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# Sports

## Endorsements: Is race still a factor?

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For pitching Colonial hot dogs to kids, Jim Rice makes \$65,000 yearly. For lending his name to additional products, Rice's annual income from endorsements adds up to \$250,000.

Indeed, Rice makes more money through endorsements than any other athlete in Boston, black or white.

But for the remainder of Boston's black professional athletes, the opportunities to increase their income through endorsements, personal appearances, etc., are considerably fewer — and the reasons are not simply a matter of black and white.

There are at least half a dozen factors affecting a player's marketability, none of which has anything to do with race — at least on the surface. Yet race can affect any of these factors.

**THE MARKET** — In comparison with places like New York, Chicago (which has more ad agencies than any city except New York) and Los Angeles, Boston sim-



The black athlete in Boston

ply does not offer a great deal of opportunity for endorsements, for either black or white athlete.

John Hannah, the Patriots' All-Pro tackle and perhaps the best offensive lineman in the National Football League, is white and has played here for seven years. He's still waiting for the offers to pour in. "Boston is one of the poorest areas I've seen (for deals)," he said.

There are athletes in Boston with relatively lucrative endorsement deals, a partial list of whom would include:

Carl Yastrzemski — Hillshire Farms (about \$100,000 yearly); Aqua Velva  
Carlton Fisk — American Express, Skoal-Happy Days-Copenhagen  
Steve Grogan — Oldsmobile, Wilson Sporting Goods, Spot-Built Shoes  
Butch Hobson — Friendly's, Wilson Sporting Goods  
Fred Lynn — Yellow Pages  
Dave Cowens — Voit, Tiger Shoes, National Rent-a-car  
Russ Francis — Toyota  
Dennis Eckersley — Barrelhead Root Beer  
Tim Lincecum — Wendy's hamburgers

It's a fact that everyone on the above list is white. It's also a fact that Leon Gray, Mike Haynes and Sam Cunningham, all present or former All-Pro players for the Patriots, and all black, have nothing of a similar nature.

Gray had a minor deal with a local restaurant, but has nothing now; Haynes has a minor deal with a local sneaker company and one with a local car dealer which affords him the use of a car; and Cunningham has an arrangement with a local furniture company that calls for two appearances a year.

On the face of it, it seems a case could be made that race is the reason why some are getting endorsements, and some are not. But in this particular sampling of athletes, there are at least two other factors at work, each perhaps a truer indication of why things are the way they are: the team you play for and what position you play.

**THE TEAM YOU PLAY FOR.** Of the nine players mentioned above with significant product endorsements, five are

Some samples from Colonial Provisions' ad campaign featuring Jim Rice.

members of the Red Sox. Clearly, this is a baseball town.

"It's a baseball crazy area," said Bill Pollack, president of Sports Promotion, a Boston firm that counts many of the Red Sox, Patriots, Celtics, and Bruins among its clients. "We get the most (personal appearance) requests for baseball players."

In fact, playing in Foxboro, 30 miles from Boston, may be one of the reasons the Patriots are on the outside looking in. "I don't think we have the same rapport with our fans that the Celtics, Bruins, and Red Sox have," said Hannah. And, of course, the team's history of mediocrity — until the past few years — is also a factor.

"If we were going to the Super Bowl every year, I'd expect a lot of business," said Cunningham.

The endorsement list does show three Patriots — Grogan, Francis and Fox, all white — whose performance on the field is comparable to the accomplishments of Gray, Cunningham and Haynes, all black, again perhaps indicating that race is a factor.

Gray, for one, is resentful about his lack of opportunities, particularly because he, among all Boston athletes, is perhaps the most active in the community. "I'm good enough to get applause on Sundays," said Gray, "but I'm not good enough to do commercials."

But is race the primary factor here? Or is it simply...

**WHAT POSITION YOU PLAY.** Grogan is a quarterback, and quarterbacks are the most visible player on a football team. "They're the only ones you see without helmets," said a New York advertising executive. "Take Mean Joe Greene, Lynn Swann, and Terry Bradshaw (all of them Pittsburgh Steelers) Bradshaw (the quarterback) is the only one who wouldn't need to be identified in a commercial."

While position might explain why Grogan is making money off the field and

BLACKS, Page 54

