their products and how attitudes and beliefs about drinking may be influenced by this form of advertising. In particular, we have been looking at the ways in which alcohol companies want consumers to link positive associations with sports and sporting events to their beverages.

For homework, students have been asked to watch a televised sporting event sometime during the next week. While watching, they are to keep track of:

1. Types of products that are advertised during commercials.
2. Products that are advertised through "sneaky ads," such as logos and signage at the stadium or arena, logos or brands on uniforms, program titles such as "Molson's Hockey Night in Canada," and sponsored pre- or post-game shows.
3. The number of ads for alcohol that appear.

Because much of the advertising that appears during the course of a game can be quite subtle, it would be helpful if an adult member of your family could watch the sporting event with your child and help him or her keep track of the various forms of advertising that appear.

Please sign and return this letter with the completed assignment.

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Parent's signature

## Sports and Advertising TV Survey



Name:

Co-Viewer:

Sporting Event:

Date and Time:

As you watch the sporting event, record products that are advertised and indicate what age group the ad might appeal to:

	Product Advertised	Adult	Kids/ Teens	All
<p><b>TV Commercials</b></p> 				
<p><b>"Sneaky" Ads</b> (Through branding and placement at the game.)</p> 				

Total Number of Ads:

Number of Ads for Alcohol: