Today, the Business of Sports Network is pleased to announce the addition of Kurt Hunzeker to our growing staff of authors. Kurt founded Sparts Marketing, a sports-centric design and consulting firm where sports, art and marketing fuse together to create award-winning campaigns, unique brand identities and innovative sponsorship platforms. - Maury Brown

Beginning in 2008, Major League Baseball's week of celebration will give way to a *Summer of Baseball Love*
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In conjunction with the 2008 MLB All-Star Game logo unveiling this afternoon , representatives from **Major League Baseball, the New York Yankees and the City of New York** touted next year's "All-Star Summer," complete with its own brand.

What was once solely an exhibition pitting the stars of the American League against those of the National League has now transformed into an exhibition of revenue-generating capitalism.

The last time the Yankees hosted an All-Star Game (in 1977), in was just that, a game. Now spin-off programming such as the Home Run Derby and Futures Game draw sellout crowds, 3-figure ticket prices (not counting the secondary market value) and multi-million-dollar corporate title sponsorships.

Recognizing increased demand for one of its "Crown Jewel" events, MLB successfully supplied new inventory to attract new partners. The Home Run Derby (and its record-setting television

audience) enticed State Farm to sign on as an official MLB corporate partner and the event's title sponsor earlier this month.

Now that its existing All-Star-related sponsorships are sold, MLB did the one thing any company looking to add new revenues would do….

Create more inventory, thus creating additional revenue streams. Hello, All-Star Summer.

It would be shocking if someone like Bank of America or MasterCard does not join the list of All-Star programming sponsors; currently including Chevrolet (Red Carpet Show), DHL (FanFest), Gatorade (Workout Day), State Farm (Home Run Derby) Taco Bell (Sunday and Legends & Celebrity Softball Game) and XM Radio (Futures Game).

Bank of America and its "Official Bank of Baseball" status could utilize this summer-long platform to expand its presence in not only New York City, but in every MLB market. Parents who start a Bank of America savings account for their children could enter to win a sweepstakes for tickets, merchandise and/or one-of-a-kind experiences only Bank of America could provide.

Similarly, MasterCard (positioned nicely next to the Yankees' logo on the podium during today's press conference) could reward its cardholders with exclusive access to All-Star Game festivities and discounts on purchases on MLB.com.

These two ideas do not even scratch the surface in terms of event marketing opportunities, in-season tie-ins and global possibilities (taking into consideration New York's diverse population).

Regardless of who (if any) sponsor emerges as All-Star Summer's presenter, Major League Baseball continues to prove that while some players may be mired in a negative spotlight, Corporate America views the National Pastime as a viable marketing machine.

Kurt Hunzeker *is a staff member of the Business of Sports Network. He can be contacted via The Biz of Baseball Authors page here.*