

MKT 410 Fall 2025

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

How women's sports teams can use social media marketing to connect authentically with Gen Z audiences while still monetizing them



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OVERVIEW

Our Guiding Question:

How can women's sports teams use social media marketing to connect authentically with Gen Z audiences while still monetizing them?



01

Build Star-Driven, Personality-Led Brands

Authentic player-focused content builds emotional connection and increases revenue

02

Bring Fans In From Everywhere

Tap into creators, pop culture, and cross-platform moments

03

Educate the Fan Experience

Use accessible, entertaining social media content to make the sport easier to follow

04

Build Communities that Show Up

Community involvement and shared identity drives frequent attendance and purchases

RECOMMENDATION #1

Why Personality Matters

Key Message: Gen Z doesn't just follow teams – they follow people

- 62% of women's sports fans follow athletes for personal content
- Women's sports fandom is emotion-driven, built on reliability and values
- Gen Z values authenticity and behind-the-scenes access
- Social media turns connection into monetization.

Takeaway: If fans connect to the person, they spend more on the product



RECOMMENDATION #1

Example: Minnesota Lynx

Key Message: Personality makes cultural moments which drive revenue

- **Napheesa Collier** leads Lynx's merch
- Social content: pre-game fit checks & behind the scenes builds **parasocial connection**
- **Courtney Williams & Natisha Hiedemann** leverage pink hair and StudBudz podcast

Takeaway: Sales & engagement grow when athletes identities show up in culture



A group of Houston Dash players in orange jerseys standing in front of a stadium. One player in the background is holding a blue banner that says "MD Anderson Cancer Center".

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RECOMMENDATION #1

Cross-Sport Proof

Key Message: Authentic personal branding works at every level

Houston Dash

- Fans engage most with players who have strong personal brands
- High-performing examples:
 - Michelle Alozie
 - Jane Campbell
 - Paige Nielsen
- Narrative posts = highest engagement & sponsor value

Other Examples

- **Phoebe Bacon x Jones Dairy Farm**
 - Humor and athlete identity fuel consumer interest
 - Strengthened brand-athlete-fan connection
- **Ilona Maher (Olympic rugby)**
 - Viral TikTok presence that highlights humor & personality
 - Converted social attention into major brand deals & national visibility
 - Demonstrates how athlete-first identities can drive fan growth beyond the sport

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RECOMMENDATION #1

What We Recommend

Key Message: Scale athlete-led storytelling into conversion channels

**Integrate merch into
storytelling moments
(fits, milestones,
personal causes, etc.)**

**Prioritize video-first
strategy: TikTok, Reels,
episodic doc-style
content**

**Co-create content with
athletes vs. controlling
the message**

**Track impressions,
clicks, and sales to
demonstrate ROI**

RECOMMENDATION #2

Gaining New Fans Through External Figures

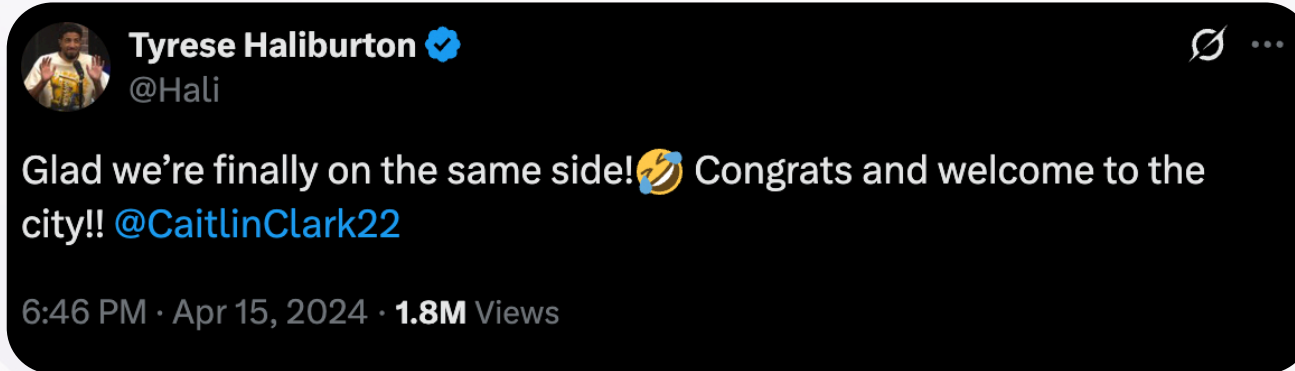
Key Message: Monetizing new fans with celebrity collaborations

- **Lil Wayne** promotes the Packers
 - Attends games + posts on social media
 - “Green & Yellow”
- **Patrick Mahomes**
 - Invests in the NWSL
 - Kansas City Current owner (2023)
- **Drake**
 - Toronto Raptors global ambassador
 - Promotes the Raptors at games and on social media
 - Merchandise and jersey collaboration

Takeaway: Fan investment and viewership increases when celebrities are involved with



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RECOMMENDATION #2

Supporting Women's Sports Through Men's Team Partnerships

Key Message: Men's sports leagues can increase women's sports buzz

- **Cross-league spotlight drives buzz**
 - Example: Steph Curry vs. Sabrina Ionescu at the 2024 NBA All-Star Game
- **Established men's teams help lift new leagues**
 - Seattle PFWHL (Seattle Torrent) collaborates with local pro teams to grow visibility and legitimacy
- **Amplifying reach through social channels**
 - Men's teams can use large followings to promote nearby women's programs and events, boosting awareness and attendance

Takeaway: Men's teams and leagues play a big role in women's sports success from a marketing perspective

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RECOMMENDATION #2

Sustaining Local Fans Through Authentic Partnerships

Key Message: Local partnerships that show personality and identity excite fans more

- **Shared athletes build continuity and loyalty**
 - Madison Night Mares roster includes many Badger Softball players
- **Authentic community sponsors drive engagement**
 - Madison partners actively invest in women's sports to boost visibility
- **Fun & personality-driven activations stand out**
 - Bubbl'r sponsored player bobblehead giveaways
 - Creative campaigns showcasing an athlete's individuality

Takeaway: When teams collaborate locally, fandom becomes rooted in community



RECOMMENDATION #2

What We Recommend

Key Message: Leverage celebrity star power and men's sports connections to boost women's sports viewership and revenue

Use celebrities to gain clicks and followers on social platforms

Harness men's sports to promote the women's side

Use local and authentic partnerships to keep the community involved and excited

Fun content showing player personality works well at a local level

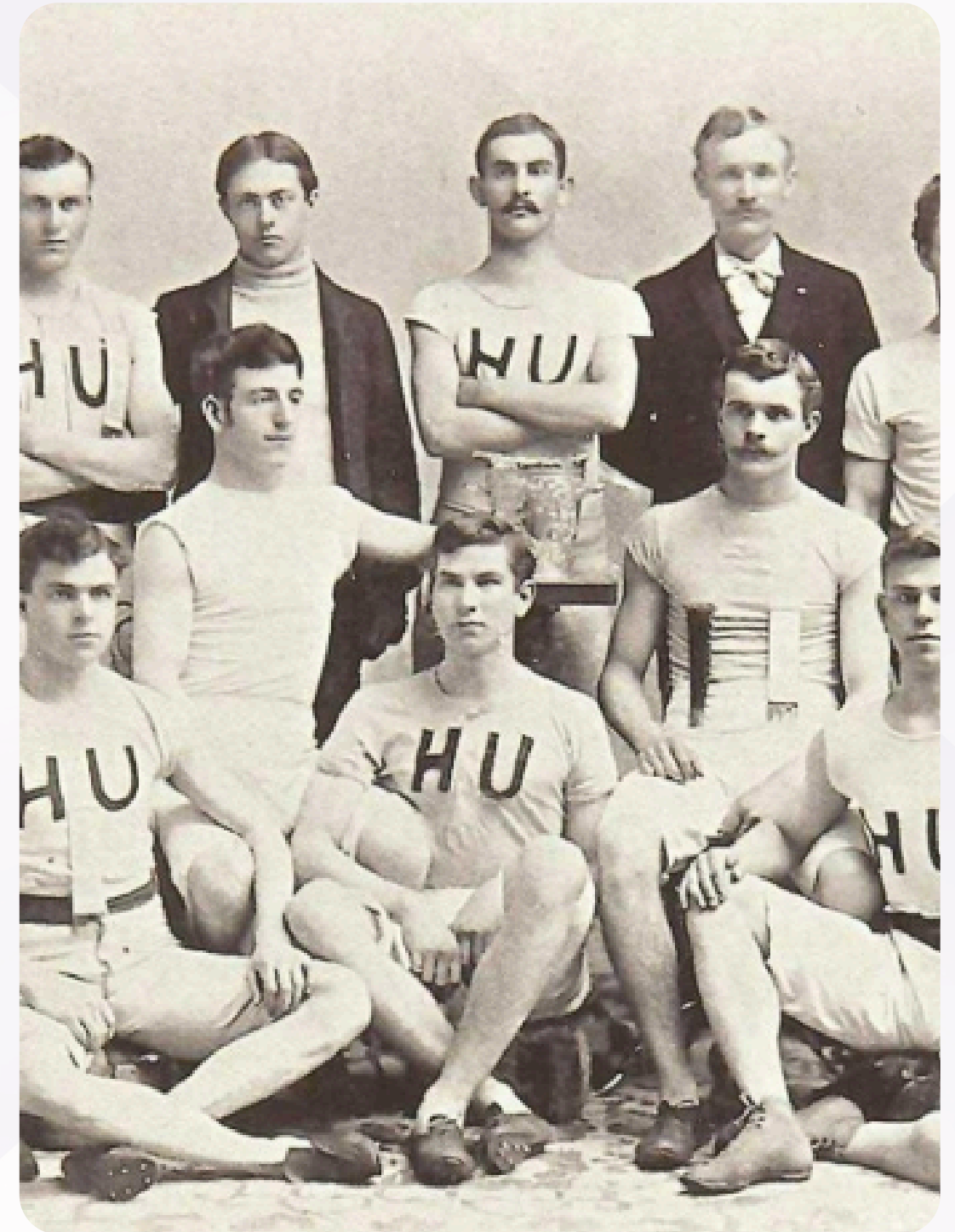
RECOMMENDATION #3

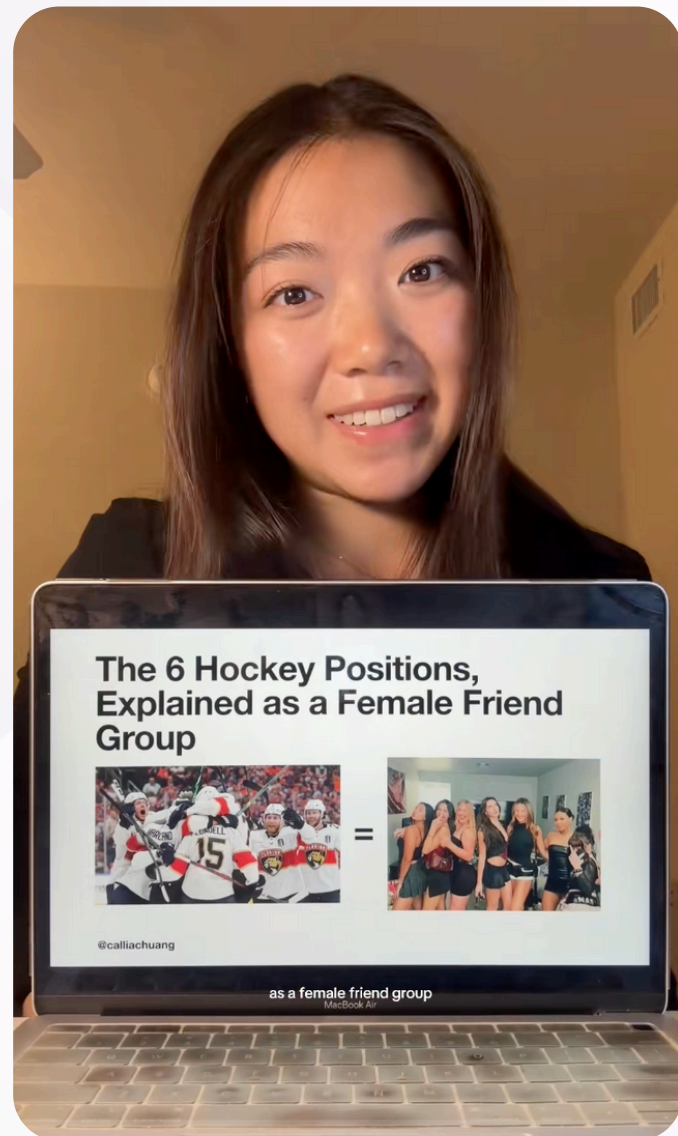
Overcoming the Knowledge Gap

Key Message: Women's sports must build fan education and cultural familiarity from scratch

- Men's leagues have 100+ years of visibility and fan legacy
- Fans need help understanding rules and a team's history
- Social media is the most efficient tool to close the gap

Takeway: Education is not optional, it's the foundation for a sustainable fandom and future revenue





RECOMMENDATION #3

Social Sports Content That Works for Gen Z

Key Message: Translate the sport into relatable language

- Gen Z prefers learning through authentic, bite-sized, culturally relevant content
- Humor + everyday analogies make the game approachable
- Short recurring video series featuring athletes explaining the sport through lifestyle metaphors
- Makes fans feel included

Takeaway: Educational content that uses metaphors and cultural references removes barriers and boosts repeat engagement



RECOMMENDATION #3

Teach Culture, Not Just Rules

Key Message: Sport identity and personal storytelling deepen emotional investment

- Showcase program history, local pride, and athletes' identity off the field
- Emphasize a consistent brand voice
- Establish a brand that feels conversational, empowering, and aligned with its players' identities
- Athlete-led content builds personal brands

Takeaway: When fans identify with the team, education turns into loyalty and loyalty turns into revenue

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RECOMMENDATION #3

What We Recommend

Key Message: Educate fanbase as a way to inspire and retain their support

**Create content that
simplifies complex
aspects of the sport**

**Educate fans about the
team's history and
culture**

**Build a recognizable and
consistent brand
identity**

**Create a consistent tone
across platforms**

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RECOMMENDATION #4

Build Communities that Show Up

Key Message: Women's sports teams establish fan bases through community involvement

- KC Current (NWSL) was founded in 2020
- KC Current players volunteer at local community events in partnership with United Way and YMCA
- The club's positive reputation makes it easier to sell group tickets
- Showing players off the pitch, volunteering enhances a female athlete's personal brand

Takeaway: Women's sports teams need to create a positive image in the local community

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RECOMMENDATION #4

Connect the team with personal friendships

Key Message: Women's sports teams establish fan bases through community involvement

- The "Blue Crew," KC Current's official supporters group
- "Blue Crew" hosts watch parties and after-game parties
- The community aspect is crucial to Gen-Z
- Increases fan engagement → easier monetization

Takeaway: If teams can effectively leverage personal connections tied to the team, it will drive higher engagement



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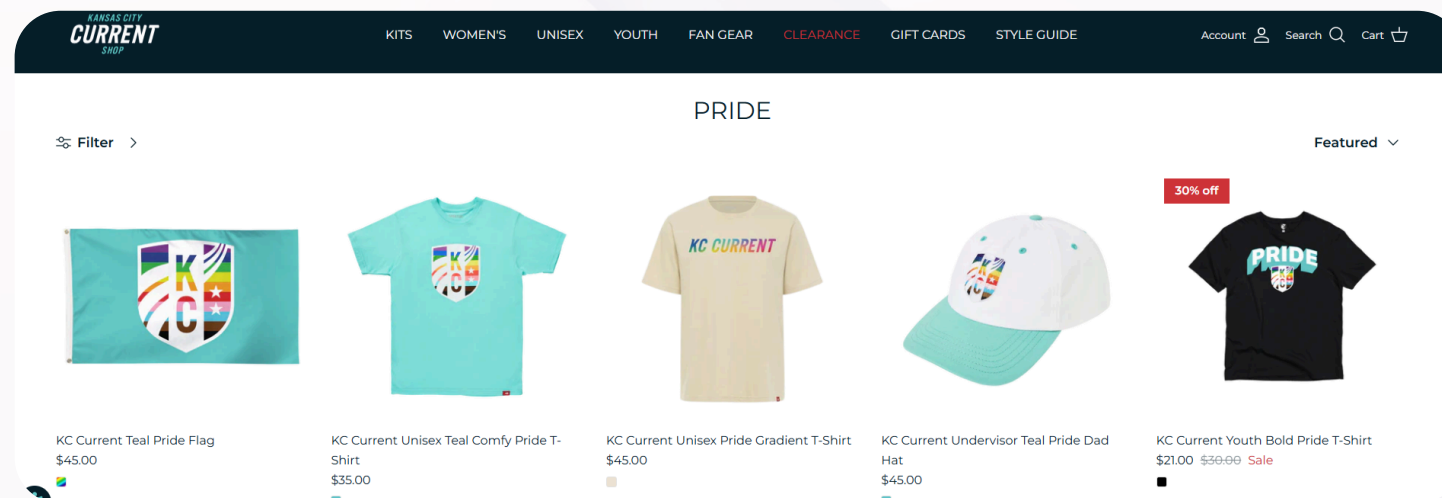
RECOMMENDATION #4

Take a stance

Key Message: Gen Z places great importance on an organization's social involvement

- Gen-Z wants brands to take a stance on political events
- KC Current supports the LGBTQIA+ community
- Product line of merchandise featuring the LGBTQIA+ color schema
- Social involvement attracts the Gen-Z audience that may not otherwise be interested

Takeaway: Becoming socially involved can attract new crowds and drive merchandise and ticket sales



RECOMMENDATION #4

Inspire the next generation of fans

Key Message: Gen-Z consumers place high importance on an organization's social involvement

- College athletic departments use institutional marketing
- Annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day as a promotion for a game
- Fans view female athletes as role models
- Higher attendance for the Gen-Z segment than at a typical game

Takeaway: Using institutional marketing, college athletic departments can increase attendance for women's games



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RECOMMENDATION #4

What We Recommend

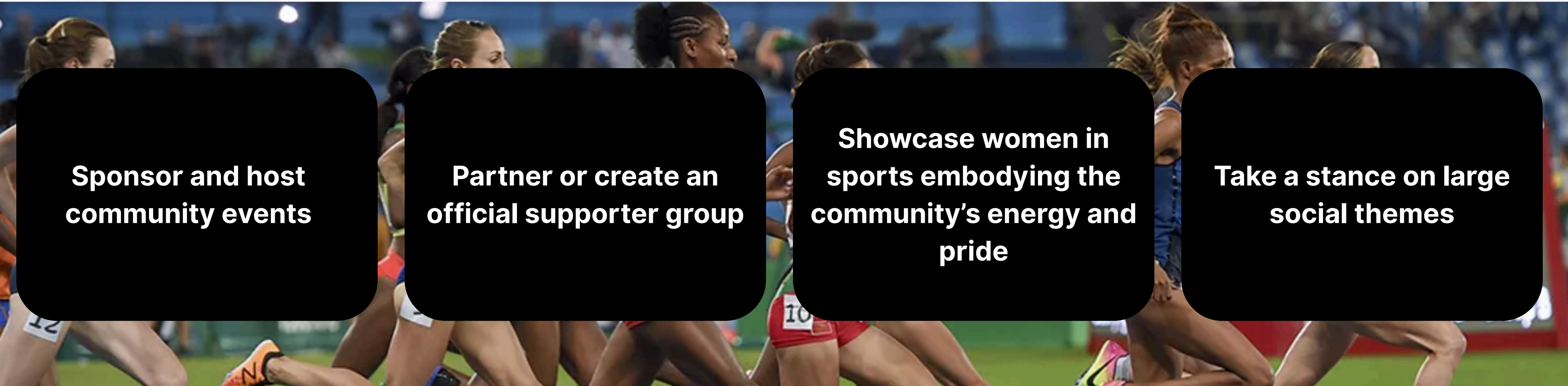
Key Message: Emphasize commitment to the community

**Sponsor and host
community events**

**Partner or create an
official supporter group**

**Showcase women in
sports embodying the
community's energy and
pride**

**Take a stance on large
social themes**



CONCLUSION

Key Message: Applying the four strategies holistically will yield the best results

- Unique opportunity to draw in Gen Z fans through social media
- Opportunity to create a distinct identity separate from its male counterparts
- Ability to create legacy and tradition from scratch

Takeaway: Women's teams can build and attract a unique fanbase through athlete personalities, fashion, sponsorships, etc. and building a social media platform that captures this

