

Mean Joe Greene Commercial for Coca-Cola

This comes from the same interview with Marty Blackman in *the Merchandising Reporter* in April 1983:

MR: Take the Mean Joe Greene example, did you first approach NFL Properties?

BLACKMAN: You do not need to do it simply to use Joe Greene. All you need is Joe Greene's permission and the NFL team must not object. That objection cannot be unreasonable. If they have an objection, it must be based on certain grounds.

MR: What can those grounds be?

BLACKMAN: That the campaign relates to an alcoholic beverage, that it relates to a product that reflects badly on the sport/team, for example, if Joe Greene was asked to endorse a Las Vegas casino. They would have the right to step in and object but, barring that, it is not easy for a team to object, although sometimes they will when it is in direct competition to their sponsors. Now when I say object, I do not mean that they will refuse the guy, it's just that they will try to dissuade him. For instance, using the Greene example, let's assume SEVEN-UP was tied in heavily to the Pittsburgh stadium or the PITTSBURGH STEELERS, e.g., they had run SEVEN-UP kids' day there, etc. In other words, they were the central soft drink in the Pittsburgh Steelers potpourri of promotions. In that situation, you might get the team saying to a player, "Hey look, you're working for our sponsor's biggest competitor. You know SEVEN-UP gives us the scoreboard, you know they run clinics for kids, you know they advertise on Chuck Noll's pre-game show, etc. — and now you want to work with COKE? Hey, please, don't do it." The STEELERS, by the way, are the wrong team to use, I am just using this as an example. I would never think that the Rooney's would ever stop a guy from doing anything. I am using it only as an example.



MR: Does it make a difference if Joe Greene is wearing his STEELERS uniform or not?

BLACKMAN: Yes. If he is to wear the uniform, you must go and get a license from NFL Properties. NFL sells licenses based on the territory you are asking for and scope of use, e.g., the number of commercials, the commercial length, etc. A price is negotiated based on those set of facts. If you want six teams, (let's assume you are doing your thing along the eastern seaboard) that's going to be a different price than just one team. What we got for COKE and negotiated with NFL properties was the right to use the uniform in a one-time television commercial. When you want to use exact

uniforms and logos, perhaps the team facilities, you are in a straight licensing situation with NFL Properties. If you are satisfied with other than official uniforms and can do without using official logos, then you do not need a license. You must have seen this type of ad many times, where a guy is dressed in a generic uniform or a sweatsuit. In those cases, you do not have to go through licensing with the league or the teams, but it is a very touchy area. The NFL is probably the most aggressive in protecting their rights. They'll even question you if you use a sweatshirt that has "Dallas" on it with the claim that when you have "Dallas" on a sweatshirt with the blue and silver colors, it means only one thing, the DALLAS COWBOYS. I am not saying they are right or wrong, but they are very protective of it. I don't think that the NBA would go after you or anything like that if you had a shirt with "Boston" on it. I am not saying the NFL would prevail, but they are extremely aggressive in attempting to protect their licensing trademarks and logos and anything that resembles their teams' writing script. So, you always must be aware of whether the commercial or promotion requires an NFL license.