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## World-class entertainment: Rugby World Cup

In November 2004, Sodexo and the Mike Burton Group set up one of the most innovative sports hospitality ventures in the world: Rugby Travel & Hospitality (RTH). Its purpose, to create, manage and implement the Official Travel and Hospitality Programme for Rugby World Cup.

### An unrivalled success

The partnership has been a huge success, with sales of Rugby World Cup hospitality packages in 2007 exceeding all past records. In recognition, RTH won the gold award at the global SportBusiness Sports Event Management Awards in London in November 2008.

‘For France 2007, we sold 30 per cent more hospitality packages than the two previous Rugby World Cups put together,’ says Andrew Burton, chief executive of the Mike Burton Group. ‘In total, 108,500 ticket-inclusive hospitality packages were sold across the four product types – Sky Box, Platinum, Prestige and Premier – at the 48 Rugby World Cup matches, staged at 12 different venues. We exceeded expectations, and successfully raised the bar for the standard of hospitality at major international sporting events.’

### A perfect partnership

‘We could not have done it without Sodexo,’ continues Andrew. ‘RTH draws equally on the Mike Burton Group and Sodexo’s different high-end skills, resources and abilities, from catering provision to project management.’

‘From the outset, Sodexo understood the importance and long-term potential of the project – and, as a result, allocated dedicated staff with the relevant ability and experience.’

‘Working with Sodexo has been successful because of the people – Sodexo people are incredibly easy to get on with. They’re positive, proactive and understand the business. We have a strong professional relationship built on mutual benefits, trust, good communication and an understanding of each other’s needs and objectives.’

### More than good food

The four yearly Rugby World Cup is the world’s third largest sporting event after the Olympic Games and football’s FIFA World Cup™. With the 2007 event held in France, and 2011 hosted in New Zealand, the event requires a huge global effort.

‘A common misconception is that the contract is just about catering,’ says Andrew. ‘But it’s so much more than that. It is actually a commercial ticketing contract. RTH purchases and secures the rights to manage and deliver global hospitality, putting in place the structure and strategy to maximise hospitality and travel sales.’

Together, the Mike Burton Group and Sodexo have proved their innovative and superior quality delivery through RTH and have been reappointed by Rugby World Cup Limited for the global travel and hospitality programme for 2011.

### Sodexo services:

- Catering
- Corporate hospitality packages, including sales and marketing
- Entertainment

