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1. Executive Summary

The Team Handball World Cup is a semiannual international event that is eagerly anticipated by fans throughout the world. Yet, Team Handball is curiously unknown in the U.S., even though it combines the best elements of major American sports. Spectators of the sport regularly witness the physicality of hockey and football, combined with the speed and grace of basketball. Team Handball Matches are also very high-scoring, with each team routinely scoring over 30 goals per match. Thus, we will introduce the sport of Team Handball to the United States by hosting the first American Speedball World Cup in major arenas in the U.S. North East.

The major issue preventing team handball’s success in the U.S. is its name, as it is easily confused with wall handball despite the fact that the sports have little in common. Thus, our first decision will be to change its name to Speedball, which more accurately and attractively describes the sport. The goal of hosting the Speedball World Cup is to raise awareness in the American sports market, particularly among our main target market of inner-city families both as spectators and participants. We will rely on extensive advertising as well as a celebrity Speedball game featuring stars from other sports to raise initial awareness and attendance at games, aided by high attendance from international fans and comparatively low prices.

Sponsorships will be sought from smaller companies looking to raise awareness and gain market share in the American market, as they have comparable goals to that of Speedball. The event itself will take advantage of comparable court size to basketball and hockey and already existing professional arenas in North Eastern cities such as Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., with the final being played in New York City’s Madison Square Garden. These measures will ensure that Speedball gains a footing in the highly competitive American sports market and establishes a foundation for future measures towards establishing the sport in the United States.
2. Organizational Mission

Our mission is to bring people from around the world together to celebrate the sport of Speedball (formerly known as team handball) through the Speedball World Cup, hosted in the United States North East. In doing so, we strive to establish Speedball among American sports consumers by bringing the world’s best players into the country to compete in front of U.S. fans.

3. Organizational Objectives

- To raise awareness of the sport of Speedball among consumers in the United States
- To expand the sport of Speedball into a new market
- Establish Speedball among the major sports in the United States, both in terms of participation and watching the sport
- To organize a well-functioning event that introduces the sport and creates the opportunity for those unfamiliar with Speedball to learn the essence of the sport

4. SWOT Analysis

Conducting a SWOT analysis will be beneficial to understanding the needs and goals of a marketing campaign for the first U.S. Speedball World Cup. Among the strengths of such an event is the novelty of the sport in America, as it will provide for an interesting competition the nature of which many fans might not have seen before. The sport is also extremely fast-paced and physical, with teams routinely scoring over 30 goals each per game and power play situations akin to hockey. A name change from team handball is advantageous, as the sport has been easily confused with wall handball and the new name more accurately sums up the excitement of a Speedball match. Further, Speedball is easy to play and its rules are easy to learn,
as they are easily comparable to other sports already existent in the U.S. In fact, two people and a ball are all that’s needed for a rudimentary form of the sport. Finally, a large international following of the sport will help the success of the event itself, as a large fan base from Europe, South America, and Asia can be expected to travel to America in order to support their country in the sport’s most important competition.

Conversely, major weaknesses that could endanger the success of the sport in the U.S. include the fact that despite its ease of learning, the sport is widely unknown in this market especially among older fans and could therefore struggle to pick up an initial following. Also, while the name change is advantageous, it might lead to confusion among those fans who already know the sport as team handball. This loyal if minor following should not be ignored, and should be educated about the necessity of the name change. Finally, a lack of competitive athletes compared to other nations, where Speedball is a major professional sport, could significantly influence the success (or lack thereof) of a U.S. World Cup as fans may not want to follow a sport in which their team has little chance of victory.

Externally, several opportunities may aid the success of the first U.S. Speedball World Cup. First, the arenas and stadiums are already built, as most major cities in the American North East are home to professional basketball and hockey teams that play on fields of similar size. Second, Speedball has become a rather popular gym sport, as a variation is played by middle and high school students throughout the U.S. This trend adds to the existence of several similar sports in America such as hockey, basketball, and soccer to make this innovative sport dynamically continuous instead of completely discontinuous.

Finally, several external threats may endanger the success of the Speedball World Cup. First, the above-mentioned already existing sports lead to a very saturated U.S. sports market,
and it is unknown whether yet another sport would be exciting enough to survive in this highly competitive environment. Second, a weak global economy could limit the travel of international fans to the U.S., providing for a less dynamic atmosphere than is so common during European or South American Speedball events. And even if these fans travel with their teams, their cultural differences in that they are more emotional and overly passionate could alienate the cooler, more structured U.S. fans following the World Cup.

5. Understanding Consumer Needs

5.1 Marketing Research Proposal

The goal of our research is to find out how much consumers already know about the game of Speedball and their interest level in learning more about it in terms of watching and participating. Finding out this knowledge/interest level will help us decide whether bringing the World Cup to the U.S. is a good idea. As Speedball is a game that is relatively easy to learn and play, we feel that this sport has a huge potential for growth in the States. The game includes many aspects of various professional sports in America as it is fast-paced and physical with a lot of scoring; ingredients for success when it comes to Americans and their sports.

The following survey is simple and will provide our team with primary data on the American knowledge of the sport. From our findings, we will be able to judge whether or not bringing the World Cup to the U.S. would be worth the cost and time.
5.1.1 Marketing Research Survey

1. Have you heard of the sport of Speedball/ team handball?
   Yes    No

2. Have you seen a game of Speedball? If so, where?
   Yes    No    Where you saw a game: ____________________________

3. Have you participated in a game of Speedball? (i.e. in Phys. Ed. Class in school). If so, where?
   Yes    No    Where you participated: ____________________________

4. Would you be interested in learning more about the game of Speedball?
   Yes    No

5. Would you be interested in watching a game of Speedball live?
   Yes    No

6. If the Speedball World Cup was held in a city in the U.S. near you, would you be interested in attending?
   Yes    No

7. Of these professional sports in the U.S., which do you follow? (Circle all that apply)
   Baseball   Basketball   Football (U.S.)   Hockey   Soccer

8. For what reasons do you watch sports?
   Fan of a team or player    Diversion from daily life
   Thrill of competition     Pageantry of the Sport
   Betting/Gambling          Friends/Family are fans
   Entertainment             Strengthening family ties/togetherness

9. Age_________    Sex_________    Marital Status________
   Occupation_________________    Income (approximate)__________
5.2 Consumers as Participants

According to Shank, participant consumption behavior is defined as “actions performed when searching for, participating in, and evaluating the sports activities that consumers believe will satisfy their needs.” It is essential for marketers to understand why consumers want to participate in sports and what benefits they seek in athletic participation. The reasons vary from exercise, to socialization, to the desire to be a part of a team. When seeing those reasons as a motive for participation, we see an opportunity for Speedball as it fills those needs previously mentioned. In order to bring the Speedball World Cup to the U.S., Americans need to be able to recognize and identify with the sport. By introducing Speedball as a way of keeping in shape, being a part of a team and socializing with friends, Speedball has the potential for great success.

Examining the Model of Participant Consumption Behavior by Shank reveals the importance of information being made readily available for consumers. Initially, consumers will need to conduct an information search after they realize Speedball could fill a need in their life (exercise, competition, socialization, etc.) When it comes to internal sources of information about the sport, they will obviously be limited because most likely, any experiences they may have with the game would be limited to something like a Phys. Ed. Class from high school. For example, the consumer may know that they like competition and fast-paced sports but they do not know all the rules of the game. For more information in that area, the consumer will need to turn to an external marketing source or experiential source. The marketing source we will provide for Speedball includes websites, advertisements and a staff responsible for answering questions about the game. We will do anything in our power to help people gain more information about how to become involved with the game. The experiential source would be watching a game of Speedball. Due to the sport’s lack of presence in the States, websites like
YouTube would prove to be a vital tool for people to be able to watch a game in which they are interested. Also, by nationally broadcasting and promoting the World Championships, consumers are able to see the game played at a high-level and begin to shape an opinion about it.

Part of the process is also to help reduce the risks perceived in playing Speedball. Obviously, as with any competitive sport, injury is a risk factor. However, by having different recreational leagues and levels, the speed and physicality would vary based on the shape and age of the people at a respective level. Furthermore, minimal equipment is required for the game (a ball and two goals) so the economic or financial investment would not be much; perhaps fees to participate in a league that would cover insurance and facility rental costs.

Overall, consumers will not be able to truly know if they enjoy the sport until they actually play it or attend a game in person (ideally, of course, a match during the World Cup). After they have participated, consumers can form an educated opinion based on their experiences. Not only will those participants then have an experiential source, but they can provide testimonials to their friends and reference groups who may have an interest in the game.

In general, all it takes to play the game is a ball, goals and a desire to have fun, compete or make new friends while playing an exciting game; a game that can meet the needs of various types of consumers. By playing the game, they are more likely to watch the game and vise-versa; a very important factor in the success of Speedball in America.

5.3 Consumers as Spectators

Various sociological, psychological, and situational factors can influence a consumer’s decision to attend a sporting event. Understanding these factors and what motivates people to attend will be a key component in our marketing team successfully introducing Speedball to America through the World Cup. In reference to question eight on the survey in section 5.1.1,
eight factors may influence a consumer’s decision to attend a sporting event. The sport of Speedball has the ability to satisfy any of those needs for watching sports.

For pure sports fans, the thrill from seeing top-level competition as the world’s best teams and athletes compete for the ultimate goal would be enough to drive them to the games. Also, people seeking entertainment will find the fast-paced action and high-scoring matches to be exciting, fresh, and new as no professional level of this sport exists in the United States. This excitement can also influence people who want to get away from the daily grind by providing them with something new to watch. Furthermore, the grace, speed and, coordination it takes to play the game at a high level add to the visual pleasure of the game. In addition to the on-court action, the pageantry displayed in the stands as fans chant for their teams (similar to soccer) and the passion international fans would bring to the atmosphere make the sport very appealing to fans who like the ambiance as much as the action.

Socialization and friendship-oriented fans will also be valuable in getting people to attend. For example, if someone is part of a large circle of friends and one or two of them have an interest in seeing the game played at its highest level, the other friends may want to tag along and enjoy the camaraderie that comes from spending time together. Furthermore, the World Cup provides a chance for families to spend time with one another at a memorable event. This would be the first time the Speedball World Cup is hosted in America, providing an opportunity to make a memory with your kids as well as the ability to say that together, you attended the first ever Championship match; something not many people would be able to boast.

From an economical perspective, betting is the least motivating factor. However, gamblers are often addicted to the rush from having a vested interest in a game. Speedball
provides an opportunity for sports gamblers to expand the scope of their wagers and would, undoubtedly, increase interest in the sport.

One area where Speedball, initially, may not satisfy needs is for American fans that like to root for specific teams and players. While holding the event in the U.S. North East would attract many Europeans to the country, some people may not be sold on the idea because they do not follow the sport internationally. A possible solution would be holding a celebrity game where athletes from different sports compete in a friendly exhibition. NBA fans would probably be interested in seeing Dwight Howard block a shot attempt or LeBron James take off from just outside the penalty arc and bury a shot in the net while soaring through the air. Overall, the sport of Speedball provides an opportunity to satisfy the many reasons that people attend and watch sporting events, while introducing a whole new style of game to sports fans.

6. Market Selection Decisions

6.1 Segmentation

Market segmentation is defined by Shank as “identifying groups of consumers based on their common needs.” No product can effectively target every market, as focusing on specific segments allows for a better ability to meet the needs of specific segments. The marketing plan for the Speedball World Cup will therefore focus on various demographic, psychographic and geographic measures in order to best serve their potential target market.

Demographically, marketing for the Speedball World Cup will focus on lower-to-middle income consumers, specifically families with teenage children who might not have the money to regularly take their children to other, more expensive professional sporting events. As we will discuss, the event will be promoted by professional athletes from other sports present at the
game, so taking children to the World Cup will allow families to see their favorite athletes in person while getting to know a new and exciting sport. Furthermore, this family dynamic will allow for an ease of getting to know the sport, as many children have played a variation of it in gym class and can explain the basic rules to their parents. In short, focusing on lower-to-middle income families with teenage children allows for an effective means of raising awareness of the event and sport in America.

In terms of psychographic segmentation, our focus will be on families that are already fans of other sports and have experienced the excitement of cheering for specific teams. This prior knowledge will also aid in understanding the sport of Speedball, as many of the rules such as dribbling (basketball) and penalties (hockey) are directly comparable to already successful sports in the U.S. Finally, avid fans of other sports will have a higher likelihood of understanding the enthusiastic nature of foreign sports fans traveling to the Speedball World Cup, eliminating one of the threats mentioned in the SWOT analysis.

Finally, our geographic segmentation will logically focus on the U.S. North East, where the games are taking place. More specifically, we will focus on the urban families in major event cities such as New York City, Boston, Washington, and Philadelphia. Families living in this environment often have less discretionary income at their disposal, and will welcome the opportunity to see a major sporting event for less cost than they are accustomed to. Further, the ability to pick up a ball and play the game will help spread recreational participation among urban children once initial awareness has been achieved.

**6.2 Target Marketing**

Targeting this demographic, psychographic, and geographic consumer group will allow the Speedball World Cup to reach the one segment most inclined to spread the word about the
sport and raise awareness. The segment is large enough due to the considerable size of North Eastern cities such as New York City and Boston, but narrow enough to be targeted based on a specific need in not having enough money for other sporting events. The segment is also reachable, as television and internet channels are largely available even to lower-income consumers in the U.S. today. For those without the ability to be reached via these channels, billboards and promotions at gyms and street ball courts in inner cities will be effective. However even beyond this segment secondary target markets like sports-hungry college students should be targeted with less expensive, minor marketing campaigns to ensure maximum exposure to the sport.

6.3 Positioning

Positioning, according to Shank the process of “fixing the sports entity in the minds of the target market,” is crucial to a successful marketing campaign as it gives the event a specific image that all communication will be based on. The Speedball World Cup should focus on communicating the speed and physical nature of the sport, as well as the ability to play it with merely two people and a ball. These two dimensions are not combined in any of the comparable major sports in the U.S. today. Soccer and basketball are easy to play, but often criticized for their lack of physicality. On the other hand, football and hockey are very physical in nature, but need expensive equipment and many participants to play. Thus, marketing Speedball as a physical sport that is easy to play will position it apart from the potential competition of other, already established American sports. During the World Cup itself, this positioning could be strengthened with boot camps and recreational games before each match, allowing spectators to try out their skills and experience the speed and physicality of Speedball.
7. Marketing Mix Decisions

7.1 Product Issues

Several obstacles have to be overcome to make the product of Speedball successful during its debut into the U.S. sports realm. The main issue for the product’s market entrance will be that the sport being brought to America is brand new, leading to a lack of awareness among sports fans for Speedball. The product itself is discontinuous, as major learning is required before a match can be enjoyed. For a successful venture, the product must be carefully developed to successfully capture the interest of the U.S. sports fan. An already established and well-traveled international fan base will serve as a cornerstone to introduce the product, giving Americans the desire to join in the celebration. While American consumers may not yet easily recognize the brand logo of the Speedball World Cup, a redesigned logo that can be easily associated with the event would help boost the recognition of the sport. Once recognition is established, future goals of sponsorships can be addressed and will be discussed later. This brand awareness should also be based on an effective brand image, based on the fast-paced, physical, easy-to-follow game. Once American consumers can relate to and follow the World Cup the issue of gaining brand loyalty among new American followers through other international games can be explored.

Speedball itself is closely comparable to major sports in the U.S., as it essentially combines baseball, hockey, football, and basketball into one sport. Sports fans dissatisfied with any one game can find the best of all sports at one event: the Speedball World Cup. For example, a fan that criticizes the lack the physicality and fast pace of baseball can find those in a match at the World Cup, giving a significant advantage for the new brand to enter the market. A proper plan to build on this advantage will successfully introduce this brand new game, capturing the eyes of Americans and developing a fan base during the Speedball World Cup.
7.2 Promotion Issues

But this plan can only be successful among American consumers with effective promotions. Specifically, we will focus on advertising, public relations, and sponsorships. A successful promotion mix that can reach all possible fans will be a major victory for the Speedball World Cup. Specifically, a heavy emphasis on advertising will raise awareness for the event within the U.S. We will utilize the ideal media channels to reach consumers that fit the profile we are looking for. Such advertising will be done on networks such as NBC, ABC, ESPN, and Versus while avoiding unrelated stations such as the Lifetime Network that our target market will watch significantly less than other networks. But proper advertising will still be prone to get lost in all the “noise” caused by ads for other sports occurring during the World Cup. That noise can be reduced with successful, creative advertising. For the promotions to reach our objectives, a plan should be assembled by considering the target market, setting promotional goals, deciding the budgeting necessary for the World Cup to take off in the U.S., and developing a detailed promotional mix. Promotions such as hosting a celebrity all-star match at the beginning of the tournament will help generate publicity and awareness, introducing the sport to fans that have been unaware of Speedball. Having already established sports figures and actors play Speedball will lead to fans of these stars starting to gain knowledge of the World Cup in a sport they most likely see for the first time. Successful planning leads to the fans to attend the matches and be immersed into the fast-paced world of Speedball that everyone can learn with ease.

7.3 Sponsorships

The next step in bringing the Speedball World Cup to America is to start searching for sponsors looking for a sound financial investment, and to extend their brand image while helping
Speedball gain awareness in the U.S. Sponsors of the event will have an exorbitant amount of places to find sponsorship opportunities. Companies will have the opportunity to provide the players with uniforms, warm-ups, tennis shoes, and other apparel in exchange for a fee ensuring that the players will only be permitted to wear the specified clothing and the privilege of showing the public the new, innovative sponsor products. A good fit of sponsorship would be an athletic apparel company that, like Speedball, is looking to raise awareness of its brand in a new market. Such second tier companies looking to gain awareness are Umbro, Fila, Puma, Russell Athletics, and Champion. Bigger companies could also be interested in sponsoring the specific rounds of the tournament, and the event arenas are already sponsored by companies that would have even more exposure. For example, if a round was played in Washington D.C., Verizon would be an indirect sponsor for owning the naming rights to the Verizon Center. As a brand-new product hitting the market, the Speedball World Cup will not only be very attractive to the well-known companies, but also be a great opportunity for smaller companies looking to expand together with a new product that will catch the American’s attention.

7.4 Pricing Issues

The issue of pricing persists in every marketing project. According to Shank, price is a statement of value for a sports product. The central idea of pricing is the value, a relationship of the perceived benefit to the price paid. Internal factors influencing price include the product, promotions, cost, distribution, and organizational objectives. External factors include competition, economy, technology, and consumer demand. In the case of Speedball, the issue arising is that the sports product is unknown to people in the U.S. with only approximately 5% of people knowing about its existence. As one main focus of the World Cup is to gain awareness and get consumers to gain a better understanding of the Speedball, keeping prices for the event
on the lower end makes sense because consumers are unsure of what to expect. Several websites show that the average Speedball game in Europe converts to a price range between $20 and $60. The Speedball World Cup will need to stay on the lower end of this price range due to a lack of knowledge of the sport by the American consumer. But prices could eventually increase with the proper promotions and distribution. Both advertising on TV and a potential celebrity all-star game could positively affect the event and allow an increase of price. The economy always plays a role in price and with the current uncertainty and struggle everyone is facing, it will be difficult to set ticket prices at a high level. Consumer demand not being very high for an event that is new and unknown to people in the United States will also tend to keep the price level low. Of course advertising will also be part of the cost associated leading up to the event. The main cost will be the amount to rent out the arena or stadium where it is hosted. A price range between $15 and $40 for group stage matches, with a higher price for later elimination rounds, should be low enough to get people into the door of the Speedball World Cup.

7.5 Place Issues

Where the event will take place is another issue to consider. We have decided that the stadiums hosting the event will be exclusively in the North East of the United States, as the majority of fan traffic for the sport is coming in from Europe. Keeping all arenas in one area will also reduce travel costs and time differences for teams and fans. The final and semifinals should be held at Madison Square Garden in New York, which currently hosts the NBA’s New York Knicks, the WNBA’s New York Liberty, the NHL’s New York Rangers, and other sporting events throughout the year. Since the Speedball court is similar in size to a basketball court, it will fit easily into such arenas. Another major arena hosting the event could be the Verizon Center in Washington D.C., which plays host to the Washington Wizards, Washington Mystic,
Washington Capitals, and Georgetown Hoyas. In short, the availability of professional arenas in the U.S. North East will make hosting the Speedball World Cup in this region a logical choice.

8. Implementation Process

Planning the marketing process is only possible with an effective implementation of the strategy. We will take the main Speedball event to Madison Square Garden. Hosting the Cup on Versus television network will ensure broad television coverage. Holding tryouts for fans before games will get them familiar with the sport. We will obtain sponsorships and promotions from athletes such as LeBron James (NBA) and Larry Fitzgerald (NFL). Finally, a local sponsor to the event from the New York Knicks will be Carmelo Anthony to help draw in the local crowd.

9. Control Process

The plan and event will be controlled and evaluated on whether or not there is increased awareness of the sport. Finding out if consumers better understand the product and if they would return again are two criteria that will be measured. Perhaps gathering data from a brief survey, asking the attendees if they were satisfied with the event and would be interested in attending another event in the future will help achieve that goal. Based on the feedback from such surveys, we will be able to assess whether planning more Speedball events in the U.S. or even establishing a league is a legible option for the future. Long-term, it would be ideal to check into specific sales figures for the event. But as Speedball in the U.S. is in the introduction stage, gathering and measuring awareness and understanding of and by the consumers it is most important. In short, being able to build and maintain customer relationships is crucial in keeping the product up and running.