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## Sydney Yields Few Ad Champions --- 'Ted' and Stacy Dragila Beat Elephant, Grim Divorcee In Thin Field of Entrants

By Kathryn Kranhold and Suzanne Vranica

No, it isn't your imagination. There really are more commercials interrupting the 2000 Summer Olympic Games from Sydney each night on NBC. And unfortunately, few get better the more you see of them.

With the Sydney Games drawing the smallest television audiences in recent Olympic history, General Electric's NBC is doling out plenty of "make good" commercial time, in some cases squeezing additional minutes of advertising into its nightly telecast. No wonder many of this year's Olympic campaigns seem so annoying.

Several big advertisers shamelessly pushed all the big sentimental Olympic buttons -- but forgot to sell some product. Other companies decided to make the Olympics the context for commercials about a serial killer and the pains of divorce. The result is a year in which some advertisers scored despite a decidedly thin pool of Olympic advertising. Some of the best and worst:

### **Monster.com—Agency: Mullen Advertising**

A guy named Ted posts his resume on TMP Worldwide's Monster.com job site, touching off a frenzy of interest. News magazines and network newscasters cover his job search; "Get me this Ted," one executive commands. Meanwhile, the fruit baskets and offers pile up as Ted slouches in front of the PC in his cubicle.

Clever as this spot is, it comes too late to help Mullen, a unit of Interpublic Group, hold onto the Monster.com account. Mullen was the agency behind Monster.com's sly 1999 Super Bowl campaign featuring deadpan kids talking about uninspired career aspirations. But the Wenham, Mass., agency's follow-up Super Bowl campaign didn't make the same splash this year. Monster.com recently shifted its business to Havas Advertising's Arnold Communications.

### **Visa International—Agency: BBDO Worldwide**

Pole-vault gold medalist Stacy Dragila stars in this far-sighted Olympics spot, which Visa launched during the Super Bowl in January. The commercial features Ms. Dragila soaring over the bar in what traditionally had been a male event -- the Sydney Games are the first to feature women's pole vaulting -- while the Rodgers & Hammerstein tune "I Enjoy Being a Girl" plays. This week, Omnicom Group's BBDO aired a new Olympic ad congratulating Ms. Dragila on her history-making medal.

### **Powerade, Coca-Cola Co.—Agency: McCann-Erickson Worldwide**

These entertaining commercials from Interpublic Group's McCann are all about the rituals athletes perform before their events. Steven van Eeden, a South African wrestler who never actually competed in the Olympics, slaps himself in the face over and over while standing in front of a mirror. Another South African, boxer Hawk Makepula, sings soulfully inside the ring at his gym. U.S. sprinter Maurice Greene, gold medalist in the men's 100 meter, writes his goal time -- 9.76 -- on a slip of paper and tucks it in his track shoe. The tagline: "Whatever you do to get up for the game. Stay Up. Powerade, on the field at the Olympic games."

### **Heineken—Agency: Lowe Lintas & Partners**

Taking a funny look at the athletic yearnings of wannabe Olympians, the spot from Interpublic agency Lowe Lintas features a young man walking into the living room with a Heineken in his hand. "He's got to be feeling a lot of excitement right now," the TV blares. "It's Bob's first attempt at this height." The man leaps over the couch like an Olympic high-jumper -- only to have a few droplets fall from his bottle. "The 2 Point Deduction," the screen reads. "He'll have four more years to think about that one," the TV announcer says.

### **International Business Machines—Agency: Ogilvy & Mather**

Profiles of some less-well-known Olympians, Akhi Spencer El, a fencer from Harlem in New York City, and Eadaoin Ni Challarain, a kayaker from Ireland, from WPP Group's Ogilvy. The kayaker spot features the residents of Spideal, a damp coastal outpost in Ireland. Ms. Ni Challarain glides past a fisherman who says proudly, "She's not only doing it for the medal. She's doing it for Ireland." In the other spot, Mr. Spencer El practices his fencing moves on the subway, and his neighbors practice theirs at the local barbershop. "I didn't even know brothers fenced," one young boy says.