

October 2007

## Sodexo joint venture lifts sales at Rugby World Cup

The Rugby World Cup 2007 has been the most successful in the history of the sport in terms of sales of corporate hospitality and travel packages.

The sales of corporate hospitality packages reached 110,000, which is more than twice the number sold for the RWC 2003 in Australia. Take up of travel packages hit 185,000, again more than double than for the tournament four years ago.

Remarkably, the combined total of corporate hospitality and travel packages – 295,000 – is a third more than the amount sold at both of the last two Rugby World Cups put together, and the success is in large part down to the vision of the International Rugby Board (IRB), which organises the four-yearly competition.

In 2004, the IRB signed a groundbreaking deal which allowed a single supplier - RTH'07, a joint venture between Sodexo and the Mike Burton Group - to look after the marketing and distribution of both types of packages, a first in sports marketing.

With overall control, RTH'07 was able to tightly restrict the number of tickets which fall into the hands of black marketers and also offer an innovative hospitality experience, marrying excellent food with exciting multi-media displays, all designed to set the RWC 2007 apart from other competitions. RTH'07 appointed 25 official travel agents and nine corporate hospitality agencies to sell the packages.

Tony Barnard, head of marketing and communications for RTH'07, said: "The IRB wanted to raise the bar in terms of the sheer quality of the hospitality in order to make the RWC 2007 an unforgettable experience and to set a new standard for people who enjoy hospitality at major sporting events.

"To reach the platinum hospitality area, fans have to walk through an atmospheric tunnel which is ten metres long and has a vivid and captivating display of life-sized rugby images. When people emerge, to the sound of cheering crowds and playing bands, the sense of excitement is palpable."

Sodexo and the Mike Burton Group are both formidable names in world sport and have worked together providing corporate hospitality at major sporting events for 23 years.

Sodexo provided catering, ticketing and transport services for the last Rugby World Cup and provided 50,000 meals a day to spectators, athletes and officials at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002, and corporate hospitality at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Mike Burton Group are appointed official corporate hospitality licensed operators at Twickenham, the home of England rugby, and were the official travel agent for the British & Irish Lions tour to New Zealand in 2005.

The Rugby World Cup is the third largest sporting event in the world behind the Olympics and the soccer World Cup. It is watched by more than three billion people and attracts two million spectators, and raises funds to help pay for the expansion and development of the game worldwide.

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## About Sodexo

In the UK and Ireland, Sodexo employs 48,000 employees, and provides food and facilities management services to clients at over 2,300 locations in the business and industry, education, healthcare, leisure and defence sectors.

Many companies rely on Sodexo for cost-effective solutions to their employee or hospitality catering, or to deliver services such as cleaning, reception, switchboard and help desks, mailroom, reprographics and grounds maintenance.

Sodexo is part of Sodexo Alliance the leading global provider of food and management services, with more than 332,000 employees at 28,300 sites in 80 countries.

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