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## Mercury in final year of LifeLock sponsorship contract

BY JAN BUCHHOLZ  
Phoenix Business Journal

The Phoenix Mercury opens its season June 4 against the Seattle Storm, marking the team's 15th anniversary.

It also marks the third and final year of LifeLock's marquee partnership with the Women's National Basketball Association franchise.

The sponsorship is not your run-of-the-mill promotion. Two years ago, the identity protection company rocked the sports world by rolling out its name and logo on the Mercury's jerseys.

The practice of selling jersey space still is rare in the U.S., but it's standard operating procedure for European sports teams. The Mercury was the first major U.S. team to give it a whirl.

LifeLock, meanwhile, was game for trying something completely out of the box.

"We had already been known to be disruptive with our marketing," said LifeLock CEO Todd Davis. "This very much falls within our innovative style and helps build our brand in the local community."

The gamble seems to have paid off for both sides. For starters, the jersey deal turned more than a few heads.

"The media coverage we received blew us all away. There were stories on ESPN, in *The Wall Street Journal* and in *The New York Times*," said Amber Cox, the Mercury's chief operating officer.

LifeLock paid at least \$1 million to secure the privilege of marketing its brand on the Mercury's jerseys. Davis will say only that

it's a seven-figure number. In addition, LifeLock receives marquee signage, seating perks and behind-the-scenes benefits.

Davis gives the impression that he's ready to renew the contract.

"The original deal was for three years with exit clauses. We never exercised those," he said. "As we continue to grow, we'll look at how we can further leverage this partnership."

Mercury owner Robert Sarver said it isn't just about building the LifeLock brand. It's been a boon to the team, too.

"It's worked well for both of us," he said. "It's visibility for them, especially with the Mercury winning a championship. It's also given us a platform for reinvesting in the team and making it better."

Like Davis, Sarver won't discuss numbers, saying only that the price of the sponsorship makes it a very valuable resource for the team's future.

Cox expects some form of the deal will be renewed as the evaluation process proceeds through this year.

"We're so grateful that LifeLock stepped and set the bar so high. They are trendsetters across the WNBA, and even other teams are grateful for what they've done," Cox said.

As of this season, four other WNBA teams — Los Angeles, Seattle, New York and Washington — have entered similar partnerships.

Zion & Zion CEO Eric Zion said a sports sponsorship, even a big jersey deal, will be valuable only if you work every angle.

"You can't just affix a logo to a jersey and have it be a one-dimensional promotion," he said.

Zion's advertising and public relations agency represents Phoenix-based Goettl Air Conditioning, which purchased a more conventional sponsorship with the Arizona Cardinals.

"We work to get everything out of it," he said.

Matt Silverman, managing director of ad and PR firm R&R Partners, has handled numerous sports partnerships, including some with Nascar, the National Basketball Association and the Professional Bull Riders Association.

"There's the intangible value of being associated with a brand that rubs off on you," Silverman said.

The excitement of a new season definitely has rubbed off on Davis, who was in the mix at the Mercury's media day recently.

"The fan in me loves the chemistry and energy that I'm seeing," he said.

Cox said Davis has developed a balanced perspective on the game and the business.

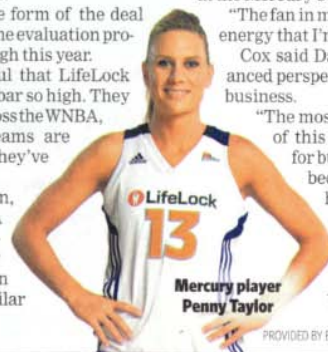
"The most pleasant surprise of all of this is that Todd got involved for business reasons. Now, he's become a fan and feels like he's a part of the team," Cox said.



Sarver



Davis



Mercury player Penny Taylor

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