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SUPER BOWL XXVII

Two Gold Stars

Aikman, Smith lead Corporate America's Team

By Steve Zipay
STAFF WRITER

Buffalo coach Marv Levy says his Bills are the new America's Team. But from Pasadena to Madison Avenue, sports marketing and media executives say the "Boys Are Back."

Even if the young Cowboys lose in Sunday's Super Bowl, the team and several players could dominate the multimillion-dollar world of sports-related ads, product endorsements and merchandise in the '90s, several experts say.

Sales of Cowboys merchandise — which dipped along with the team's fortunes in the late 1980's — have already bounced back to the top tier, and rising stars such as quarterback Troy Aikman, premier runner Emmitt Smith, flashy and cocky wide receiver Michael Irvin, linebacker Ken Norton Jr. and 330-pound lineman Nate Newton could reap similar rewards.

"Without a doubt that team is back, and Aikman is ready to go through the roof" in terms of popularity, said Brandon Steiner, president of Steiner Sports Marketing. Aikman and Smith will be among the most sought-after athletes for endorsements this year, according to a survey by Steiner's Manhattan-based firm, which polled 80 senior marketing executives at Fortune 500 companies. Aikman placed third in the survey; Smith finished seventh. Bills quarterback Jim Kelly was sixth.

At the string of parties in the week preceding the game, agents are pushing videotapes and press clippings of their clients to advertising and corporate representatives. Steiner said top firms such as AT&T, Citicorp and IBM are looking for athletes with positive, clean, socially-responsible images. "There's millions in it for [the athletes] if they can work it right," he said.

According to ad agency Foote, Cone & Belding/San Francisco — which compiles an Advertisers Professional Scouting Report for the Super Bowl, NBA Finals and World Series — Aikman is the "odds-on favorite to be 'going to Disneyland'" this year.

Aikman, says the report, has "laid-back country boy charm — Troy Donahue with a southern drawl. Perfect for Dr Pepper, KFC, Copenhagen (his chaw of choice). Should Super Bowl XXVII mark the beginning of a new Dallas dynasty, everyone will be aching to use Aikman."

Smith, who already has a TV spot for Starter apparel, "runs like he's on Duracell," says Bob Dorfman, who writes the sometimes tongue-in-cheek report. "Look for him on Wheaties boxes if Dallas wins. The way he maneuvers over, around and through makes him ideal for a Jeep, Range Rover or Ford truck commercial. But call soon — this could be the first of many Super Bowls for Smith and he's only going to get more expensive."

The new "Boys are a hot item not only in Texas, where everything from eyeglasses to toiletries sports the silver-and-blue star. For five of the six years from 1979 to 1984, Cowboys merchandise sales ranked No. 1 nationwide. Then they dropped almost annually, to 15th of 29 teams in 1990, according to NFL Properties. This year, as of Nov. 1, the "Boys have leaped back to No. 2 and, with their December victories, probably will surpass the top-ranked Raiders when the final numbers are in.

But don't count out the Bills, who've lost two Super Bowls in a row. Kelly and Bruce Smith, their two most recognizable players, could prosper. But only if they win.

Kelly, whose resume includes ads for Nuprin, Domino's, Pro-Line and Frito-Lay, "remains the most successful endorser on the field in Pasadena," Dorfman says. And unlike the shy Aikman, Kelly is no shrinking violet when it comes to promotion: He threw a party for corporate types before last year's game.

"The biggest endorsements are for sports people who come to the forefront after a period of time," said David Burns of Chicago-based Burns Sports Celebrity Service. "The recession really cut back on TV production budgets so even the top quarterbacks aren't getting what they

Big Money on the Horizon

Signing the Stars

Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith will be among the most sought-after athletes for endorsements this year, according to a survey by Steiner Sports Marketing, which polled 80 senior marketing executives at Fortune 500 companies. Brandon Steiner, president of the Manhattan firm, said top firms such as AT&T, Citicorp and IBM are looking for athletes with positive, clean, socially responsible images. Aikman placed third in the survey; Smith finished seventh. Bills' quarterback Jim Kelly was sixth.

Player	Sport	Team/Title
1. Shaquille O'Neal	NBA	Magic
2. Cal Ripken, Jr.	Baseball	Orioles
3. Troy Aikman	NFL	Cowboys
4. Dave Winfield	Baseball	Twins
5. Larry Bird	NBA	Former Celtic
6. Jim Kelly	NFL	Bills
7. Emmitt Smith	NFL	Cowboys
8. Brett Hull	NHL	Blues
9. Christian Laettner	NBA	Timberwolves
10. Riddick Bowe	Boxing	Heavyweight Champion



What's Their Appeal?

Jim Kelly

The hair's thinning, the QB controversy is thickening and most experts are predicting a third straight Super Bowl loss, yet Kelly remains the most successful endorser on the field in Pasadena. He threw a party for corporate types before last year's Super Bowl. His '92 resume includes spots for Nuprin, Domino's and Pro-Line and a guest spot on "General Hospital." If Kelly leads Buffalo over Dallas, advertisers of everything from Special K to Kmart to Rogaine will be after him.

Troy Aikman

Odds-on favorite to be "going to Disneyland" this year. Youthful, laid-back country-boy charm — Troy Donahue with a southern drawl. Perfect for Dr Pepper, KFC, Copenhagen (his chaw of choice). Should Super Bowl XXVII mark the beginning of a new Dallas dynasty, everyone will be aching to use Aikman.

Emmitt Smith

Runs like he's on Duracell. Star on the rise on team on the rise. Decent looks, great eyes, poised on camera. So far best in non-speaking roles, like TV spot for Starter apparel. Look for him on Wheaties boxes if Dallas wins. The way he maneuvers over, around and through makes him ideal for a Jeep, Range Rover or Ford truck commercial. But call soon — this could be the first of many Super Bowls for Smith and he's only going to get more expensive.

Bruce Smith

Easily the best-known defensive player in the bowl. Surprisingly poised, articulate, great smile. Market his "Bruce Smith flak jacket" in high-crime areas. Or given his ability for sacking QBs, he would be an ideal endorser for Helix Cinch Socks.

SOURCE: Super Bowl XXVII Advertisers Professional Scouting Report by Foote, Cone & Belding/San Francisco