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CURRENT ISSUE THE BRIEFING

May 22, 2006

Basketball's big bounce

By CHRIS POWELL

Hockey may be Canada's favourite sport, but the fan base for basketball and soccer will grow faster in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal over the next decade thanks to their growing ethnic populations. New data from Solutions Research Group's Diversity Study shows that basketball is the preferred sport of fast-growing visible minorities, 37% of whom say it's their favourite—followed by soccer (36%), hockey (22%), football (12%) and baseball (11%). Basketball is currently the preferred sport of black and Chinese Canadians, while soccer is tops among those of West Asian and Hispanic backgrounds. Hockey is the most popular sport among South Asian Canadians, ahead of cricket, soccer and basketball. Though hockey will remain the most popular sport in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver for the next 10 years, SRG projects its fan base will grow just 19% versus 56% for basketball. Soccer also has momentum—something that Toronto's new Major Soccer League franchise (Toronto FC, which starts playing in 2007) can capitalize on. "Compared to 10 to 15 years ago, both basketball and soccer are far more cosmopolitan," notes SRG president Kaan Yigit. "They're fast growing, urban and have more sex appeal than before...For marketers they have become much more viable options."


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