

The Boston Globe

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2009

SPIT AND PALLISH

Today: Cloudy, rain tapering off.
High 54-59. Low 46-51.
Tomorrow: Cloudy, some rain.
High 56-61. Low 40-45.

Hour: 9:04 a.m. 9:29 p.m.
Square: 5:54 a.m. Sunset: 7:33 p.m.

Price Report: Page B15

Business

With seats available, Sox roll out ads

Record sellout streak in jeopardy as fans try to save

By Johnny Diaz
GLOBE STAFF

The Red Sox are hoping to hit a promotional home run with a new ad campaign that the team begins pitching today.

The "Greatest Moments" campaign will feature TV and online ads that highlight some of the team's more historic and recent moments with commentary by local fans and celebrities. The first of four ads, which will air tonight when the Sox play the Minnesota Twins, celebrates the famous steal by Dave Roberts in the ninth inning of Game Four of the 2004 American League Championship Series game against the New York Yankees and includes interviews with Sox manager Terry Francona and Celtics forward Paul Pierce about the play.

The Red Sox are losing corporate sponsors and selling fewer premium seats after ratings for regular season games on New England Sports Network dropped 30 percent last year. While the ads are not necessarily aimed at selling tickets, Red Sox officials say they are aware of how a weakening economy can discourage even the most passionate sports fans.

"There is definitely a concern and attention given internally to the effect the economy has on the Red Sox and all sports in general," said Sam Kennedy, chief sales and marketing officer for the Red Sox. Still, "we

have been fortunate to have been able to sell tickets at a considerable pace."

But some local marketing professors say the Sox have a reason to try to fill more seats. After all, the team, which holds the major league record for consecutive sellouts (476 since May 15, 2003), have not sold out all home games for this season. That suggests the streak could be in jeopardy should the team experience a major slump or nasty weather.

"Teams need campaigns to sell tickets," said Stephen A. Greyser, a Harvard Business School professor who studies brand marketing and sports management.

The Boston Globe and 17 percent of the Red Sox are owned by the New York Times Co.

Greyser also said the Red Sox might be trying to revive interest in the team as other Boston professional sports teams command more headlines. "You have the Bruins and the Celtics on people's minds. While the Red Sox are the dominant team in the market, they are reminding people that there are all these games to go

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HISTORY REVISITED

Watch a commercial featuring Dave Roberts's stolen base from the 2004 playoffs at www.boston.com/business.

Sox push ad campaign as tickets sales slow

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to Fenway Park" for, he said.

Geoff Klapsch, a media and marketing professor at Boston University, agrees. "They want to remind their core audience of reasons to be loyal to their team, especially now when people are being careful financially," he said.

But Red Sox officials say the new spots are intended to showcase Sox fans and pay tribute to the team's more memorable moments. The new campaign follows last year's "Here" promotions, which branded Fenway as a place for families. Those ads, including one with footage of Babe Ruth, are still airing.

Along with the Roberts ad, which will air through May, three other promotional spots will air this spring and early summer. One ad pays tribute to Sox legend Ted Williams. Another highlights former left fielder Jim Rice. The team would not give specifics for

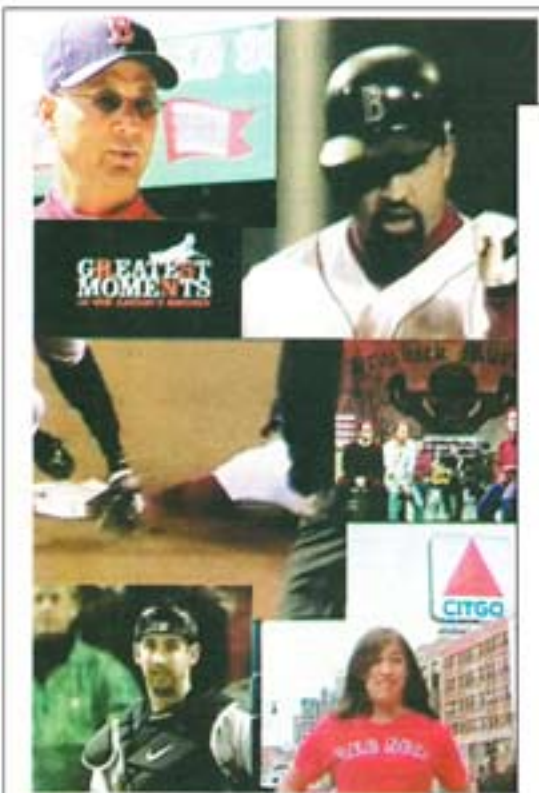
other ad.

"You see us celebrating the fans and the importance of what they have in the history of the franchise," Kennedy said.

As part of the campaign, the team is also asking fans to vote on one of nine other historic moments featured on www.redsoxnation.com through May 27. Some of the moments include Curt Schilling's famous bloody sock in Game 6 of the 2004 Yankees series. The most voted moment will be featured in a TV commercial to air on June 16.

"We wanted to use the fans to tell the story," said Grant Pace, executive creative director at Conover Tuttle Pace, the Boston ad agency that helped create the campaign. "To us, there is a pride and sense of community with Red Sox Nation, and these spots just enforce that."

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The new campaign leads off with people's reactions to Dave Roberts's key steal in 2004.