

PRISM AWARD SUBMISSION

AGENCY: BYDESIGN COMMUNICATIONS
CATEGORY: BEST USE OF AN EVENT TO BUILD REPUTATION
CLIENT: ORLANDO PIRATES
CAMPAIGN: ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK - ORLANDO PIRATES 2021 NEW KIT INTRODUCTION



OPENING STATEMENT

For football clubs, launching their new kit is a highlight of the season. For footballers, kit is a part of who they are as a team. For fans, it's an emotional connection to the players, the team and the game. But 2020 changed the game. So, Orlando Pirates changed their game and introduced a totally new look: A bright orange 'away' jersey that's as different from their traditional black 'home' kit as it's possible to get. The challenge was launching the new kit in the middle of a pandemic, when mass events are illegal and even intimate events require social distancing.





STATEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

All over the world, sports stadiums are empty, athletes feel isolated and fans feel disconnected. But the launch of Orlando Pirates' new season kit gave us the opportunity to renew the energy that drives a professional football team to achieve great things, and to reconnect the team with their fans and media.

So, we turned what would traditionally have been a single launch event into a series of fan interactions. The official press conference has only 10 attendees but thousands joined online. We secured broadcast interviews using multiple spokespeople. We delivered jerseys to hundreds of fans at their homes. All of these combined to create rich, seed able content and mass impact.



RESEARCH CONDUCTED

- We reviewed social media conversations to better understand how fans feel about kit launches.
- We've been nurturing media and influencer relationships over several years. This allowed us to tap into their feelings about Orlando Pirates and kit launches in general, and their feelings about being distanced from both the game and the players due to the lockdown.

Key insights:

We learned that even the most loyal fans don't see kit launches as something that they connected with. The perception is that launches are generally pitched at the media and the fans don't feel included.

Orlando Pirates' fan-base is representative of society in all respects. They were socially isolated and uncertain about the future in all respects. They needed to feel like they were part of something. Something meaningful.

The pool of footballing media and influencers is relatively small and a bit jaded. With lockdown restrictions, there have been few opportunities to wow this group with face-to-face interactions and events. The absence of traditional press conferences has also meant it's been harder to get access to the players and thus more difficult to create compelling content.



PLANNING

Based on our research, we built our strategy around connection and engagement.

We had to create an opportunity to bring the fans to the centre of the launch and bring all the stakeholders – the club, players, media and fans – together in a celebration of the brand and the game, but in a socially distanced world.



Building on our key insights and our client's expectations, we had **three** main objectives:

1. **Support the sale of as many Pirates jerseys as possible**
To introduce the new Orlando Pirates replica jersey to as many media and fans as possible, within the lockdown restrictions.
2. **Stand out in a cluttered market through widespread media coverage and social media engagement**
With online and broadcast content being the primary platforms available during lockdown, we needed to create a premium seeding experience that would be compliant, unique and memorable, and still generate mass reach.
3. **Re-kindle an emotional connection with and between the media, influencers and fans**
The challenge was to create a digital experience that fans could be part of. We need to give the fans an opportunity to connect with their team

Our strategy hinged on two simple key messages. The first is that our brand unites our fans even when we can't play in packed stadiums. The second is that our kit isn't just something we wear when we play. It's part of who we are as a team.



To achieve this, we would have to:

- Create content to be used on social media.
- Design a robust media engagement plan, which included media packs and a press conference.
- Create an influencer experience that fans could connect with.
- Make fans feel included and valued.

EXECUTION

The football world runs on a tight schedule, with seasons, matches and tournaments planned years in advance. Significant events, like kit launches, are planned tangentially – until COVID-19 threw everything into disarray.

This year, we had to finalise the launch around the last-minute adjusted match schedules (and physical lockdown restrictions) and were able to unveil the new season's kit mere days before it would be worn on-field for the first time and available for purchase in-store and online.

Pre-launch plan:

Key to our plan was the knowledge that Thulani Hlatswayo, the current Bafana Bafana captain, has just 'signed' for OP. We used this landmark signing across all platforms for added excitement.

Kit reveal: To create visual material for media and influencers to seed on launch day, we filmed a video and did a photo shoot with players in their new kit.

Media event: We secured the attendance of our top 10 media at the in-person media launch in main team sponsor adidas' flagship store in Sandton City. (We could only accommodate ten people due to COVID-19 restrictions.)

Fan participation: We partnered with influencers, and developed social content, to invite fans to join the press conference via Facebook live – a first in terms of media event participation.

Top-tier broadcast interviews: We arranged a full day of interviews starting with SABC Morning Live, eTV Morning Show and Newzroom Afrika Breakfast Show, followed by a series of live radio interviews.



Launch day:

The planned elements worked together seamlessly to create mass reach, buy-in and a sense of togetherness.

Broadcast interviews and press conference: The interviews and media event happened as planned.

Our 10 top media attended the physical press conference. Spokespeople included Thulani Hlatswayo, Happy Jele (Club Captain), representatives from OP management and sponsor adidas, with veteran sportscaster Thomas Mlambo as the MC.

Excited by the influencer content showcasing the new kit, thousands of fans joined in real-time via Facebook Live, and the Orlando Pirates app.



Jersey hand-overs: We hand-delivered personalised jerseys to over 100 key people, across four cities, using 15 delivery teams. (You read that right.)

Each delivery team drove a branded orange Ford Mustang, team sponsor. The entourage in each car brought the energy, drama, noise and colour that could ordinarily be expected at a live match. We created a VVIP seeding experience, with famous names in the drop-off teams including Lucky Lekgwathi (OP's most-revered player), DJ Shimza, and Thomas Mlambo, and other big names in the football world.

We filmed the handovers on the recipients' phones so that they could share the experience with their followers – turning Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube black and orange for days to come.

Keep the momentum going: We sustained the launch momentum with further product seeding over the next week, piggy-backing on the hype already created.





EVALUATION

1. **Simple:** The jersey sold out in a matter of days. This was the first time that Orlando Pirates had an orange jersey (which happened to sell out faster).
2. Marketing and communications validation is evident when other relevant big brands join in the conversation (even Chicken Licken and Vodacom Soccer trended on the day due to the tweets below)



3. Stand out in a cluttered market:

- 122 pieces of coverage across online, print and broadcast
- 262 posts across Instagram and Twitter
- Overall media AVE: R10,119,584
- Overall media reach: 49,534,519
- Overall social media AVE: R50,446,559
- Overall social media reach: 28,018,244



4. Re-kindle emotional connections:

- 10 top-tier media houses attended the physical press conference, with many more joining online.
- A total of 3,072 fans joined the virtual conference (live).

In Closing

A few weeks after the unveiling of their new season's kit, Orlando Pirates won their first major trophy in six years - we couldn't have planned a better finale to the launch.



1192 words (excl Opening Statement and Headings)



RE: PRISM Awards Entry - Entry Submission & Client Email



Thandi Merafe <thandi@orlandopiratesfc.co

To ✓ Peter Mokoko



11:26

This message was sent with High importance.

To whom it may concern,

This email hereby certifies that I, Thandi Merafe, in my capacity as head of Media & Supporters at Orlando Pirates acknowledge and endorse ByDesign Communications' use of the "Orlando Pirates Kit Launch" submission into the PRISM Awards for 2020.

Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact the undersigned at Orlando Pirates.

I trust this email finds you well.

Best Regards,

