

PRODUCT LAUNCH

At golf rollout, big balls mean press

Client: Fotoball (San Diego)

PR Team: Formula PR, Sports & Entertainment Division, (Los Angeles)

Campaign: PGA Merchandise Show

Time Frame: January 1-29, 2001

Budget: Less than \$20,000

Rawlings, the 113-year-old sporting-goods maker, had dropped its golf equipment line due to low profits. But it recently found its way back onto the green when Fotoball USA, a younger, speciality manufacturer with no brand identity in golf, was awarded a 10-year license to manufac-

ture and distribute for the company.

Fotoball landed the license in mid-November, just two months shy of the PGA Merchandise Show, the world's largest golf equipment exhibition, held in Orlando, FL.

Strategy

In early January, Formula PR was enlisted to tee off a publicity push at the show. Dusting off and reintroducing the Rawlings brand was newsworthy, but Fotoball needed something special to stand out among the show's more than 1,000 exhibitors.

"The most important goal of appearing at the PGA show was to convey that Rawlings Golf was returning to the marketplace," says Matt Kovacs, account supervisor at



Eye-catcher... Bugs bearing the Rawlings logo got attention

Formula.

The new Rawlings line, set to debut in retail outlets later this year, targets middle-market golf enthusiasts by offering high-quality equipment at affordable prices.

"At the PGA show, we wanted to make the statement that Rawlings is a brand to be reckoned with," says Josh Gold, assistant account execu-

tive at Formula.

To stand out amid the swarm of show exhibitors, Fotoball knew it needed a campaign with balls – giant balls, in fact – that people couldn't help but gape at.

Tactics

Prior to the show, Fotoball held a press conference, and Formula performed media

outreach and developed a press kit.

But the real hook came on January 25, the show's opening day, when enormous golf balls were mounted atop two Volkswagen Bugs that then circled the arena throughout the event. And as a kicker, one of the giveaways was an oversized golf ball – about the size of a softball – which turned out to be one of the show's more popular favors.

"We knew visitors were going to be flooded with a million different products," explains Kovacs. "We did all the standard PR stuff, but we wanted to show them something outside the box."

Results

At the show, which attracted some 55,000 attendees, Nike

released a new line of golf balls and Calloway debuted a \$1,000 driver. But for the most part, according to Kovacs, who attended the event with Gold, there were not many industry-shaking developments.

Consequently, Fotoball garnered significant media coverage of its Rawlings equipment, including spots by *Sporting Goods Business*, *Brandweek*, *Chicagoland Golf*, *La Opinion*, *PGATour.com* and several local news stations.

Future

"I don't know about before, but [Fotoball] believes in PR now," says Kovacs. The company plans to use it to augment a larger advertising campaign for an upcoming retail launch.

Craig McGuire