Who is Dairy Milk sponsoring in the New York City Marathon? Every female runner who joins its team

The category of MilkPEP will match the registration cost for every woman who signs up in donations to Girls on the Run.

Any female-identifying runner can join Team Milk by signing up on the website for Dairy Milk, a category of the Milk Processor Education Program, a marketing and education hub for U.S. milk companies. Sponsored runners will receive branded gear; expert advice on running, stretching and nutrition; access to an on-site lactation pod; a cheer squad shouting words of encouragement and a recovery station with chocolate milk.

The 26.2 campaign will appear on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. A giant glass being filled with milk appeared on the Nasdaq building in Times Square this week, and cameras set up on race day will capture runners on digital billboards. The campaign is running through the day of the marathon, November 6.

MilkPEP’s agency of record, Gale, handled creative, strategy, public relations and Dairy Milk’s website for the campaign.

Dairy Milk is bringing attention to the disproportionate number of sponsorships female athletes receive compared to their male counterparts. Sponsorships for women’s sports comprised just 0.4% of total sports sponsorship between 2011 and 2013, according to Women in Sport, a charity organization focused on breaking down gender inequalities in sports.

“These amazing women who are running deserve to be sponsored just like everybody else,” said Yin Woon Rani, MilkPEP’s CEO.

The 26.2 campaign also puts Dairy Milk further into the performance drink category. According to its website, fat-free chocolate milk replaces glycogen, reduces muscle breakdown and provides essential electrolytes after exercise.

Milk has a storied marketing past with athletes. Tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams, Super Bowl legend Tom Brady and Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky have all donned a creamy white mustache. But milk isn’t often mentioned in discussions about performance beverages, which is why 26.2 is designed to surprise consumers who don’t know the athletic benefits milk provides, Woon Rani said.

She added that breaking into the performance-drink market is challenging given how much marketing spend competitors have.

“We’re very outspent by our competitors,” she said. “We’re never going to be able to outspend everybody, so we just have to outsmart them.”

She declined to provide budget information for 26.2, but said that MilkPEP operates with an $80 million national budget annually.

PepsiCo invested $550 million in performance energy drink company Celsius on August 1.

Dairy Milk has been present at marathons for more than five years, Woon Rani said. This year, it plans to invest more in national marketing leading up to the race, instead of focusing more on its regional presence on race day.

The registration fee for every female runner that joins Team Milk will be matched in donations to Girls on the Run, a national nonprofit organization that designs programs for girls between the third and eighth grades. Programs are designed to improve girls’ social, emotional, physical and behavioral skills.

Dairy Milk will also sponsor e-athletes who join Team Milk at TwitchCon in October.

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