

MusclePharm Signs Johnny Manziel; Takes the Low Road

written by Mike Roberto | August 4, 2014



MusclePharm today announced their multi-year endorsement agreement with Johnny Manziel, much to the dismay of several of their customers.[1,2]

First, allow me to preface this with two notes:

1. I am a lifelong Cleveland Browns fan. By extension, I am therefore a “Johnny Manziel fan”, albeit very begrudgingly.
2. You can’t argue with MusclePharm’s success, and I am overall supportive of the brand. They continue to grow and sell, and are actually profitable this year.

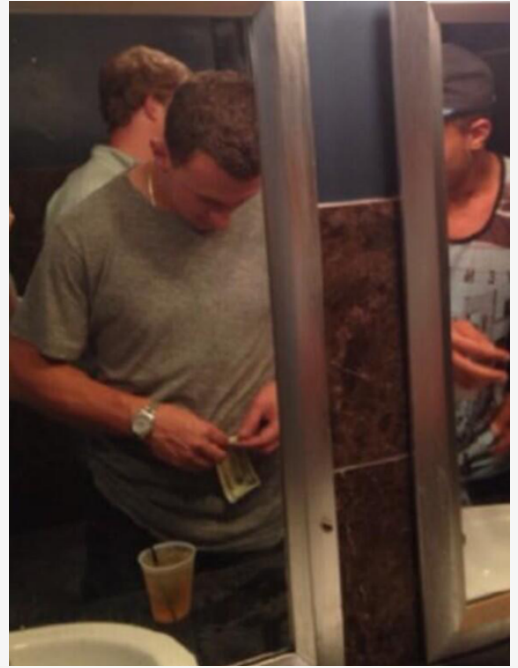
But with that said, **this deal is a bad idea.**

Risks vs. Rewards

The problem is that more bad than good can (and likely will) come from it.

Manziel has proven to be one extremely polarizing character, ultimately due to his unsportsman ego and raucous nightlife behavior (which he is of course entitled to).

I believe that it is truly only a matter of time until he lands himself in trouble.



This likely doesn't end well for Cleveland... or for Muscle Pharm.

For instance, he was recently pictured rolling up a one hundred dollar bill in a Las Vegas bathroom. It's not hard to imagine what that was for, and people don't typically do things like this "just once." If you're rolling the bill, you're not a first-timer.

It's all good press... until it's not

I remember a great conversation I had at the Arnold Expo a few years back with the manufacturer of a popular clothing company. He sponsored a notorious individual from MTV's *The Jersey Shore*, but told me that he could not *wait* until this individual's contract was up.

This character was simply a walking piece of trouble, and were it all to blow up, this CEO did *not* want his brand anywhere near it.

I asked, *"There's no such thing as bad press though, right?"*

To which he responded, *"That's the dumbest saying ever."*

At the time, they were excited to sponsor a Jersey Shore castmember – it got some attention (sound familiar?) and it suited their demographic.

But over time... the pleasure wore off and all that was left was a **black cloud of risk** overhanging the contract.

That black cloud is likely where MusclePharm will find themselves at some point in this contract if Manziel continues to do what he does – all while sitting on the bench providing little to no benefit.

Where are the pros to these cons?

Which brings up the next question... where are the “rewards” in this?

At the time of this signing, Manziel has yet to play a single NFL snap. He is slated to be the backup, and is currently losing in the quarterback “competition” to an underrated Brian Hoyer.

Meanwhile, Manziel should technically not be using MusclePharm’s products, since they’re no longer NSF Certified for Sport.

This isn’t MMA – you can’t wear a non-sanctioned logo on the NFL field. Visibility from this will likely be low.

So all you’re getting are some questionable pictures for your Facebook campaigns and a few new customers in Cleveland, Ohio.

Granted, the kid’s got 1.1 million Twitter followers, but will that translate to new customers? Or just higher costs?

“There’s no such thing as bad press though, right?”

“That’s the dumbest saying ever.”

The Jekyll and Hyde of MusclePharm’s Marketing

From an outsider’s perspective, it’s been interesting to watch MusclePharm’s moves. Every single good decision has been countered by a seemingly bad one.

For instance,



Unlike Manziel, Kaepernick has proven himself at the professional level

High Road: Sponsoring Colin Kaepernick and Eric Decker after their successes in the NFL.

- **Low Road:** Sponsoring Tiger Woods, effectively getting Gatorade’s sloppy seconds
- **High Road:** Signing Arnold Schwarzenegger and giving him a spin-off line
- **Low Road:** Making Arnold’s product line into one massive piece of overpriced garbage (except for maybe one product).
- **Bad/Risky Idea:** Reformulating Assault, a top-selling pre workout supplement.

- **High Road:** Actually pulling off the Assault reformulation with a very solid formula
- **High Road:** Preparing to go after the sports drink market with a superior product after years of non-innovation from Gatorade and Powerade.
- **Low Road:** Sponsoring a polarizing, hot-headed NFL rookie who has yet to prove anything on the field... just for some attention.

With that said, MSLP typically ends up coming out on top. Throwing money at problems seems to do that in this business.

So, if it works out for them, then good – because that means it will have worked out for Cleveland and the sports nutrition industry as well.

But if it blows up – and that's what I'm putting *my* money on – it will be fun to sit back and enjoy the popcorn.

References

1. *Facebook.com; MusclePharm*
3. *@BradPyatt; Twitter.com*