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Former IMG Chief Launches Sports Agency, Sets \$250 Million Pact with WPP



Former IMG Sports and Entertainment prexy [George Pyne](#) has launched Bruin Sports Capital, a global marketing venture backed by an investment of \$250 million from a syndicate led by advertising giant WPP.

Bruin Sports plans to work in all aspects of the sports biz, from marketing to establishing or acquiring new franchises, federations and leagues. WPP is one of a handful well-heeled investors Pyne has enlisted with the help of Allen & Co. over the past six months.

Pyne exited IMG in August, a few months after the sports agency was acquired by WME, with the intent of launching his own sports-focused venture fund. “WPP’s investment in sports and sports content through Bruin Sports Capital is an important part of its strategy, as it impacts new markets, new media, data investment management and the application of technology and horizontality,” said Martin Sorrell, found-CEO of WPP. “George is a major talent in the sports business world and based on his track record, I’m confident that the clients who work with WPP’s operating companies will be given access to many high-value media and sponsorship opportunities.”

Pyne emphasized that his company aims to not only invest but operate businesses. The investors he’s recruited are looking at a 10- to 15-year timeline for returns — a distinction from other private equity players working in the space, he added.

Although the global sports biz has become the land of giants, with rights fees reaching into the stratosphere, Pyne said he believes there are ample opportunities for nimble startups. Pyne said investors are banking on his 25-year track record of working in sports and lifestyle marketing and business development.

“I believe in the Wayne Gretzky approach: You want to build it for where the puck’s going, not where the puck is,” Pyne told *Variety*.

The partnership with WPP also affords Bruin Capital access to a wide range of prospects. The advertising giant has been steadily enhancing its content and production assets through the GroupM Entertainment banner, which houses investments in Media Rights Capital, Vice, MediaPro, CSM Sport & Entertainment, Indigenous Media, FullScreen and the China-focused CMC Creative Fund.

Pyne said he will unveil the exec team for the New York-based company in the coming weeks. Bruin Sports Capital is named after the mascot of his Brown U. alma mater.

Pyne had been with IMG since 2006. He’s credited with building the company’s profitable college sports marketing business and expanding IMG’s operations in licensing and consulting. He served on the board of directors prior to the sale. Before IMG, Pyne had an 11-year run at NASCAR, rising to chief operating officer.

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