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**PRESS RELEASE
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**The 2012 Brand Keys Sports Fan Index
Scores MLB Team Loyalty Winners and Losers.
Phillies, Yanks, and Sox at the Top; Pirates, Orioles, and Royals Trail.**

NEW YORK, NY April 4, 2012 - The Major League Baseball season opens today with the cry of 'play ball' accompanied with the release of Brand Keys' 2012 *Sports Loyalty Engagement Index*, the 20th annual fan survey conducted by Brand Keys, Inc. (www.brandkeys.com), the New York-based brand and customer loyalty research consultancy.

Brand Keys Sports Loyalty Index was designed to help professional sports team management identify precise fan loyalty rankings in their home, and national, markets. "These insights enable league and team management to identify areas that need strategic brand coaching," said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys' founder and president.

Current 2012 MLB top 5 and bottom 5 brand-standings are listed (Note: #'s in parentheses give the team rankings for 2000 and 2005 respectively):

Top 5

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| 1. Philadelphia Phillies | (#17, #6) |
| 2. New York Yankees | (#3, #2) |
| 3. Boston Red Sox | (#1, #9) |
| 4. San Francisco Giants | (#4, #10) |
| 5. St. Louis Cardinals | (#10, #18) |

In the Cellar

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| 30. Pittsburgh Pirates | (#21, #21) |
| 29. Baltimore Orioles | (#25, #23) |
| 28. Kansas City Royals | (#12, #16) |
| 27. Seattle Mariners | (#10, #10) |
| 26. New York Mets | (#9, #7) |

The Sports Loyalty Engagement Index provides an apples-to-apples comparison of the intensity with which fans within the team's SMSA support the home team versus corresponding values for the fans of the other teams in the market. "That's important because fan loyalty correlates very highly with broadcast viewership, merchandise purchase, and ticket revenue. And happier fans as well," noted Passikoff. "Everybody loves a winner, but it's important to note that win/loss ratios do not entirely govern fan loyalty. There are three other factors that have to be taken into account."

Fan loyalty is driven in four ways:

- Pure Entertainment: How well a team does, but more importantly, how exciting is their play?
- Authenticity: How well they play as a team. New stadia and, often, new managers, can lift this driver.
- Fan Bonding: Are players respected and admired?
- History and Tradition: Is the game and the team part of fans' and community rituals, institutions and beliefs?

"And since overall league and team rankings correlate with viewership and merchandise sales, and rankings can be influenced depending upon how loyalty drivers are managed, it's critical that team marketers do accurate scouting regarding the strategic ball they intend to pitch to their fans," said Passikoff.

The 2012 MLB season opens today with the christening of a new ballpark and a 20th-anniversary celebration of the ballpark that changed everything for St. Louis last season, with the Miami Marlins and Cardinals beginning the season today followed by six openers on Thursday.

The Brand Keys Sports Fan Loyalty Index measures all the teams in the four Major Leagues, with this year's top-5/bottom-5 rankings showing up as follows. Again, for comparative purposes, #'s in parentheses give the team rankings for the years 2000 and 2005 respectively:

National Basketball Association

Top-5

1. San Antonio Spurs (#5, #1)
2. Boston Celtics (#22, #7)
3. Los Angeles Lakers (#1, #3)
4. Dallas Mavericks (#27, #14)
5. Oklahoma City Thunder (Were Seattle Supersonics; #18, #16)

Bottom-5

30. Charlotte Bobcats (Expansion Team in 2000, #20)
29. Sacramento Kings (#19, #4)
28. Golden State Warriors (#26, #19)
27. Minnesota Timberwolves (#13, #6)
26. Washington Wizards (#29, #21)

National Football League

Top-5

1. New England Patriots (#18, #1)
2. Pittsburgh Steelers (#25, #6)
3. Green Bay Packers (#3, #4)
4. Indianapolis Colts (#5, #5)
5. New Orleans Saints

Bottom-5

- 32. Oakland Raiders (#29, #32)
- 31. Cleveland Browns (#10, #21)
- 30. St. Louis Rams (#15, #17)
- 29. Washington Redskins (#13, #28)
- 28. Miami Dolphins (#26, #25)

National Hockey League

Top-5

- 1. Detroit Red Wings (#1, #1)
- 2. Vancouver Canucks (#27, #10)
- 3. Boston Bruins (#5, #6)
- 4. Philadelphia Flyers (#8, #4)
- 5. San Jose Sharks (#10, #17)

Bottom-5

- 30. New York Islanders (#19, #11)
- 29. St. Louis Blues (#8, #12)
- 28. Columbus Blue Jackets (#22, #27)
- 27. Tampa Bay Lightning (#29, #16)
- 26. Winnipeg Jets (Were Atlanta Thrashers till 2011, #28, #30)

“All teams can benefit from increased loyalty levels, but as baseball is America’s ‘National Pastime,’ noted Passikoff, “there are very few fans who don’t get excited about seeing a game, especially Opening Day. After all, wasn’t it the great Yogi Berra who said, ‘A home opener is always exciting whether it’s home or on the road.’”

Contact: VISIBILITY
Len Stein
cell 914 527 3708
Lens@VisibilityPR.com
www.VisibilityPR.com