The Sports Premium

The Brand Manager's Playbook for Athlete & Arena Creators

Navigating the highest-trust, highest-risk distribution channel in modern marketing.



Gemini Notebook

SINGLE-VENDOR STATISTICS ARE MARKETING, NOT MARKET TRUTH.



OpenSponsorship: 10.97% Engagement vs 4.92%!

7x Return on Ad Spend!

FILTER: DOES INDEPENDENT CORROBORATION EXIST?

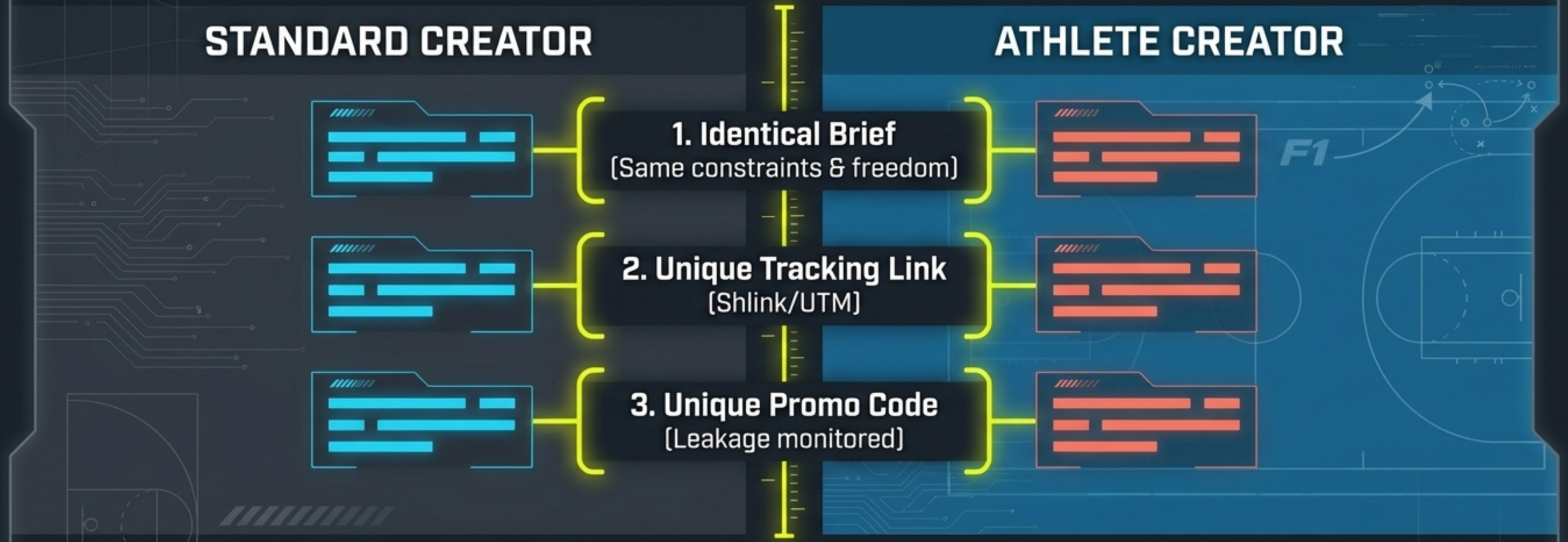
JOHNSON AND XUE / NIL STUDIES



THE ATHLETE ADVANTAGE IS A **DIRECTIONAL TRUTH**, NOT A FIXED MULTIPLE. IT IS DRIVEN BY **SIMILARITY, RELEVANCE, AND AUTHENTICITY**—NOT AUTOMATIC ROAS.

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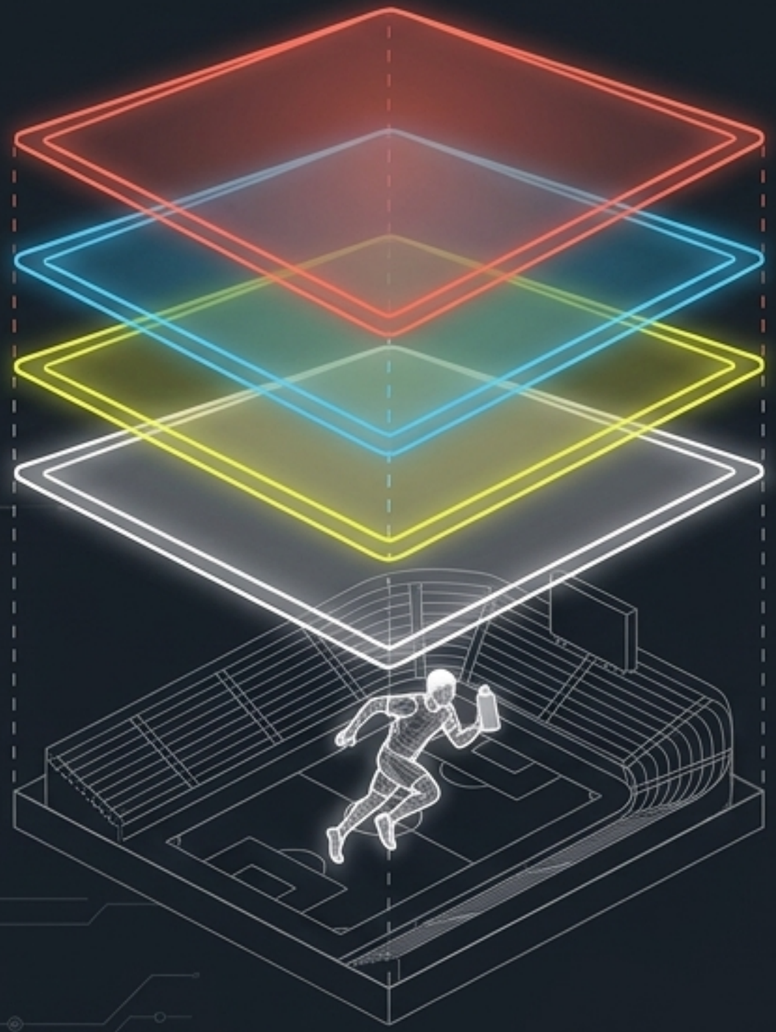
The Price Discovery Protocol isolates and measures the true athlete premium.



DECISION RULE: Thresholds must be set before posting.

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The greatest trap in sports marketing is assuming the athlete owns the frame.



1. **The Athlete**
   (Face, Likeness, Voice)
2. **The Team**
   (Uniform, Helmet, Venue Marks)
3. **The League**
   (Game Footage, Broadcast IP)
4. **The Players Association**
   (Group Licensing, 3+ Player Marks)

WARNING: A single sponsored post can trigger three separate cease-and-desists if you only pay the first layer.

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Bypassing the gridlock requires isolating the exact asset you need.

Drafting the Sports Campaign

Do you absolutely need team marks or game footage?

Yes

Team/League Corporate Sponsorship

(High cost, multi-party negotiation)

No

The Safe Play

Buy Likeness + Own-Shot Content. The athlete shoots off-site, out of uniform, relying solely on their voice and parasocial trust.



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Retired athletes are specialized media entities built on shared fan memory.



Asset Ownership
(Low to High)

Founder/Equity Partner (High asset control, rare public voice)	**Show Host** (Recurring voice + full ownership)
Appearance Athlete (One-off fee, low asset control)	**Media Professional** (Recurring network voice, no asset ownership)

Frequency of Voice
(One-off to Recurring)

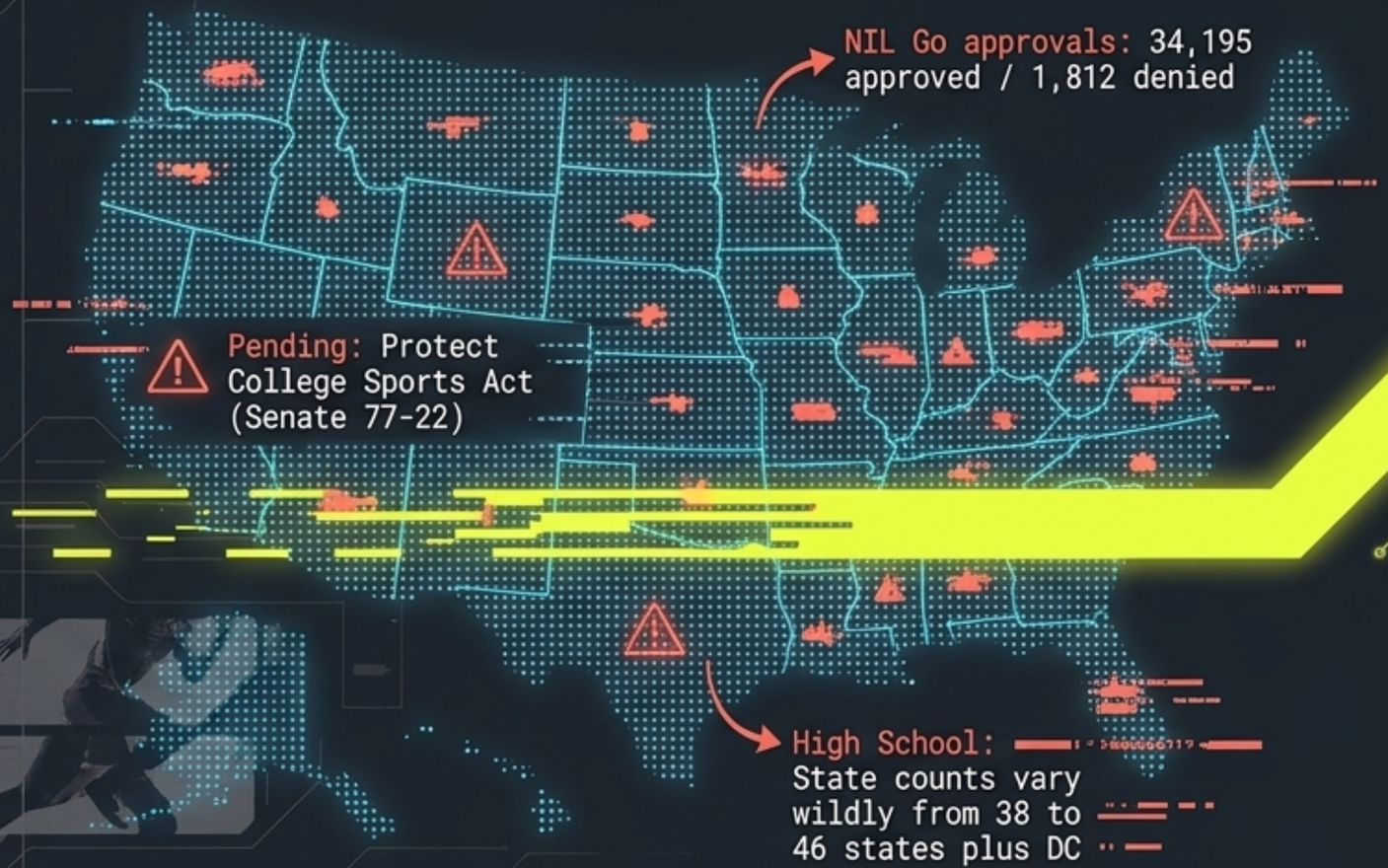
CASE STUDY:
"New Heights" / Wondery

$100M+ structure represents the pinnacle of the recurring asset model



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National NIL trackers are volatile; the only truth is local.



NIL Go approvals: 34,195 approved / 1,812 denied

Pending: Protect College Sports Act (Senate 77-22)

High School: State counts vary wildly from 38 to 46 states plus DC



The State Association Rulebook

CORE RULE: Do not rely on vendor dashboards. Confirm the specific athlete's state association rule in writing before making an offer.

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When youth sports are involved, legal compliance is just the floor.



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The true premium of Women's Sports is unmatched authenticity, not charity.



(Driven by source similarity, high product relevance, and in-sport content. Ref: BofA Institute >5,500 deals & $76M WNBA rev in 2024)

(Pay for the audience size and fit delivered, with zero discount for the sport)

The 5-Question Partnership Test

1. Duration?
2. Reason for product?
3. Creative input?
4. Equal pay applied?
5. Support beyond the post?

(<4 Yes answers = a rental, not a partnership)

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THE ECOSYSTEM PROPERTIES: CHOOSE THE CATEGORY RISK BEFORE WRITING THE BRIEF.

CREATOR TYPE	CORE VALUE	PRIMARY RISK	REQUIRED COUNSEL
Fitness	Routine integration	**FTC Health Claims ($15.2M Teami judgment)**	Medical/Claim review
Fantasy / Betting	High engagement	**Entry fee/prize laws, youth proximity**	Written state-by-state legal clearance
Commentary	Niche authority	Unpredictable brand safety	Strict morals clause
Highlights	Viral reach	IP takedowns / Copyright strikes	Licensed footage verification

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When activating around a venue or team, access is the ultimate multiplier.

THE COMMENTATOR

- No physical access.
- Relying purely on reaction content.
- Easily replaced.

THE BROADCASTER

- Brand-granted sideline, locker-room, or event access.
- Generates original, exclusive IP.
- Smaller follower counts yield massive engagement spikes.

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ARCHITECTING THE SEASON-LONG CREATOR DEPTH CHART.



STARTERS

Small count. High flat-fee. Hero content, exclusive camp access, brand ambassadors.



MAIN ROSTER

Medium count. Hybrid fee/commission. Consistent output, recurring narrative across the season.



PRACTICE SQUAD

High volume (30+). Zero-cash entry point (seeded gear), open applications. Scouting pool for future Starters.

REF: Chiefs' Kingdom Creators Model

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EVENT-ANCHORED EXECUTION: THE DISCIPLINE OF THE COUNTDOWN



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TRIANGULATE THE SPIKE: DO NOT PAY FOR THE ORGANIC GRAVITY OF THE GAME



THE TRIANGULATION METHOD:

- Unique single-creator codes.
- Tracked Shlink/UTM links.
- Post-purchase survey data to catch view-throughs and code leakage.

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THE SPORTS PREMIUM IS REAL, BUT IT MUST BE RIGOROUSLY ENGINEERED.









1. AUDIT RUTHLESSLY:
Verify vendor data through controlled, paired tests.

2. CLEAR LEGALLY:
Navigate the 4-owner rights stack and state NIL rules.

3. MANAGE BY TIER:
Deploy the Starter, Roster, and Practice Squad architecture.

4. MEASURE INCREMENTALITY:
Separate creator impact from the event's organic gravity.

SUCCESS COMBINES THE CULTURAL INTUITION OF A FAN WITH THE RUTHLESS DISCIPLINE OF A COMPLIANCE OFFICER

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