



AON

PERFECT MATCH

Meet the alum managing one of the largest soccer sponsorship deals in history

Turning an athletics store into the 100-year-old Manchester United soccer stadium for an evening wasn't easy. "The Theatre of Dreams, ladies and gentlemen, holds 75,000 people," bellowed Alan Keegan, the British team's announcer, from a turf-carpeted stage. "Make the noise of 75,000 people."

Michigan Avenue's Niketown roared with the cheers of Aon employees, their families, clients, and members of the international media. The July 14 event, which Keegan emceed, marked the unveiling of the new Manchester United jersey, spurred by the June 2009 sponsorship contract between the soccer team and Chicago-based Aon Corporation, a leading provider of risk management and human resource solutions. The four-year, \$130-million deal, which replaced longtime sponsor AIG, marks one of the highest sponsorship prices in soccer history—some five times more than any other team in the English Premier League.

As global chief marketing officer, Philip Clement, AM'93, MBA'93, manages the sponsorship for Aon and was a member of the team who secured the partnership—he was one of the two Aon executives who received the original jersey mock-up (CEO Greg Case was the other). After AIG's financial meltdown in 2008, Clement was strongly urged by members of Aon's global executive committee to look into the sponsorship's availability. Simultaneously, Manchester United was on the hunt for a global company with a solid balance sheet to help the team gain a foothold in new markets. Aon scored high on both counts. With more than 500 offices around the world, the company earned \$747 million in net income for its stockholders in 2009, despite the turbulent economy.

Designed by Nike, and crafted out of recycled water bottles, the trademark red home shirt—Manchester United's nickname is the "Red Devils"—now features the Aon logo in bold white letters. Its fabric is lighter than previous jerseys, and 200 tiny, laser-cut holes in spaces Nike calls "ventilation zones" allow air to pass across the torso. "I am probably more than a

little bit biased on this," admits Clement, one of only five people who saw the final jersey before it was unveiled, "but I see it as a piece of modern art."

More importantly, Aon hopes teaming up with what is perhaps the world's most famous team will finally boost its brand awareness, says Clement, who has been trying to increase the company's global recognition since he took the position in 2005. "Some organizations make decisions like this based on what I would call almost a religious belief that sponsorship is good," he explains, pointing to the benefits of his econometrics training at the Harris School. "[Our] decision had to be made by numbers."

With more than six million Manchester United jerseys sold around the world each year, those numbers spoke loud and clear. The team "has 333 million fans globally," Clement explains, "more than every man, woman, and child in the United States, Canada, and Australia."

Clement and his team have since joined the ranks of other full-fledged Red Devil fans—almost 300 employees were at the July 14 jersey unveiling at Niketown, and hundreds of others were at simultaneous parties around the world. That day, Clement notes, the hits on Aon's website went up 176 percent.

The company also introduced a new slogan, "Aon United," marking the beginning of a five-year plan to unify recent acquisitions like human resources consulting firm Hewitt Associates, which Aon bought in July. "The notion of how to bring a firm together globally around one theme, one idea, was difficult and pretty evasive," Clement adds, "until something like Manchester United came up." ■

Philip Clement

Global Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
Aon Corporation