

## Touring Without Tears.

It is important for every leading Premiership football club to operate an effective strategy for pre-season tours, friendly matches and tournaments. This can facilitate a range of positive benefits, but is not without inherent risks for the unprepared. Clubs engage in pre-season tours and friendly matches generally do so for the following reasons:-

- To help condition the playing squad for the coming season
- To extend the club's brand visibility and connect with local fans
- To allow local sponsors the opportunity of activating against club assets
- To cultivate positive PR by engaging in local community projects
- To generate incremental revenue

So what are the key issues for a touring club to consider before loading their most precious assets onto a plane (I mean the players, not the directors) and flying off to some far-flung destination to raise their club colours high and claim dominion over the territory and its indigenous fans for themselves?

- 1** Understand and establish the key motivation for the activity. Make sure this is communicated throughout the club on both the playing and commercial sides.
- 2** Identify the territory and research carefully any competitive activity that might affect the granting of regulatory approval or local demand for tickets.
- 3** Identify and establish good working relationships with the regional and national regulatory bodies necessary to sanction the planned activity
- 4** Implement a rigorous approach to tendering for local promoters, particularly where there are cultural issues such as language and local customs to meet.
- 5** Develop an internal project team and a robust operational process with representatives from each relevant department of the club participating.
- 6** Develop a comprehensive security plan in conjunction with local security services, club resources and advice from HMG Foreign Office as appropriate.
- 7** Put in place a detailed strategy for broadcast rights and other media facilities, ensuring that a tour website is available for each territory.
- 8** Implement a sponsorship plan to establish a range of global and local sponsors with a suitable rights inventory to activate around the tour.
- 9** Plan local strategies for linking with local fans through membership and CRM initiatives prior to, during and after the tour.
- 10** Plan the ticketing pricing and distribution strategy carefully in relation to local preferences and customs.
- 11** Ensure that club merchandise distribution licenses are in place before the tour commences and that tour-specific merchandise is available in each territory.
- 12** Develop a programme of community activity, ideally to operate in conjunction with the national governing bodies or the local opposition club.

**Continued overleaf >**

## **Touring Without Tears. (Continued)**

A successful and sustainable tour strategy is therefore one that:-

- Establishes a brand presence in the market prior to the team's visit through use of media, merchandise, sponsorship, CRM and local membership
- Forms a good working relationship with the regional & national associations
- Develops a strong portfolio of local sponsors keen to activate around the tour
- Leaves behind a legacy of social programmes to benefit the local community

Follow these guidelines and you can avoid many of the pitfalls that so often trap the unwary. Star Sports Marketing has the experience and capability to help you plan your tour, organise friendly matches and execute tournaments at home and abroad. Visit [www.starsportsmarketing.com](http://www.starsportsmarketing.com) or email [steven.falk@starsportsmarketing.co.uk](mailto:steven.falk@starsportsmarketing.co.uk) for an informal discussion on the possibilities for your club.