

Broadcast Dysfunction: Sex, Violence, Alcohol, and the NFL

January 2009



CBS: Worst Week
TV show promo
6:00 pm EST / 3:00 pm PST



Fox: Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles
TV show promo
5:00 pm EST / 2:00 pm PST



CBS: Viagra® ad
2:00 pm EST / 11:00 am PST

Professional football is the most popular sport in America, and one big reason is that families enjoy watching it together. But they don't enjoy the advertisements and promotions that run during pro football game broadcasts. The sex, violence, alcohol, and erectile-dysfunction drugs marketed during pro football games create an environment that makes millions of parents squirm – and gives kids way too much information way too soon.

In fact, our review showed that one out of every six commercials shown during Sunday pro football broadcasts in fall 2008 contained messages and images that were inappropriate for young kids. And nearly half of the ads with sex and violence are network promotions for their own programs.

Professional football has been America's favorite sport for many years, and continues to grow more popular. Tens of millions of viewers watch pro football on network television each week, and regular season games shown nationally on CBS, FOX, and NBC average higher ratings than pro baseball and basketball playoffs and championships.¹

One big reason for pro football's popularity is the game's appeal for the whole family. On any given Sunday afternoon, millions of families gather in front of the television to root for their favorite teams.

- > According to Nielsen reports, more than 5.3 million kids ages 2-17 (and nearly 2.8 million kids ages 2-11) watch the average pro football game on broadcast television or ESPN each week.²
- > Pro football is by far the most popular sport among kids – nearly two-thirds (65.7%) of kids ages 7-11 say they watch pro football on television.³

"I wasn't too happy with ads for erectile-dysfunction drugs popping up every fifteen minutes whenever I watched a football game with my daughters in the room."

Barack Obama
The Audacity of Hope, 2006

¹ NFL: America's Choice, January 2007

² Nielsen ratings, as of 12/18/08

³ ESPN Sports Poll, 2007



ESPN: Ultimate Fighting
TV show promo
9:00 pm EST / 6:00 pm PST



NBC: Miller Lite ad
8:00 pm EST / 5:00 pm PST



FOX: 24: Redemption
TV show promo
4:15 pm EST / 1:15 pm PST

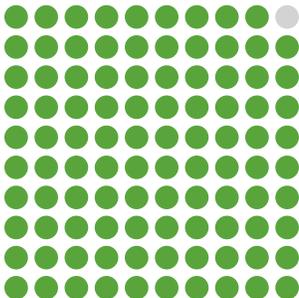
Pro football's appeal to families is easy to understand. In addition to being fun and exciting, the game offers many great lessons for parents to share with children, including the importance of teamwork and fair play.

Until the commercial breaks...

When we get to the ads, we see some very different messages – about some very interesting products and programs. But not messages or images that most parents want to discuss with their children on a Sunday afternoon.



3 out of 4 Common Sense Moms on Media (M.O.M.) members polled watch pro football on TV with their family



94.9% of M.O.M.s polled have seen commercials during pro football games that they think are inappropriate for their children

(Results based on a December 2008 – January 2009 Common Sense Moms on Media member survey.)

Common Sense Moms on Media is a group of engaged moms (and dads!) who take an active role in making media a positive influence in their kids' lives.

We know this because hundreds of parents have spoken to us about the intrusion of truly adult content into family programs. In response, Common Sense Media has spent the last four months reviewing the ads and network promos broadcast during pro football games. We reviewed nearly 60 games – more than 180 hours of coverage – and watched nearly 6,000 commercials. Here's what we found:

- > Forty percent of the games included advertisements for erectile-dysfunction drugs (Viagra® and Cialis®).
- > More than 500 of the advertisements involved significant levels of violence, including gun fights, explosions, and murders.
- > 300 of the advertisements were for alcohol.
- > 80 of the advertisements involved significant levels of sexuality, including scenes about prostitution and strippers.
- > Nearly half (44.7%) of the violent or sexual advertisements were promotions by the networks for their own programs.

“My son was walking around one day singing the Viagra® jingle. (He’s 9!)”

Common Sense M.O.M.



ESPN: Pride and Glory
Movie ad
9:15 pm EST / 6:15 pm PST



CBS: Coors Light ad
5:00 pm EST / 2:00 pm PST



CBS: Two and a Half Men
TV show promo
6:00 pm EST / 3:00 pm PST

Most pro football games are broadcast between 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm EST (10:00 am and 4:00 pm on the West Coast) – hours that have traditionally been considered time for family programming. Yet the promotional spots for TV shows – ads for movies, DVDs, and video games shown during these time periods were clearly intended for adult audiences only. Even if kids weren't the target of these promotional spots and ads, millions of them were still introduced to content that's simply not age appropriate.

“The violence and sexuality of some of the commercials that advertise primetime programs is wholly inappropriate for children.”

Common Sense M.O.M.

In fact, approximately 16% of the ads and promos during pro football broadcasts are about sex, violence, and alcohol.

Number of pro football games reviewed	57
Number of ads and promos	5778
Ads and promos with violence	519
Violent promos for network programs	242
Ads and promos with sexuality	80
Sexual promos for network programs	26
Ads and promos with alcohol	300

In addition, more than 360 ads and promos (an additional 6% of the total reviewed) were for junk food and soda – an irresponsible message to send to kids, especially when juxtaposed with the NFL's new Play 60 public service campaign, which encourages kids to be more physically active and it recognizes that, as a result of the growing epidemic of childhood obesity, “this may be the first generation not to outlive its parents.”

“It makes it extremely difficult to try to raise girls who have a positive self esteem and appropriate values when you have to constantly explain why some people think it is perfectly normal to appear scantily clad on national television.”

Common Sense M.O.M.



ESPN: Cialis® ad
9:00 pm EST / 6:00 pm PST



CBS: Grand Theft Auto IV
Video game ad
1:30 pm EST / 10:30 am PST



CBS: Bud Light ad
4:30 pm EST / 1:30 pm PST

Parents want to watch pro football with their kids without getting sucker punched by ads aimed at grown-ups. They want America's game to be fun for every American family, including our kids. So, who's responsible for responsible broadcasts?

"If you're involved with the N.F.L., you represent the N.F.L., you are held to a higher standard, and you need to be accountable, and there is a certain standard of behavior that you're going to have to live up to, from the commissioner on down."

N.F.L. Commissioner Roger Goodell
The New York Times, June 2, 2007

Commissioner Goodell is right. We should hold the entire league to a higher standard, from the commissioner on down. And we should also hold the major TV networks responsible.

Visit www.commonsensemedia.org/bad-ads today and email Commissioner Goodell to let him know how you feel about the ads and promos shown during professional football games.

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