

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, March 31, 1999

For More Information Contact:
Gary Ruskin (202) 296-2787

Nader Urges Major League Baseball to Reject Uniform Ads

Ralph Nader and Commercial Alert sent the following letter today to Allan H. Selig, Commissioner of Baseball, Major League Baseball:

Dear Mr. Selig:

We strongly urge Major League Baseball to reject any proposal to place advertisements on baseball uniforms.

According to today's *New York Times*, Major League Baseball "is considering selling small patches of advertising on the uniform sleeves of its players as a new way to increase team revenue." The *Times* quotes an unidentified team official: "The issue being considered here goes beyond the scope of a uniform manufacturer's logo."

The *Times* also quotes Howard Smith, vice president of marketing for Major League Baseball: "We're talking from A to Z about our on-field programs, and bringing in additional sponsors in other formats than we have now. We've talked about everything. But we're not close to anything."

You can honor the memories and the shared traditions of baseball, and the great players who have worn baseball uniforms, by refusing to sell the space on baseball uniforms to corporate advertisers.

It is bad enough already when outfielders are going back for a long drive, that fans have to see advertisements for Coca-Cola or other products.

You are trying the patience of loyal fans across the country. Fans yearn for baseball that is free from blatant huckstering and crass commercialism. Enough is enough.

Please don't emulate NASCAR, whose drivers already look like walking commercial billboards. Don't turn baseball players into walking billboards. Don't destroy the dignity of baseball. Don't drain the joy from watching baseball. If you let commerce interfere too overtly with baseball, fans will angrily drift away from the sport.

There is an additional burden to plastering baseball players with corporate advertising. Large corporate advertisers are usually involved in substantial public controversy -- for example, Monsanto, Shell, General Motors, Nike, and Microsoft. Do you want the penumbra of these controversies to spill over onto your players and teams?

The public tolerates a certain amount of commercialism. But their patience is limited.

If you take this reckless step, and embrace ads on uniforms, there will be considerable fan resentment, and some of it will be organized.

You can protect baseball from the corporations who wish to use it for their own purposes, to turn it from our national pastime into a cheap and gaudy vehicle for corporate marketing. This is a choice between integrity and greed. The choice is yours: will you defend baseball, or will you sell it out to big-buck advertisers?

Commercial Alert was founded last year to oppose the excesses of commercialism, advertising and marketing. The web address for Commercial Alert is <http://www.essential.org/alert/>.