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More ads with Heat stars coming to your TV

By [Doreen Hemlock](#), Sun Sentinel

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Even if you don't like basketball, you'll be seeing a lot more of Miami Heat stars LeBron James and Dwyane Wade in next week or so.

More TV commercials featuring James and Wade will air during the NBA Finals — on the games, on pre- and post-game programs and even on other channels.

That's because companies score extra points when celebrities in their ads are hot. So advertisers from State Farm to Nike, who work with James and Wade, aim to cash in.

"The Heat is generating a lot of excitement, and the ability to segue from the Heat brand to another brand is very powerful," said Kathleen Davis, president of the West Palm Beach-based Sport Management Research Institute. "It's all about striking while the iron is hot."

In the nationwide broadcast of Tuesday's game, James appeared in ads for Sprite soda and McDonald's restaurants and Wade for T-Mobile phone service. The game earned the highest TV ratings for an NBA Finals opener since 2004.

"The Dwyane Wade and LeBron James corporate partnerships will be immeasurably enhanced by their four- to seven-game trip [in the] NBA Finals," said Rick Horrow of Jupiter-based Horrow Sports Ventures.

Companies, too, know it probably will cost them more for ads with the duo next year if the Heat win the series, said Scott Becher, president of [Boca Raton](#)-based Sports & Sponsorships Inc.

"Championship rings lead to cash register rings, especially with superstars," Becher said.

Forbes magazine ranks James as the third highest-paid athlete for the past year, trailing only golfer Tiger Woods and basketball player Kobe Bryant.

James earned \$48 million for the year from salaries, bonuses, prize money, appearances, licensing and endorsements. He backed the top-selling basketball shoe, and his jersey topped all others in NBA sales this

advertisement

The advertisement graphic for UF MBA features the university's logo in blue and white, with the text 'UF | MBA' in large, bold letters. Below the logo, it says 'Bringing Our Campus to South Florida'. The graphic is split into two sections: the left side shows a photograph of the University of Florida's iconic clock tower, and the right side is a solid orange background with white text that reads 'Florida's #1 MBA Program', 'Classes in South Florida', and 'July 11 Start'.

year, Forbes said.

Wade ranked No. 20 on the Forbes list, with \$26.2 million in total pay including endorsements. Besides T-Mobile, his ad deals include Gatorade, Nike, Hublot watches and Mission Skincare, media reports say.

Three national TV ads show the variety of products already touted by the duo. In a State Farm ad, James and a pal bicker over who is to blame for an auto accident, as an insurance agent works. In the Energy sheets one, James unwraps and savors a melt-in-your-mouth energy sheet that contains caffeine and vitamins. In the Nike ad, Wade dominates the basketball court wearing Nike Jordan shoes.

South Florida companies are also boosting local ads with other Heat stars.

Auto dealer Warren Henry said his group is rolling out more ads with Chris Bosh on South Florida TV and other area media. The company signed a one-year deal with Bosh last August that allows him access to two cars at a time in exchange for ads, appearances and endorsements. Bosh now drives a 2011 Range Rover HSE from the group's Land Rover South Dade.

"It's priceless what we're getting from this," said dealership marketer Floyd Raglin, noting Bosh's growing popularity helps drive both awareness of the Warren Henry group and its auto sales.

Still, there are limits to what even a Heat star can do.

Raglin said the 6-foot, 11-inch Bosh might forego driving one of the group's new, low-to-the-ground Lamborghini sportscars that sell for about \$500,000, because "he might not fit in it."

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