

Wine and sports: who really benefits?

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This article explores the growing trend of wine and sports sponsorships, questioning their true effectiveness. While brands invest heavily to reach new audiences, the challenge lies in consumer perception. It analyzes whether stadium environments and alternative packaging formats align with wine's traditional identity or simply dilute its cultural value.

When watching a sporting event today, the real show begins before the start with logos, sponsored statistics and one in two advertisements for a betting app. **Sport has also become an advertising container and sooner or later someone in the Italian wine sector had to ask themselves: why not us?**

The logic seen from the outside is simple. Wine is

experiencing a crisis with falling demand, young consumers who are difficult to recruit, and an oversupply that pushes people to uproot vineyards. **However, sport remains one of the few channels still capable of bringing together millions of spectators in a single blow.**

Jackson Family Wines has chosen NBA and WNBA, while GALLO has put its flag on MLB, NFL and the US Open. **This means almost 40 different sponsorships according to the VinePair article about wine swinging for the fences with sports advertising.** But who watches these ads?

The VinePair article reports an important consideration, noting that sport and wine share the same goal of bringing people together. One thing is the declared intention, but another is the image that actually reaches those sitting in the stands with a beer in hand. **Bringing people together is a beautiful goal on paper, but it remains to be seen whether wine is perceived at the stadium as part of that community or as an out of context guest who has simply paid to be there.**

Here comes the first fact that defuses the enthusiasm, since paying for a logo during a match rarely guarantees automatic adherence. **The Californian giant GALLO divides its potential audience into three segments: those who have never considered a glass of wine at the stadium, those who reject beer without having found alternatives, and those who have never had a first contact with wine in general.**

Three different audiences inevitably mean three different images of what wine should represent in that context, such as an alternative drink, a transitional drink, or a discovery drink. The problem is that the product remains the same, while the story built around it multiplies based on who needs to be convinced. **It is difficult to say who really gains a clear identity from this operation, perhaps the brand does, but wine as a category might benefit a little less.**

Reading the VinePair analysis, another question emerged that Americans perhaps do not even ask themselves, but which is inevitable on this side of the ocean. Where do you drink wine during a match? **In the United States the answer comes in the form of RTD and 200 milliliter Tetra Pak containers.**

Let us try to imagine the same scene in an Italian stadium. Can you imagine people gulping wine directly from the neck of the bottle? **Perhaps you can imagine them with a glass goblet at the stadium, or more simply with a plastic cup in a village festival style.** This is perhaps the only container that our collective imagination already associates with wine drunk out of context, standing up, among friends.

If the problem of the sector is to find new consumption occasions without betraying the identity of the product, as anyone working in wine marketing now claims, the format is not just a small logistical detail. **Changing the container also means partly deciding what image of wine is being promoted.**

Finally there is the issue of inconsistency. **If the dominant narrative on the decline in wine consumption is that it is due to health concerns, advertising wine during sporting events could seem contradictory.** A rather convincing answer to this question arrived just a week ago.

If even Lewis Hamilton enjoyed a lot of sparkling wine on the podium to celebrate after his victory in Barcelona, we can rest easy because even champions treat themselves to some wine at the end of the race. The question that remains on the table is not whether wine has a place in sport, but for whom exactly it is entering.

Key points

1. New advertising channels are essential as the wine sector faces falling demand and an oversupply crisis.
2. Audience fragmentation means brands must adapt their message for traditional drinkers, beer rejecters, and complete novices.
3. Alternative packaging formats like plastic cups or Tetra Paks challenge the traditional and established image of wine.
4. Clear brand identity benefits individual wine companies more than it elevates the overall wine category itself.
5. Wine and sports sponsorships must define exactly who they are targeting rather than just buying visibility.