

# Sporting Goods



## THE OPPORTUNITY

Mexico's deeply-rooted love of sports, combined with a growing enthusiasm for non-traditional games and leisure activities, is creating an expanding market for sporting goods.

- Baseball and basketball now have strong followings, especially in the north.
- In-line skating is increasingly popular.
- Golf and tennis are attracting wealthier Mexicans.
- There is a growing interest in personal fitness.
- Poor air quality is driving a strong demand for indoor exercise equipment and sports such as racquetball and squash.

Long-run market opportunities in this sector are further supported by a young and rapidly-growing population.

## SPORTS AND THE MEXICAN CULTURE

Sports are deeply rooted in Latin American culture. Pre-Columbian Meso-American societies, including the Aztecs who founded Mexico City, played a ball game known in the Nahuatl language as *ollama*. This game provided ritual, entertainment and gambling, and sometimes

served as a form of warfare. *Ollama* was played with a rubber ball and had characteristics in common with modern soccer and basketball. The game was extremely violent and the losing team sometimes lost their lives in a ritual sacrifice following the game. European explorers observed this game and brought the rubber balls back to Europe, where they replaced the wooden balls in use at that time. This led to the development of modern ball games.

Modern Mexico continues to be known for dramatic and violent spectator sports. Bullfighting, professional wrestling (*lucha libre*) and boxing are all popular. Julio César Chávez, the professional boxer, is a national hero. In spite of their popularity, these sports are dwarfed by soccer, or *fútbol*, as it is known in Mexico. This is a participatory as well as a professional sport. Mexicans of all ages and socio-economic groups play the game, and soccer fields can be found in even the smallest and poorest villages.

A number of less traditional sports have begun to challenge the pre-eminence of soccer, and this is driving an expanding market for

## SUMMARY REPORT

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