

## Bulls go global with sponsorship deal

The global recognition that Michael Jordan gave the Chicago Bulls in the 1990s is still strong, and the team is capitalizing on it with its latest sponsorship deal.

The newest brand in the Bulls' corporate partner portfolio is one fans have likely never heard of—nor would I bet on them pronouncing it properly on the first try.

It's a foreign currency exchange company based in Poland called Cinkciarz (say it: „CHINK-chash”) that next year will open its first U.S. location at 401 N. Michigan Ave. It has signed on as an official Bulls sponsor in hopes of making a name for itself among Chicago's large Polish population.

With the seven-year deal, Cinkciarz becomes the Bulls' first-ever internationally headquartered sponsor with no major American presence—and could open up a new, lucrative sponsorship front for the franchise.

” *We really wanted to develop an international sales strategy because we believe the Bulls (were) the first global brand in sports,” thanks to the fame of Jordan and the team's dominance two decades ago*

- said Michael Reinsdorf, the Bulls' president and chief operating officer.

” *When you go outside the U.S., you can see the Bulls brand everywhere you go.*

With that in mind, Reinsdorf last year sent Bulls Vice President of Corporate Sales Scott Sonnenberg and Senior Manager of Business Development Will Syring on an expedition to Poland to meet with company officials when it became clear they would be expanding to Chicago.

” *We needed to show them that we had a real commitment to learning about their business*

- Reinsdorf said.

After nearly a year of negotiating, the result is a sponsorship deal that makes Cinkciarz the Bulls' first „official foreign currency partner,” with signage set to be displayed around the United Center during games, as well as on the team's mobile app.

” *The Chicago Bulls are an American legend, a pop culture icon. It means many positive things in Poland*

- said Cinkciarz Vice President Piotr Kicinski.

” *We want to be part of the story of the Chicago Bulls.*

Cinkciarz is not new to the sports sponsorship game. It is a top partner of the Polish national soccer team as well as Stelmet Zielona Gora, the defending champion of Poland's professional basketball league.

But Kicinski said the Bulls represent one of the most important partnerships in the company's history, a sentiment supported by the Polish media horde that attended an event today at the United Center announcing the deal.

Even former Polish President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Walesa, founder of the nation's famous Solidarity social movement in the 1980's, made the trip to Chicago to show support for the deal and for Cinkciarz's debut in the United States.

The team declined to disclose financial terms of the deal, but its significance will likely be more than just another feather in the Bulls' sponsorship cap.

It will help provide a blueprint for what Reinsdorf hopes will be a series of internationally headquartered companies that want to use the recognizable Bulls trademarks in their marketing efforts.

” *We're going to need to see the results in their business and tie it back to (how much could be attributed) to the sponsorship. That's going to take some time*

- he said.

” *We want to see how this relationship develops and how we impact their business.*

Other NBA teams have seen success with sponsors whose presence is mainly overseas, but such deals typically revolve around a star player. The Houston Rockets, for example, drew interest from a number of Chinese companies in 2002 when Yao Ming debuted with the team. More recently, the Cleveland Cavaliers have been seeking out Australian companies for partnerships based on surprise 2015 playoffs standout Matthew Dellavedova, as well as star guard Kyrie Irving, both of whom have ties to the country.

In the Bulls' case, the allure for foreign brands lies in the team's dynamic history and the fact that its social media following among NBA teams is second only to the Los Angeles Lakers. In addition, almost 70 percent of the Bulls' nearly 18 million Facebook fans are from outside the United States, according to Reinsdorf, and the number of Bulls games shown around the world on NBA TV is as many as any other team in the league.

” *I think that's what Cinkciarz saw when they started talking to us*

- said Reinsdorf.

” *The media impressions are significant.*

Besides signage during games and online, Cinkciarz's deal also aims to play off the fact that Chicago has one of the largest concentrations of Polish people outside of Poland. Through a digital sweepstakes, the company and team will give one Chicago fan a trip for two to Europe, including tickets to a Polish sporting event.

The Bulls begin the 2015-16 regular season at home against the Cavaliers on Oct. 27.