

Soccer mom cashes in on 15 minutes of fame

Now that you've noticed, here's what we soccer moms really want

By Nancy Thalia Reynolds

It seems like only yesterday I was facing imminent exile to demographic Siberia. As the mother of two children (one who plays soccer), with a mortgage and child-rearing expenses eating up my disposable income and a career and child-rearing responsibilities eating up my disposable time, I was about as attractive to television programmers and advertisers as an Amish farmwife.

Then, as I watched TV coverage of the summer Olympics, I realized something had changed. Instead of the sight of burly Romanian weight lifters, I was treated to hours of women's gymnastics, heartstring-tugging stories of bulimic athletes, and the lowdown on track-and-field rivalries, all set to elevator music.

The trend continued. Over the summer, prime time newscasts offered stories on breast cancer, childcare and hormones. The Republican Convention featured true confessions of rape and Elizabeth Dole's Oprah-style, audience-

participation tour de force.

By September, the phrase "soccer moms" rang out everywhere. Republican strategists figured out that something more substantive than Dan Quayle's pretty face was required to bridge the gender gap. Democrats pandered to us like crazy with V-chips and longer hospital maternity stays. Today, soccer moms are the hottest commodity. So, to take full advantage of my demographic 15 minutes of fame, I share the following:

Cars: We want a minivan with the safety record of a 1980s Volvo Wagon. Instead of Jonathan Pryce, the Infiniti spokesnob, choose Val Kilmer or Brad Pitt to advertise features such as a passenger-side airbag that doesn't endanger infants in car seats.

Clothes: Fashion magazine editors may be surprised to discover how few of us sport leather bustiers and plaid golf pants as we shuttle our kids to soccer games. What we seek in home- and office-wear is simple: durable pantyhose and clothes so wrinkle-free and stain-

resistant that they can be crumpled up, driven over in a muddy 4-by-4, then dusted off and worn to work.

TV: How about that V-chip? Democratic strategists picked up an important fact about us soccer moms: We don't want our kids exposed to graphic shootings or detailed accounts of child abuse.

News junkies may find it hard to do without a local news fix from KOMO, KING, and KIRO, but sacrifice is part of any parent's job. As for prime time programming, give me programs on how to get my child to practice the violin.

Supermarkets: Why, when I am efficiently stocking my cart with groceries, does a salesperson

hail me and inquire if I'm "finding everything OK?" What are you afraid of? That, disappointed with my failure to track down the olives where you hid them in the ethnic food section 18 miles away from the rest of the condiments, I'll sadly leave the store and abandon all thoughts of feeding my family? If you really wanted to help, you'd have located the dairy, produce, and meat sections

together instead of so far apart that I have to pass every other item in the store (including the Oreos you rightly figured my kids will clamor for) to get around.

Health care: We would prefer to avoid being shuffled by our employers from one medical plan to another every six months. Quite a few of us would happily trade in physician choice for never having to fill out more medical paperwork. I personally would donate a kidney in order not to have to.

Wow, I'm really getting into this! Let's see, cars, clothes, TV, supermarkets, healthcare, what am I forgetting? That's right, the election!

Here's the deal. You want our vote? Do what marketers and advertisers in every other nook and cranny of modern capitalism do: Tell us you'll match your opponent's offer and beat it by 5 percent. For example, tell us that your Republican administration and Congress will trump the Democrats and mandate a minimum 72-hour hospital maternity stay. Give us coupon books to redeem promises with. Above all, show us how your candidate will save us time (a commodity we would give just about anything to get more of) and money, to help us achieve that ultimate soccer mom dream: soccer nannies.



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