



RULE 40

GUIDELINES FOR BRANDS
(NON-OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC) AND AGENTS

August 2025

TEAM
USA

WHAT IS RULE 40?

Rule 40 of the Olympic Charter is an eligibility rule introduced by the International Olympic Committee in 1991.

The IOC states that “the rule helps ensure global participation at the Games and maintain the long-term health of the Movement. The value of the IOC’s international marketing program and the benefit partners receive to market their association with the Games supports athletes around the world, including all members of Team USA.”

Another way of describing this would be that Rule 40’s objective is to protect sponsors of the Movement who have exclusive marketing rights in their respective commercial categories from competing brands also attempting to run advertising campaigns tied to the Games.

The IOC and USOPC are supportive of athletes having personal sponsorships with brands who are not partners of the Movement but just need to ensure through Rule 40 that these sponsorships do not attempt to make unauthorized connections to the Games which would infringe on the marketing rights of official sponsors.

Read more about Rule 40 here: <https://www.olympics.com/athlete365/topics/rule-40>

WHO DOES RULE 40 APPLY TO?

Participants in the current Olympic or Paralympic Games Milano Cortina 2026, including current competitors, coaches, trainers, and officials. Rule 40 is not applicable to alumni.

WHEN IS THE RULE 40 BLACKOUT PERIOD?

OLYMPIC GAMES MILANO CORTINA 2026:

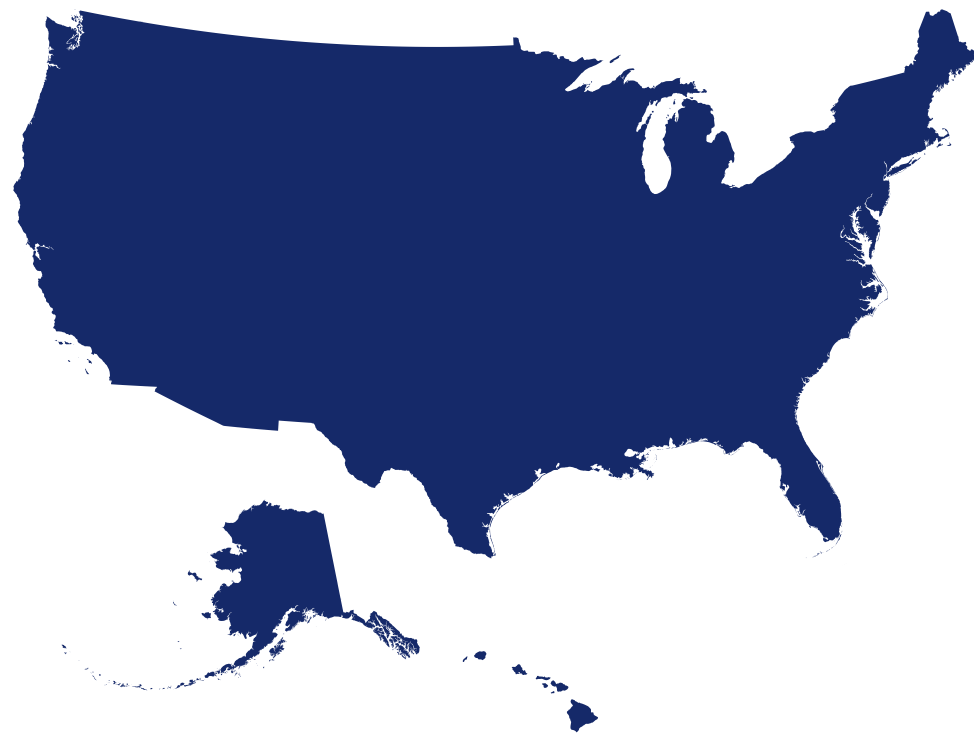
January 30, 2026 – February 24, 2026

PARALYMPIC GAMES MILANO CORTINA 2026:

February 27, 2026 – March 17, 2026



HOW TO OBTAIN PERMISSION?



U.S.-TARGETED MARKETING

Athlete Personal Sponsors obtain U.S. Rule 40 permission by completing and abiding by the terms in the USOPC's Personal Sponsor Commitment ("PSC").

STEPS FOR ATHLETES, ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVES AND MARKETING AGENCIES:

- Communicate to each personal sponsor that it will need to obtain a waiver through the USOPC Rule 40 Permissions System, which can be found here: rule40registration.teamusa.org.

STEPS FOR PERSONAL SPONSORS:

- Athlete Personal Sponsor reads and agrees to terms listed in the USOPC's "Personal Sponsor Commitment" which can be accessed via the "Personal Sponsor Entry" button on the USOPC Rule 40 Permissions System.
- Once Athlete Personal Sponsor completes a PSC, it is granted a Rule 40 permission.
- If Athlete Personal Sponsor violates the agreement, its Rule 40 permission will be revoked and it may face other consequences.



MULTI-NATIONAL MARKETING

These USOPC guidelines apply only to campaigns targeted to a United States audience.

Use of Team USA participants in personal sponsors campaigns not targeted to a United States audience is subject to the requirements of the IOC / IPC and any applicable National Olympic Committee/National Paralympic Committee. For all such campaigns running in markets outside the U.S., Athlete Personal Sponsors must notify the IOC of their non-U.S. generic advertising plans through: <https://rule40.olympic.org/>

USOPC consent to such non-U.S. use is granted subject to obtaining such IOC/IPC/NOC/NPC approvals.

U.S. APPLICATION PROCESS DETAILS



WHO NEEDS TO COMPLETE THE PERSONAL SPONSOR COMMITMENT (“PSC”)?

- Any brand seeking to run marketing targeted to a U.S. audience during the Blackout Period with an Athlete who is competing in the Milano Cortina 2026 Games.



DO ATHLETES NEED TO COMPLETE A PSC?

- No, the athlete just needs to ensure each personal sponsor is aware that it must complete a PSC to obtain Rule 40 permission.



I’M AN AGENT AND/OR THE AGENCY THAT REPRESENTS THE ATHLETE, DO I NEED TO COMPLETE THE PSC?

- If you will promote the agency itself in your creative, yes.
- If you will just show images of your athlete on your social channels and wish them luck, no.



I’M AN NGB, DO I NEED TO COMPLETE A PSC?

- If you will promote an NGB sponsor in your creative, yes.
- If you will just show images of your athlete on your social channels and wish them luck with your NGB marks, no.



WHAT IF THE ATHLETE PROMOTION IS FROM A PERSONAL ACCOUNT?

- Communications from a personal account that promote a business, brand, products or services are subject to Rule 40.



IF I WORK FOR AN NGB, CAN I SIGN THE PSC ON BEHALF OF AN NGB SPONSOR?

- No, an employee of the Athlete Personal Sponsor must complete the PSC.



IF I WORK FOR A MARKETING AGENCY, CAN I SIGN THE PSC ON BEHALF OF MY CLIENT?

- No, an employee of the Athlete Personal Sponsor must complete the PSC.



IS THERE A DEADLINE FOR REGISTERING AND SIGNING THE PSC?

- The only “deadline” is it must be submitted before the campaign is live during the Blackout Period.
- The USOPC does not require in-market dates for domestic campaigns.



DO I ENTER ALL ATHLETES AT ONCE IN MY COMPANY’S PSC?

- Yes. You may also add athletes to a completed PSC at any point.



DO I NEED TO SUBMIT THE CREATIVE FOR APPROVAL?

- No, but you can send to the USOPC for review to verify compliance.

WHAT IS RULE 40 COMPLIANT?

In the United States, Rule 40 permission allows athlete marketing in one of two ways:

**GENERIC MARKETING OF
THE PRODUCT, SERVICE AND
BRAND, WHICH INCLUDES
ONE OR MORE ATHLETES.**



**ATHLETE-RECOGNITION
MARKETING REFLECTING
A PERSONAL SPONSOR'S
SUPPORT OF AN ATHLETE'S
PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMES**

GENERIC MARKETING CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH ATHLETE RECOGNITION MARKETING

In order to avoid any implication that a personal sponsor is a sponsor of Team USA or the Games, generic marketing that specifically promotes brands, products or services can never be combined with advertising recognizing or promoting the athlete's Games participation in any manner.



DEFINING “MARKETING”

This USOPC guidance applies to all marketing targeted to the United States using current Games participants during the Blackout Period regardless of the media platform and how it’s distributed. Advertising purposes include all forms of commercial promotion, including, but not limited to:

- traditional advertising (e.g., print, TV, out of home, online).
- direct advertising (e.g., emails, text messages, direct mail).
- social and digital media (e.g., posts, retweets, shares by athletes or sponsors).
- point of sale (e.g., on-product, on-retail premises).
- public relations (e.g., press releases, personal appearances, lending or gifting of products).
- sponsored media content (e.g., advertorials, product integrations).

There is no distinction for Rule 40 between nonprofit or for-profit organizations.

WHAT'S NEVER PERMITTED?

WHAT'S NEVER PERMITTED FOR ATHLETES:

- Athletes may never allow any non-official Games or Team USA sponsor to use images of him/herself in USOPC and/or Team USA apparel or branded items from the Olympic/Paralympic Games, or with Games medals, without the USOPC's consent.

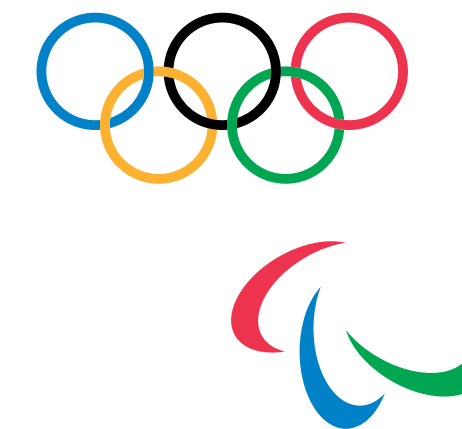
WHAT'S NEVER PERMITTED FOR BRANDS:

- Non-official Games or Team USA sponsors can never make commercial use of Olympic and Paralympic IP, including but not limited to still and moving images from the Games and trademarks such as:
 - Olympic symbol; Paralympic symbol
 - Games emblems, mascots, pictograms and graphics
 - Flag/5-Ring and Flag/3-Agito emblems
 - The words: Olympic, Olympics, Olympiad; Paralympic, Paralympics, Paralympiad
 - The name of the host city of the Games + the year of the Games (e.g., Milano Cortina 2026)
 - The names of Olympic and Paralympic Teams (e.g., Team USA, Team Great Britain)
 - Taglines such as Citius Altius Fortius; Spirit in Motion
 - Registered trademarks such as “Go for the Gold” and “Let the Games Begin”
- Brands are never permitted to use an athlete's name, image or likeness without the athlete's permission
 - Unauthorized commercial use of an athlete's name, image or likeness is a violation of the athlete's right of publicity, and will be referred by the USOPC to the athlete's representatives.

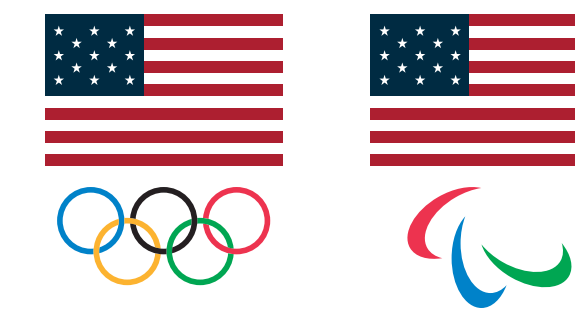
THE FOLLOWING WORDS, PHRASES AND LOGOS ARE RESERVED ONLY FOR GAMES AND TEAM USA OFFICIAL PARTNERS:

- The words: Olympic, Olympics, Olympiad; Paralympic, Paralympics, Paralympiad.
- Registered trademarks such as “Go for the Gold” and “Let the Games Begin.”
- Taglines such as Citius Altius Fortius; Spirit in Motion.

LOGOS:



Olympic symbol;
Paralympic symbol



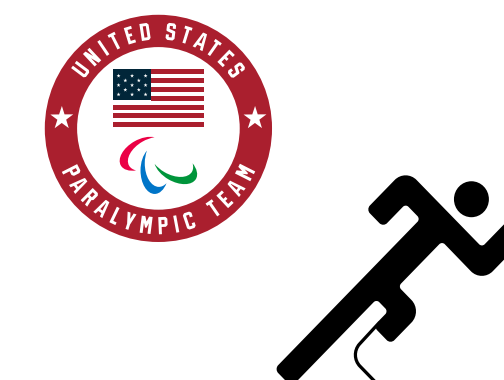
Flag/5-Ring and Flag/3-
Agitos emblems



The name of the host city of the
Games + the year of the Games
(e.g., Milano Cortina 2026)



The names of Olympic
and Paralympic Teams
(e.g., Team USA, Team
Great Britain)



Games emblems, mascots,
pictograms and graphics

WHAT'S RESTRICTED IN THE U.S. DURING RULE 40?

As a condition to receiving Rule 40 permission, personal sponsors must commit to certain restrictions for the duration of the Blackout Period, including the terms of this guidance and that:



Making negative, comparative claims (e.g., “our network is faster than [x’s]”).



Implying that any product or service enhanced the athlete’s performance.



Using the terms: Games, Winter Games or Summer Games in reference to the Olympic or Paralympic Games.



Using iconic Olympic or Paralympic words or imagery (including emojis), such as a torch, flame, laurel wreath, medal or podium.



Using Olympic or Paralympic Games venue or apparel imagery, either current or historic.



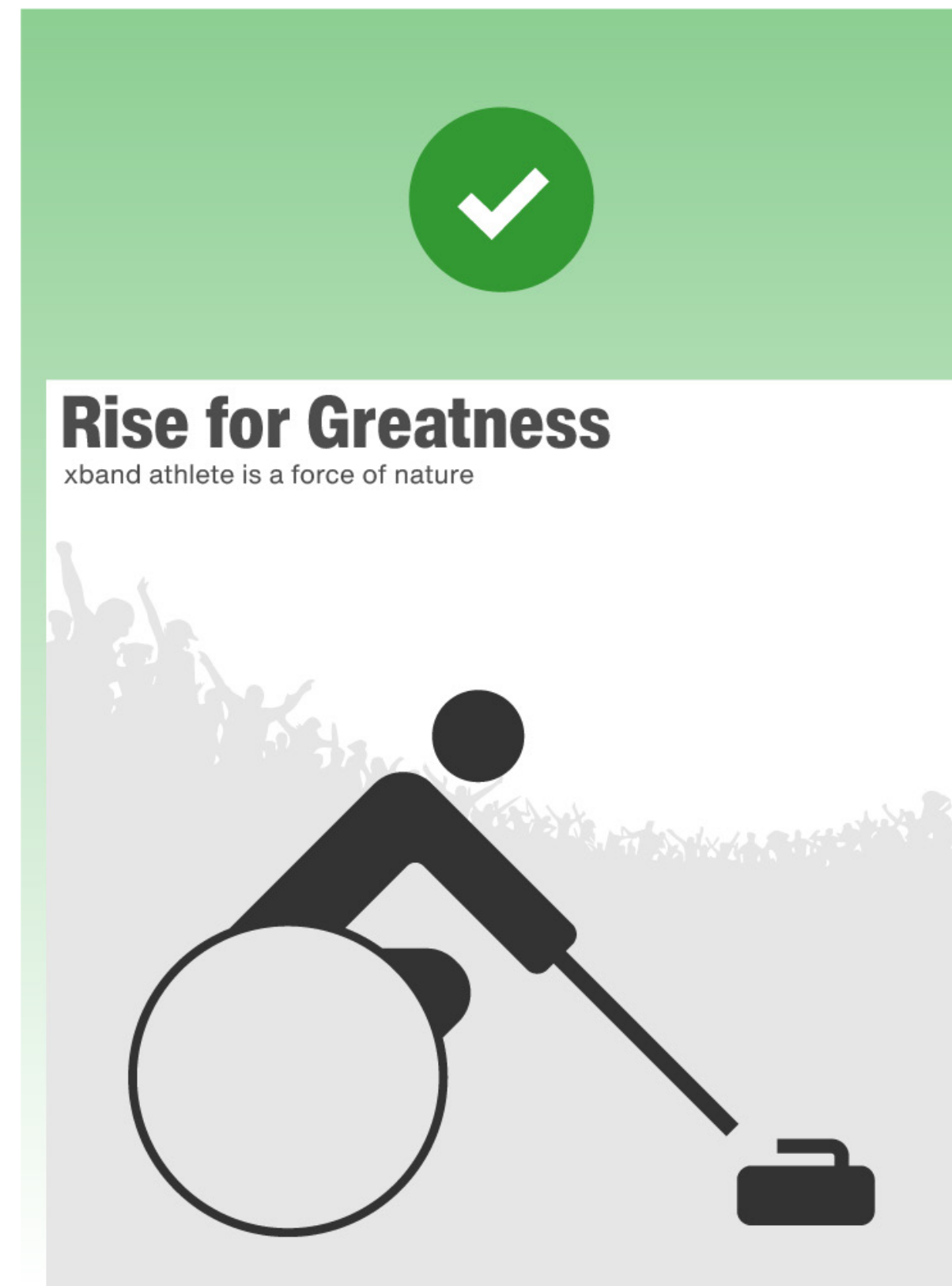
Increasing advertising in frequency or substantially changing during the Blackout Period as compared to same period in a non-Games year.



Acting as Games news source (e.g. disseminate real-time audiovisual coverage of the Games, including but not limited to real-time posting of results, event live streaming and use of still images to simulate live coverage)

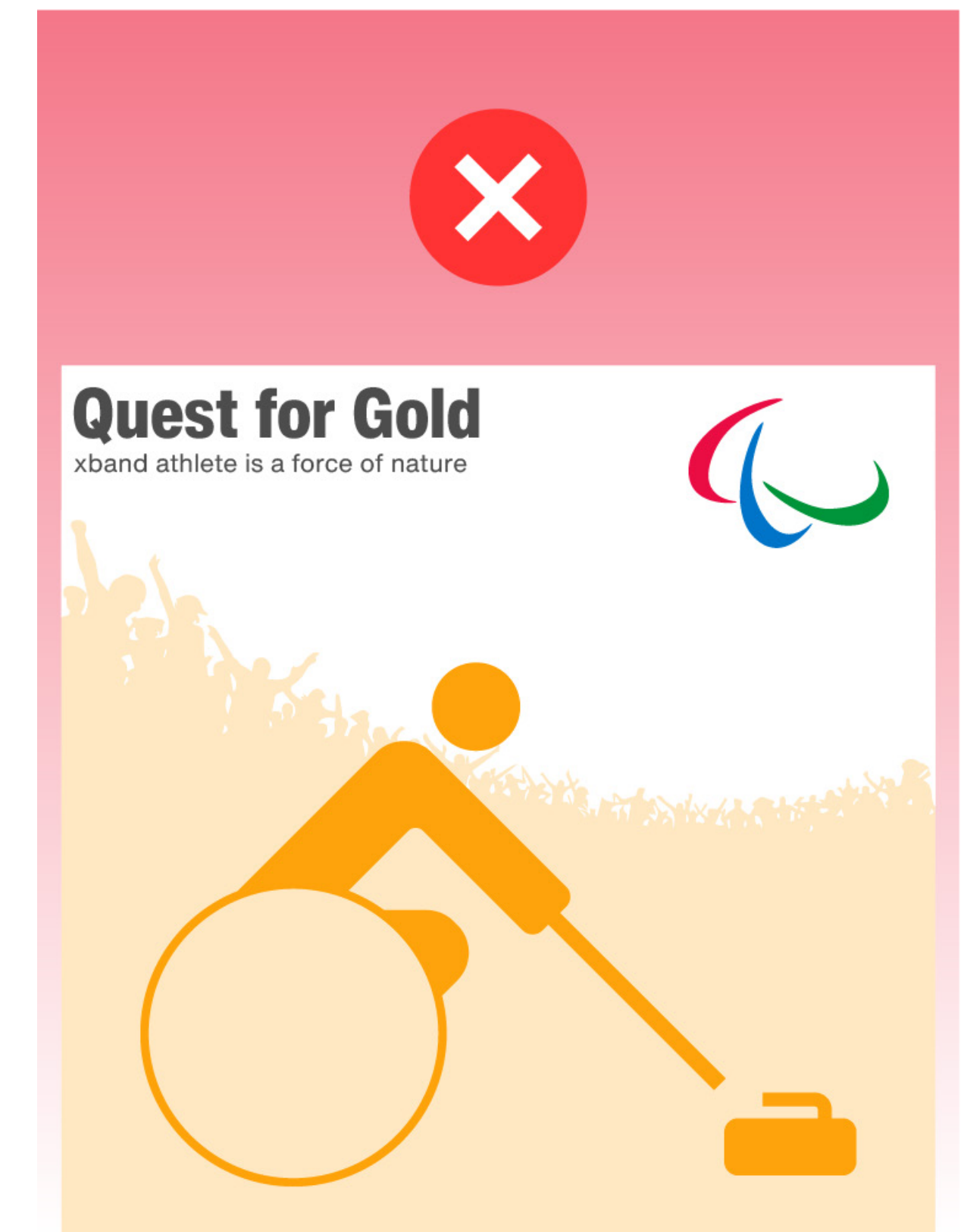
GENERIC MARKETING EXAMPLES

- Promotes the personal sponsor's brand, products or services
- Only connection between the Games, USOPC, the IOC or Team USA is the fact the advertising uses an athlete's image
- Advertising that makes any direct or indirect visual or verbal reference to Team USA, USOPC, the Olympic or Paralympic Movements or the Games does not qualify as generic



WHY

- Campaign messaging is centered around generic taglines that an average consumer would not immediately associate with the Games
- Athlete's participation in the upcoming Milano Cortina is not emphasized

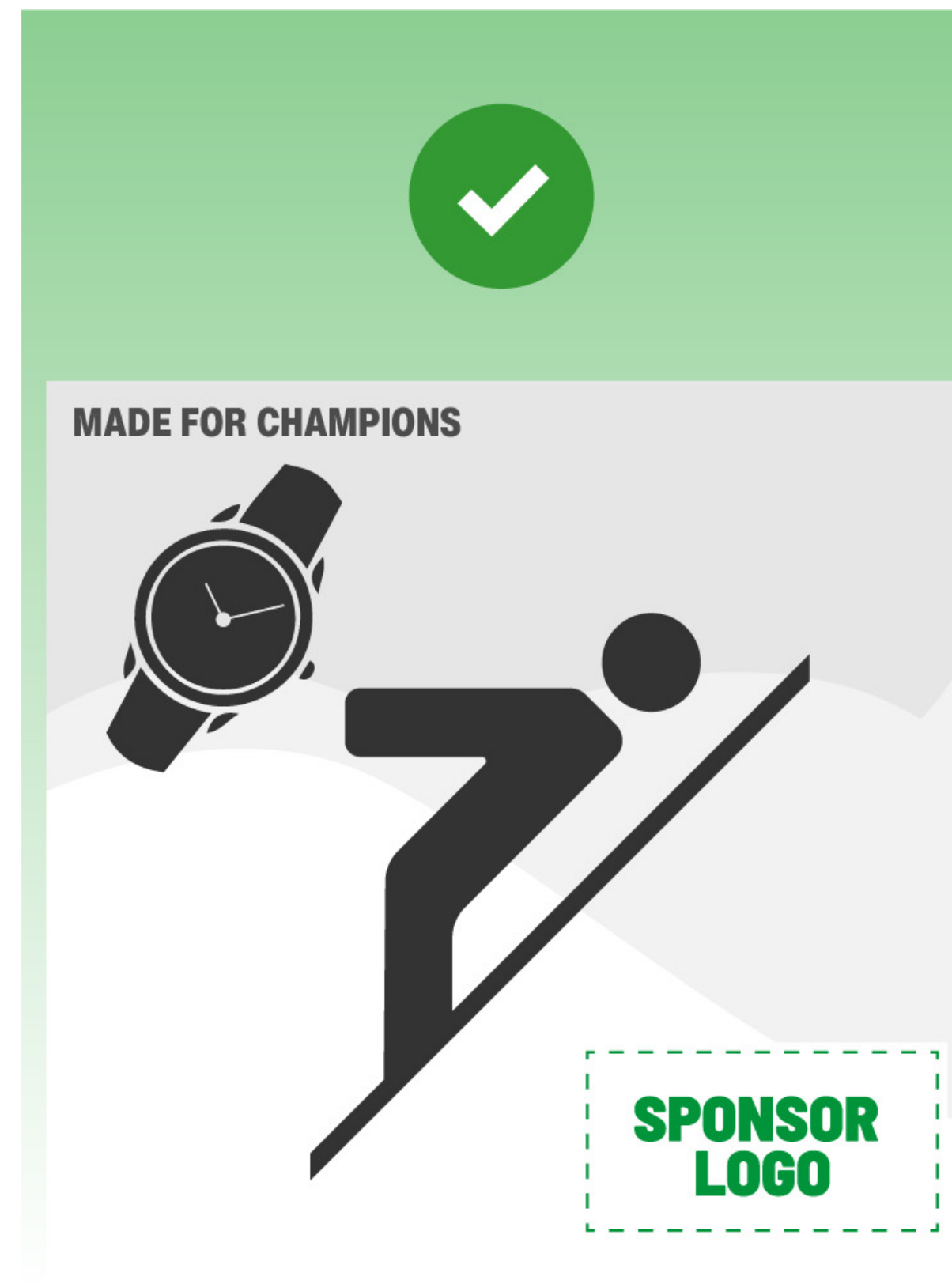


WHY

- Campaign storytelling and theme centers around athletes' upcoming Olympic/Paralympic participation with "gold"
- Average consumer would likely associate ad messaging as references to the Games

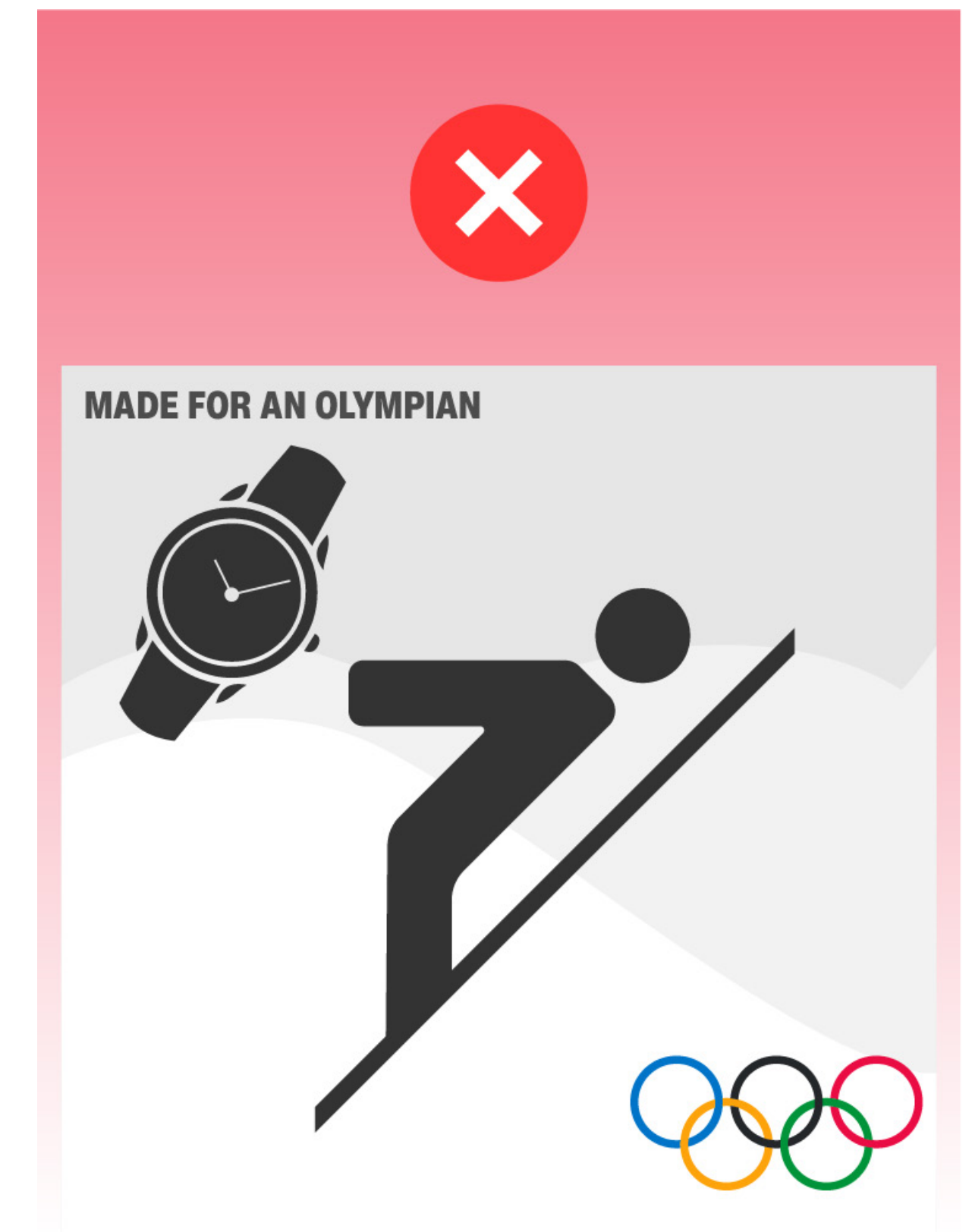
GENERIC MARKETING EXAMPLES

- Promotes the personal sponsor's brand, products or services
- Only connection between the Games, USOPC, the IOC or Team USA is the fact the advertising uses an athlete's image
- Advertising that makes any direct or indirect visual or verbal reference to Team USA, USOPC, the Olympic or Paralympic Movements or the Games does not qualify as generic



WHY

- Generic Advertisement, specific to athlete's relationship with personal sponsor.
- No implied association with the Games or Team USA.

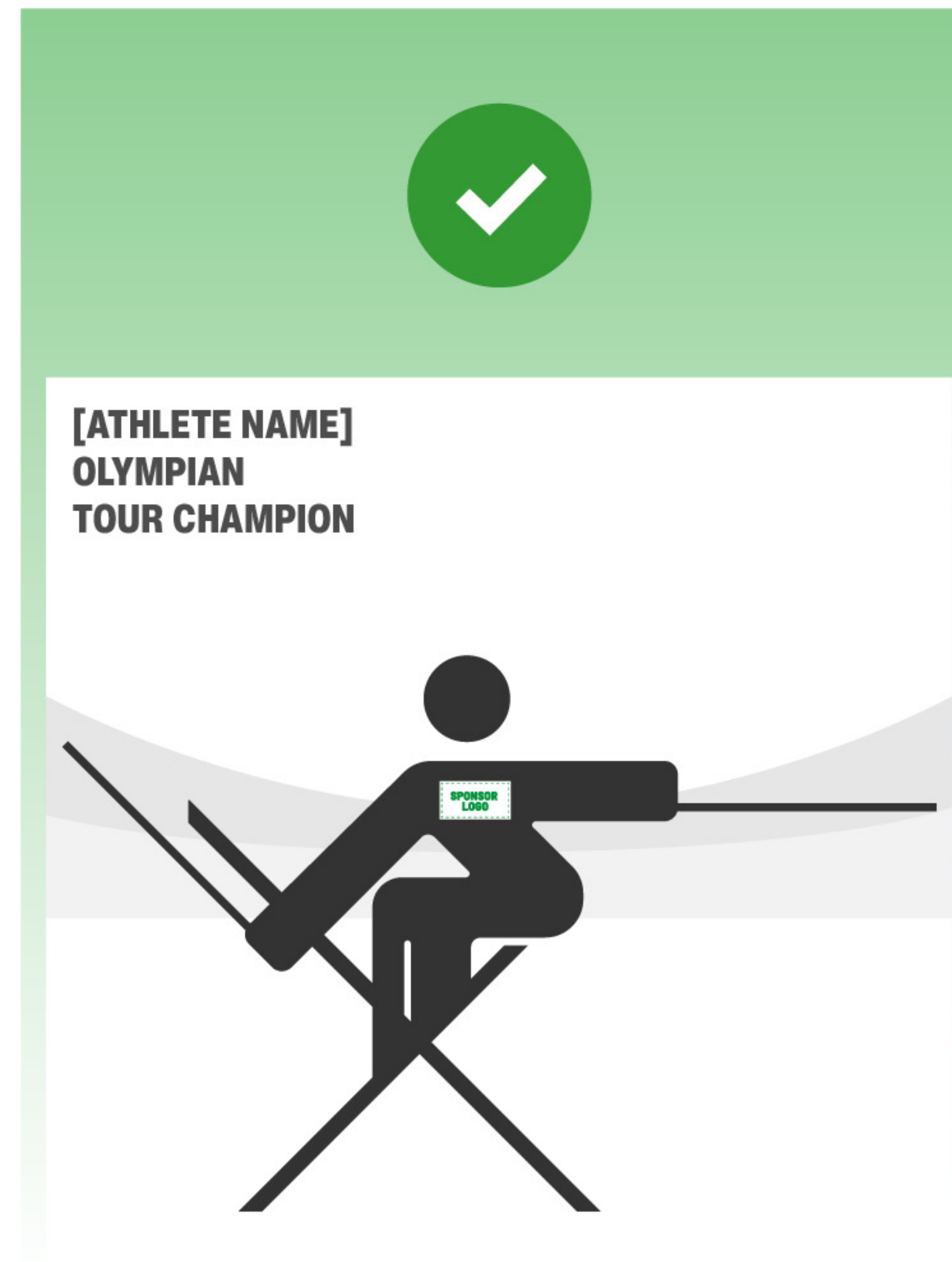


WHY

- Uses Olympic IP (Rings and tagline "Made for an Olympian").
- Athlete personal sponsors are not permitted under any circumstances to use Olympic, Paralympic or Team USA trademarks.

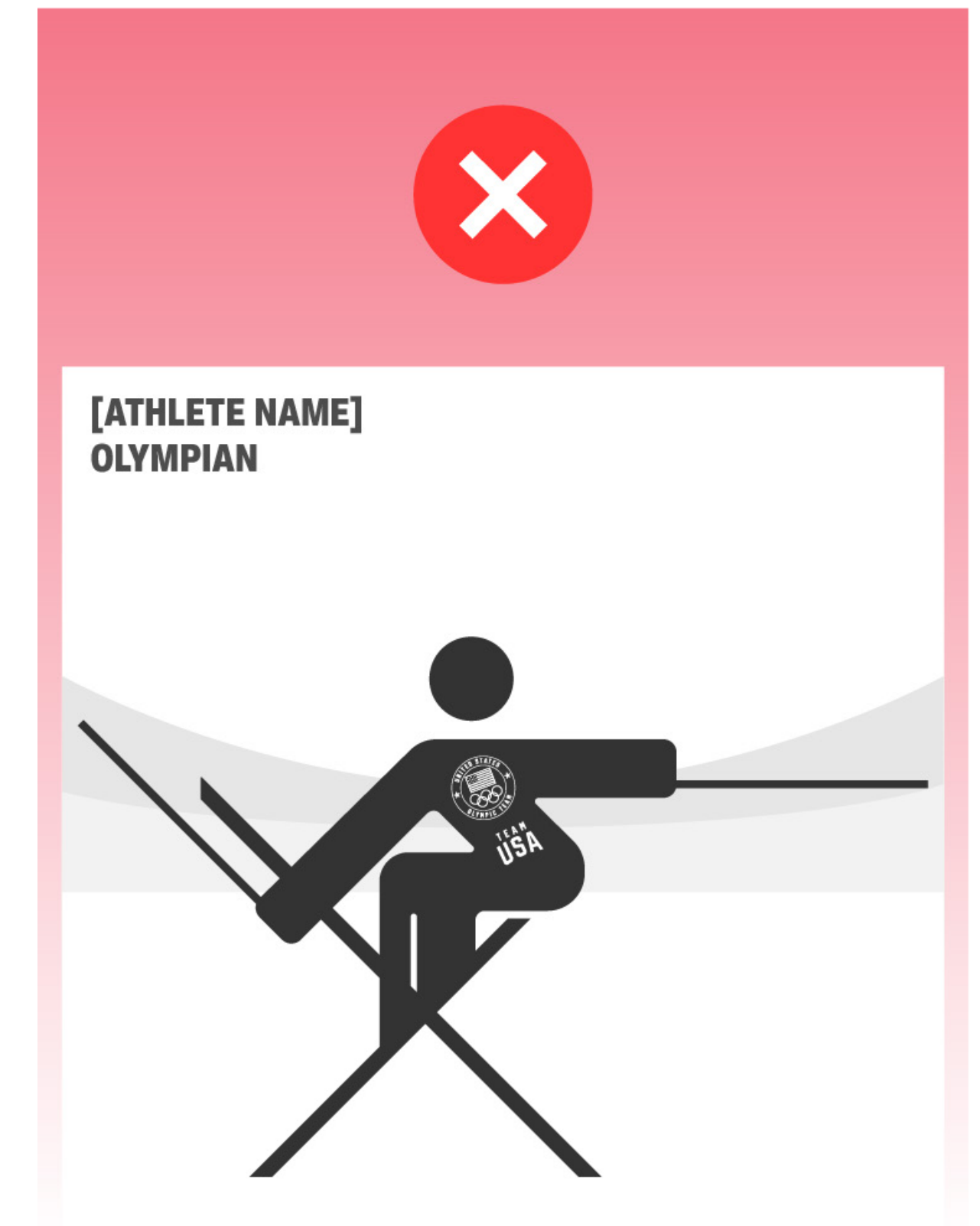
GENERIC MARKETING EXAMPLES

- Promotes the personal sponsor's brand, products or services
- Only connection between the Games, USOPC, the IOC or Team USA is the fact the advertising uses an athlete's image
- Advertising that makes any direct or indirect visual or verbal reference to Team USA, USOPC, the Olympic or Paralympic Movements or the Games does not qualify as generic



WHY

- Generic Advertisement, specific to athlete's relationship with personal sponsor.
- Balances Olympic accomplishment with a non-Olympic accomplishment in biography.



WHY

- Athlete is wearing apparel with Team USA branding.
- Does not balance Olympic accomplishment with a non-Olympic accomplishment in biography.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS ATHLETE-RECOGNITION MARKETING?

Athlete-recognition advertising can come in one of two forms:



ATHLETES THANKING PERSONAL SPONSORS

Athlete-recognition advertising is a piece of content that makes balanced, factual reference to an athlete's story. Separate campaigns for each athlete are allowed, but no more than one athlete may be included in any athlete-recognition marketing.



PERSONAL SPONSORS RECOGNIZING ATHLETES/PERFORMANCE

Athlete-recognition advertising is a piece of content that makes balanced, factual reference to an athlete's story. Separate campaigns for each athlete are allowed, but no more than one athlete may be included in any athlete-recognition marketing.

HOW CAN AN ATHLETE THANK HER/HIS/THEIR PERSONAL SPONSORS?

WHAT IS AN ATHLETE PERMITTED TO DO:

- Athletes may thank personal sponsors that have obtained Rule 40 permission on their personal social media channels and personal websites. Athletes may post a total of seven (7) thank you messages that include reference to personal sponsors during the Blackout Period.
- In line with existing rules, athlete “thank you” advertising may not:
 - mention or promote the personal sponsor’s products or services
 - use Olympic or Paralympic IP as specified on page 5
 - imply a relationship between a personal sponsor and Team USA, the USOPC, the Olympic or Paralympic movements, or the Games
- There is no limit to the number of times athletes may thank official sponsors – both IOC and USOPC – during the Blackout Period.
- Thanking a brand during the Blackout Period that is not an Athlete Personal Sponsor will count against one of your seven Thank You’s.
- In order to avoid confusion, athletes may not thank Olympic or Paralympic sponsors and personal sponsors in the same message (e.g., not ok to say “Thank You, Coca-Cola, Visa and [personal sponsor].”
- Cannot engage in paid advertising to support retweets or reposts of athlete thank you messages.

WHAT IS AN ATHLETE PERSONAL SPONSOR PERMITTED TO DO:

- Personal sponsors may retweet or repost a single athlete thank you on the original social media channel, without further text or edits, during the Blackout Period. Additionally, personal sponsors cannot engage in paid advertising to support retweets or reposts of athlete thank you messages.
- Outside of Athlete Recognition posts, there is not a limit on the number of posts that an athlete/personal sponsor may post as long as it is generic and abides by the guidelines in this resource.

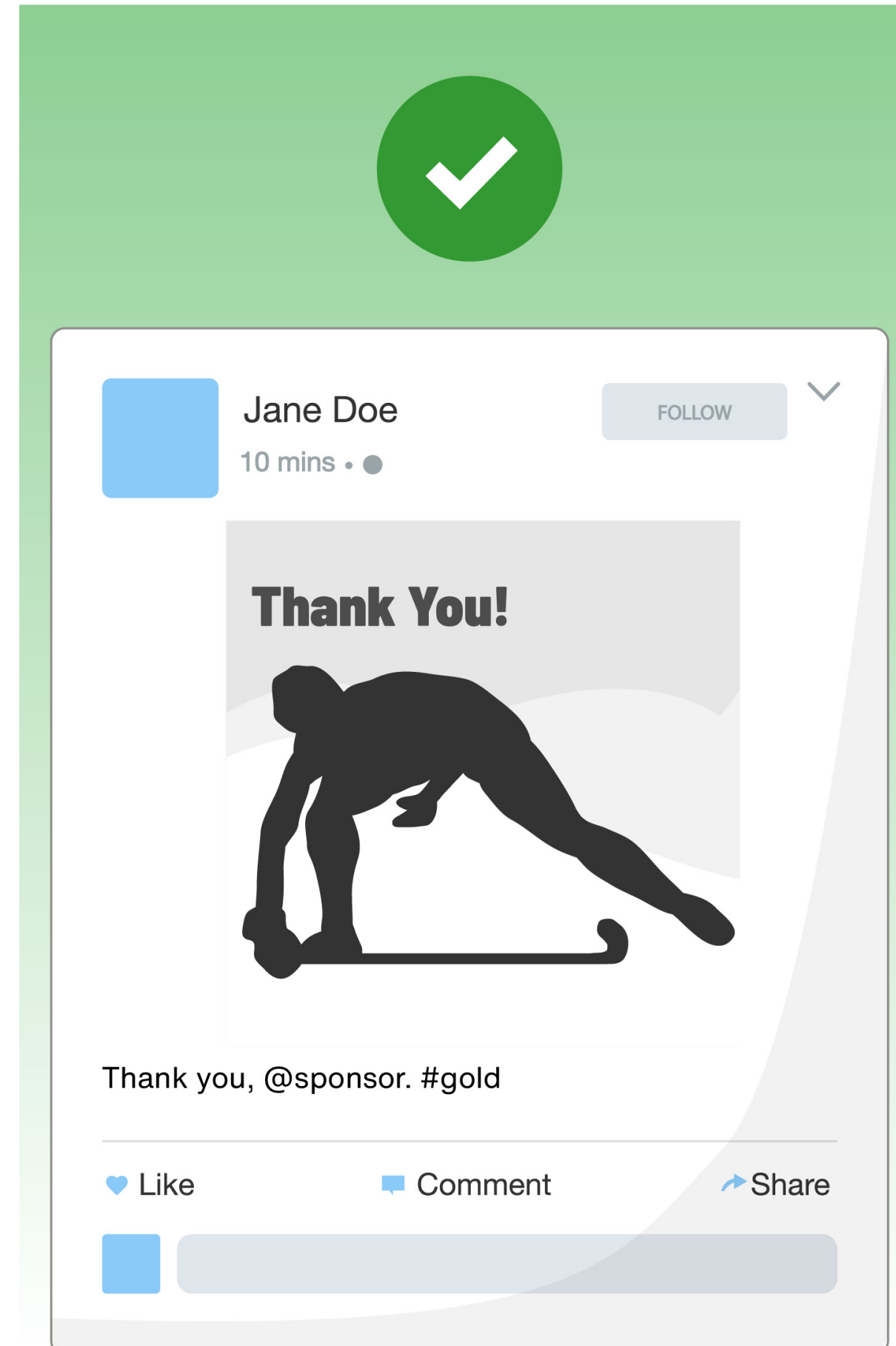
ATHLETE THANK YOU EXAMPLES

PERMITTED:

- “Thank you @company for supporting my journey.”
- “Thank you @company. #personalbest.”
- “Thank you @company. #gold.”

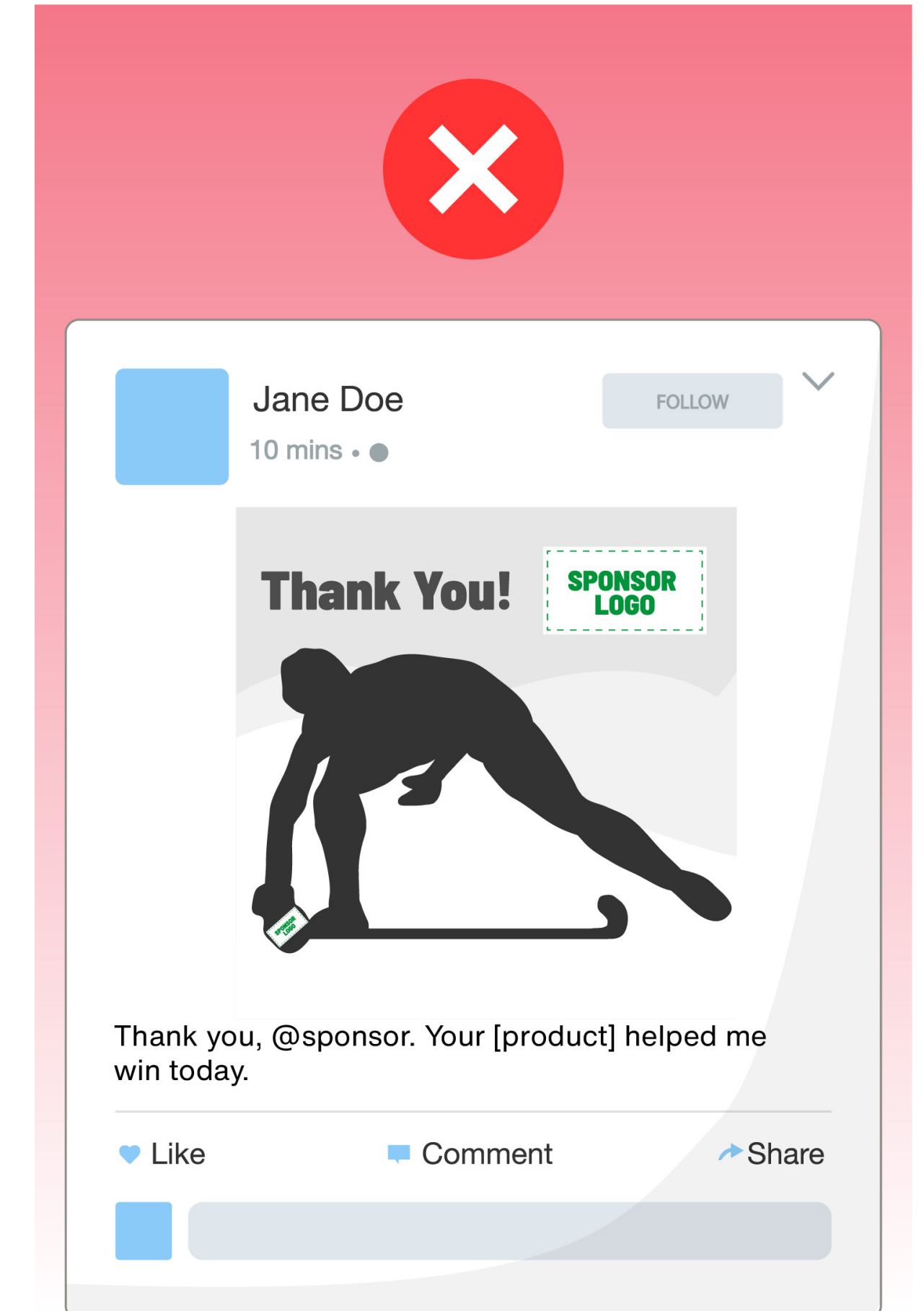
NOT PERMITTED:

- “Thank you @company. #MilanoCortina2026.”
- “Thank you @company. #TeamUSA.”
- “Thank you @company. Your [product] is the best.”
- “Thank you @company. You made my Olympic dreams come true.”
- “Thank you @company. Your [product] helped me win today.”



WHY

- Post uses generic, unbranded image and copy.
- Sponsor logo included only in conjunction with “thank you” messaging.
- Sponsor mentioned only once (copy).



WHY

- Post includes Team USA branded apparel.
- Post promotes a product or service (copy and image).
- Sponsor mentioned more than once (copy and image).
- Sponsor logo apart from thank you messaging.

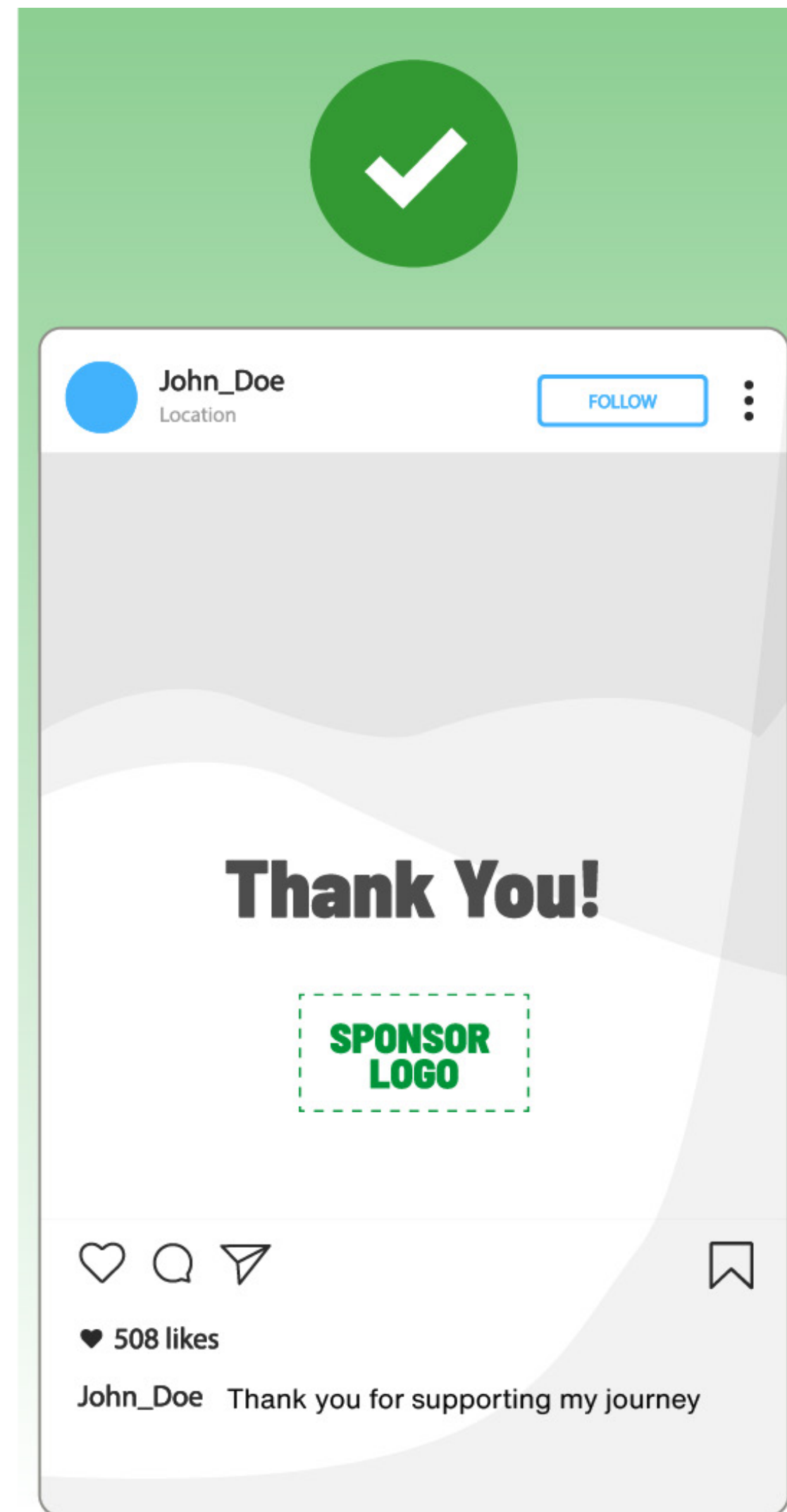
ATHLETE THANK YOU EXAMPLES

PERMITTED:

- “Thank you @company for supporting my journey.”
- “Thank you @company. #personalbest.”
- “Thank you @company. #gold.”

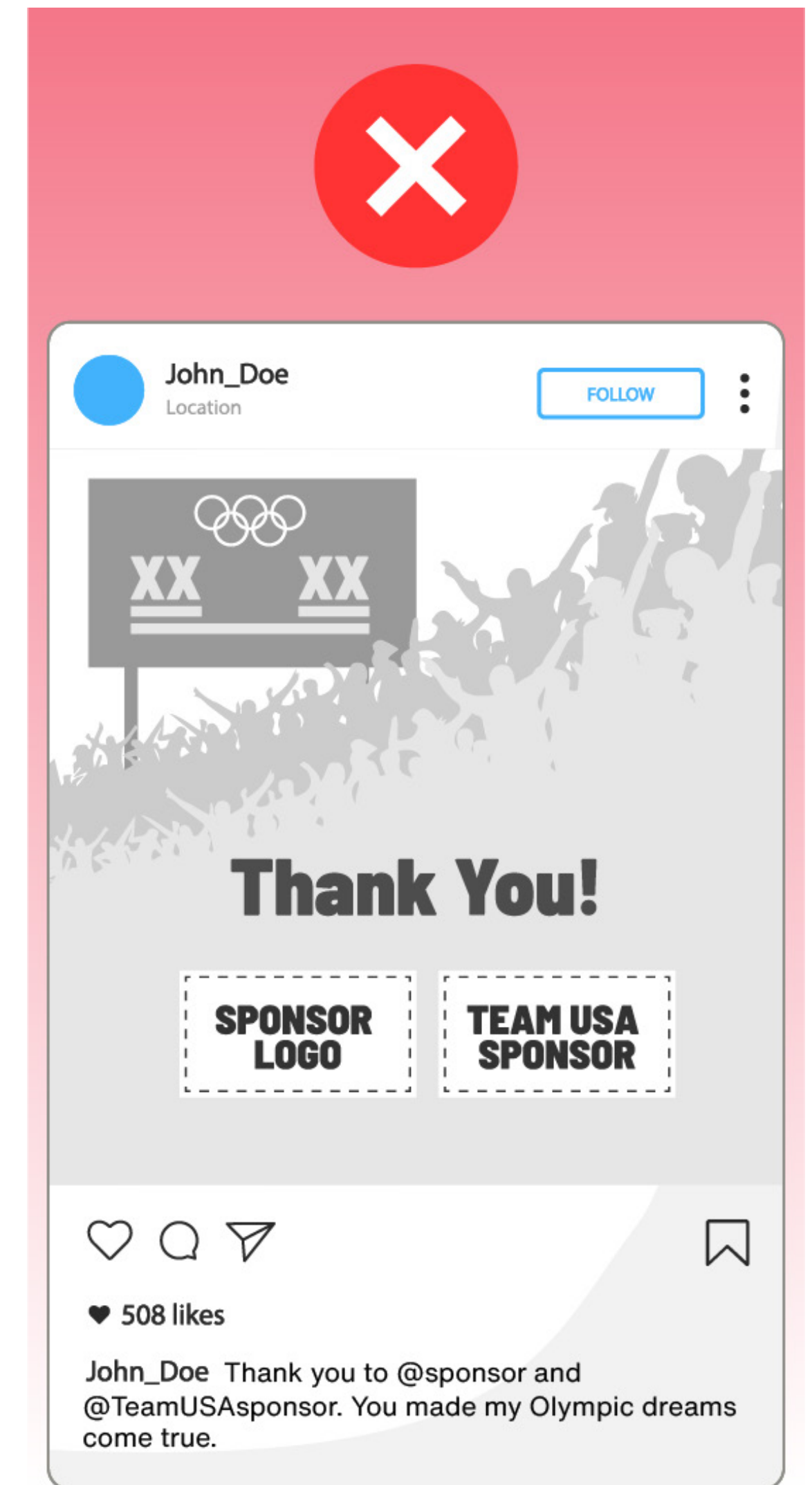
NOT PERMITTED:

- “Thank you @company. #MilanoCortina2026.”
- “Thank you @company. #TeamUSA.
- “Thank you @company. Your [product] is the best.”
- “Thank you @company. You made my Olympic dreams come true.”
- “Thank you @company. Your [product] helped me win today.”



WHY

- Post uses generic, unbranded image and copy
- Sponsor mentioned only in conjunction with “thank you” messaging.
- Sponsor mentioned only once (image).



WHY

- Post uses an image taken within an Olympic venue
- Sponsor mentioned with a Team USA sponsor.
- Olympic-specific reference (e.g. “Olympic dreams come true”).

HOW CAN A PERSONAL SPONSOR CONGRATULATE OR WISH AN ATHLETE WELL?

During the Blackout Period, personal sponsors with Rule 40 permission may create and post one (1) message congratulating or recognizing each sponsored athlete on her/his/their performance, or providing other well wishes.

This single message can only be posted on the personal sponsor's social media accounts and/or corporate websites targeted to a U.S. audience and in accordance with the following requirements. This single message may be posted through multiple social channels (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) so long as the copy and creative are the same.

With the exception of Team USA sponsors, any other media beyond social, including traditional media (e.g., print, TV, out of home), may not be used to recognize athletes during the Blackout Period.

The athlete recognition message may not:

- mention or promote the personal sponsor's products or services.
- use any still or moving images of the athlete at the Games, or any Olympic or Paralympic IP.
- imply a relationship between a personal sponsor and Team USA, the Olympic or Paralympic movements, or the Games.
- be supported by paid advertising.



CONGRATULATORY & WELL-WISHING MESSAGING EXAMPLES

PERMITTED:

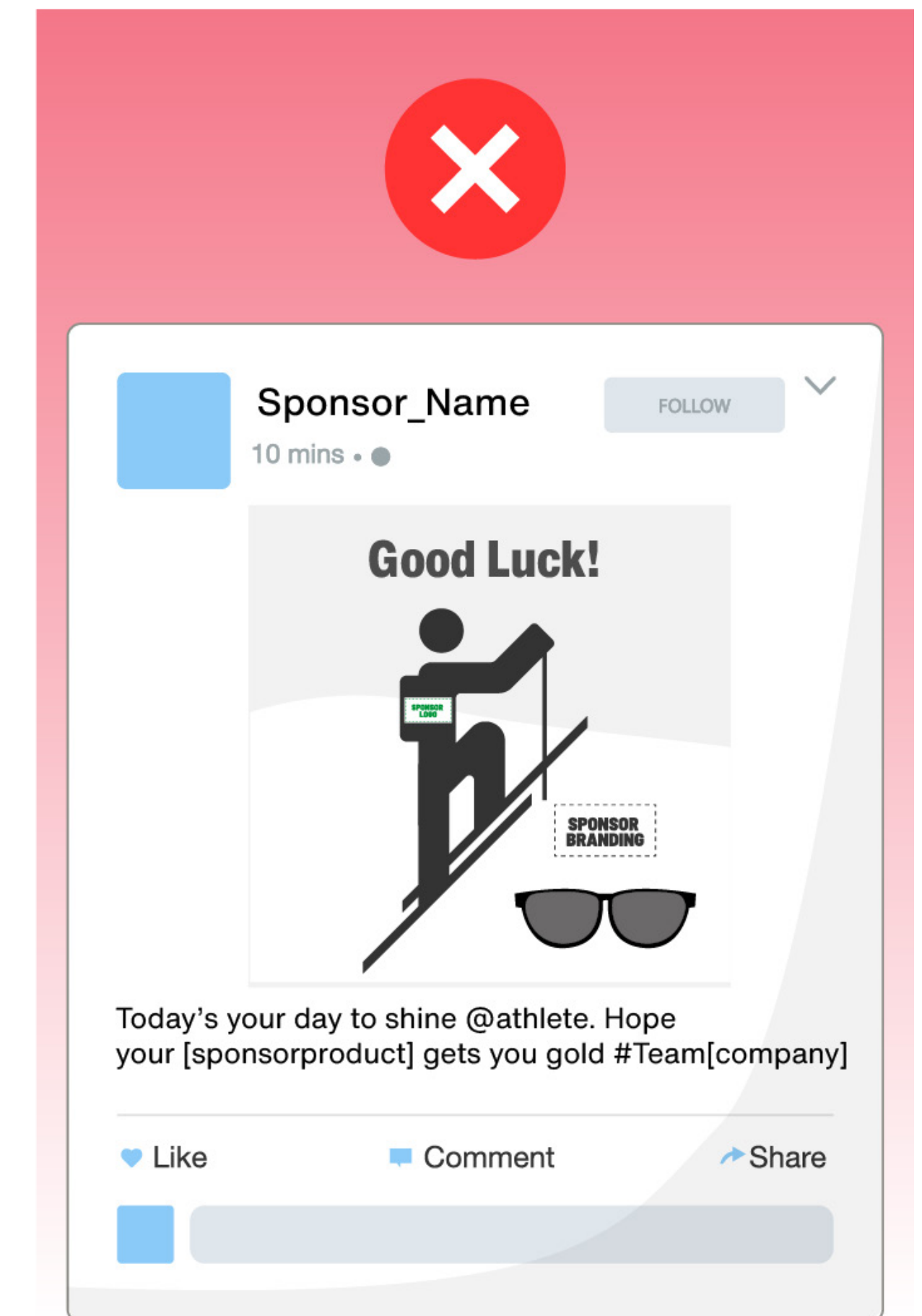
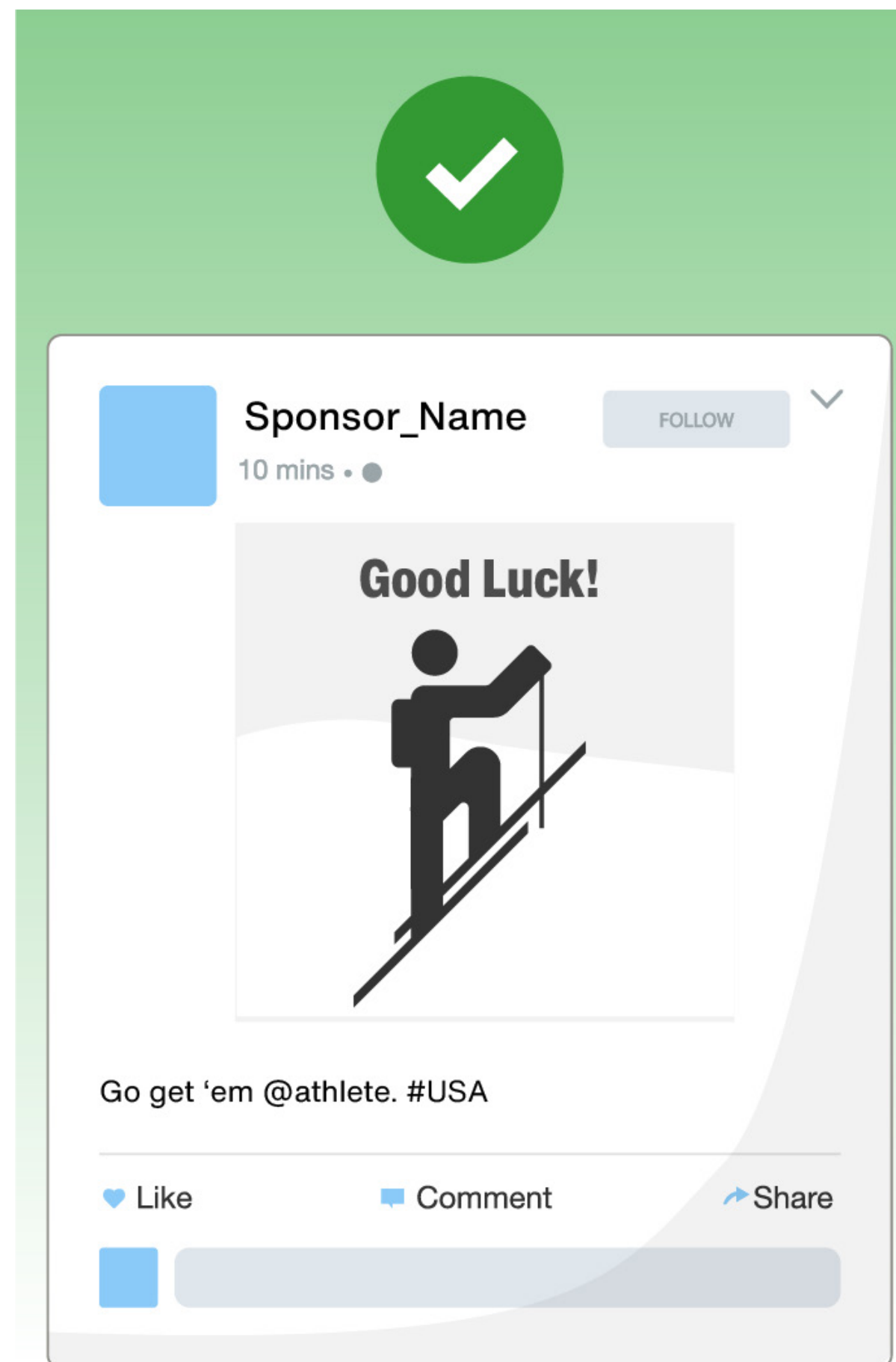
- “Congratulations @athlete on your performance.”
- “Congratulations @athlete on your personal best. #silver.”
- “Go get ‘em @athlete. #USA.”
- “You got this @athlete.”

NOT PERMITTED:

- “Congratulations @athlete, Olympian.”
- “Congratulations @athlete on your Olympic gold medal.”
- “Go get ‘em @athlete. #TeamUSA.”
- “Today’s your day to shine @athlete #Team[company].”
- “Congratulations @athlete.” [accompanied with image using Company product to simulate Olympic Rings].
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Let’s celebrate with 30% off [product/service].”
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Company slogan].”
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Proving [product X] is faster than [competitor product].”

WHY

- Post uses a generic image and copy with no sponsor branding.
- Sponsor posts use one congratulatory or well-wishing message per athlete.



WHY

- Post promotes a specific product or service (copy and image - i.e. sunglasses).
- Post includes athlete personal sponsor branding (background, clothing and #Team (company)).

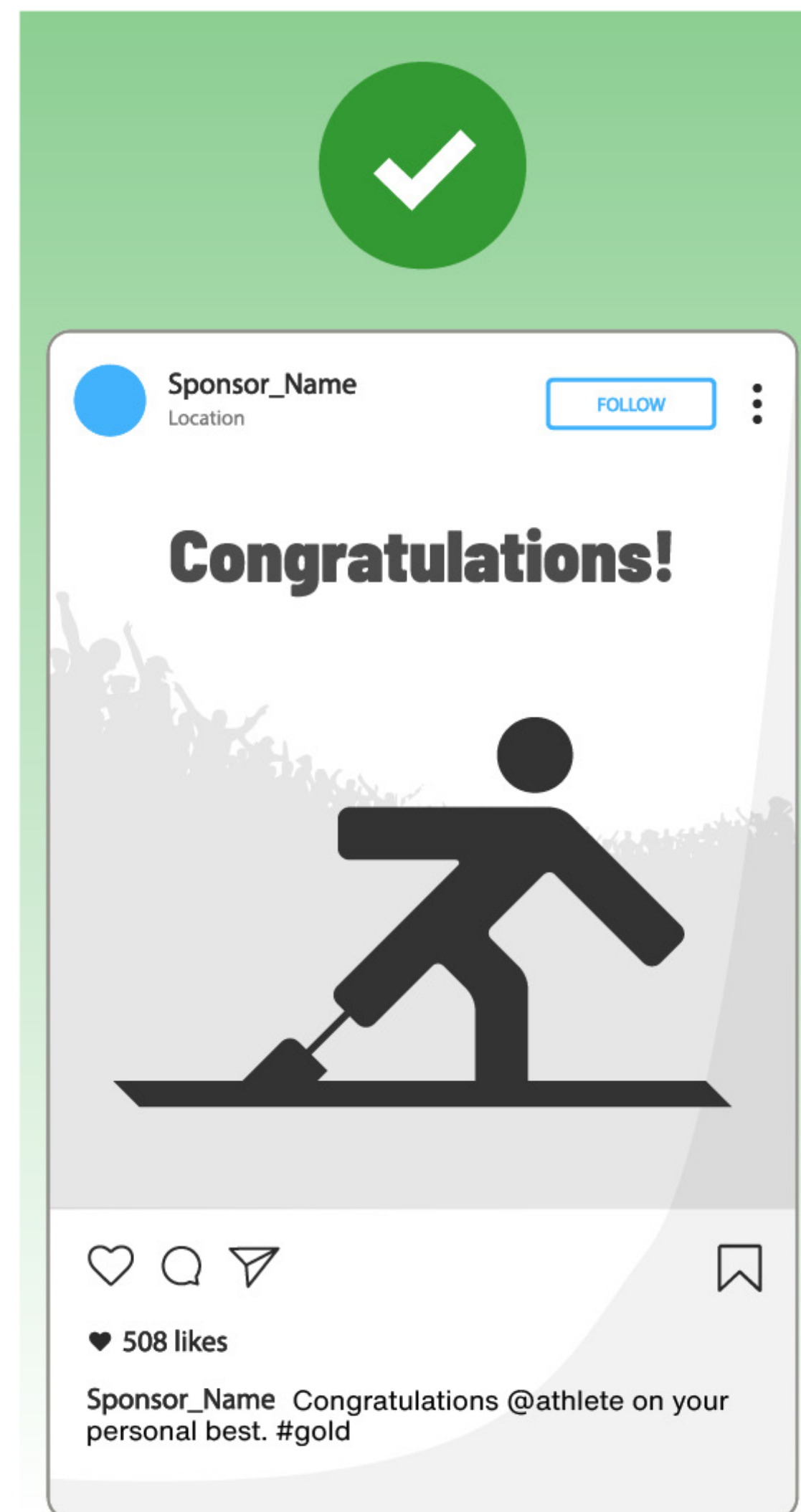
CONGRATULATORY & WELL-WISHING MESSAGING EXAMPLES

PERMITTED:

- “Congratulations @athlete on your performance.”
- “Congratulations @athlete on your personal best. #silver.”
- “Go get ‘em @athlete. #USA.”
- “You got this @athlete.”

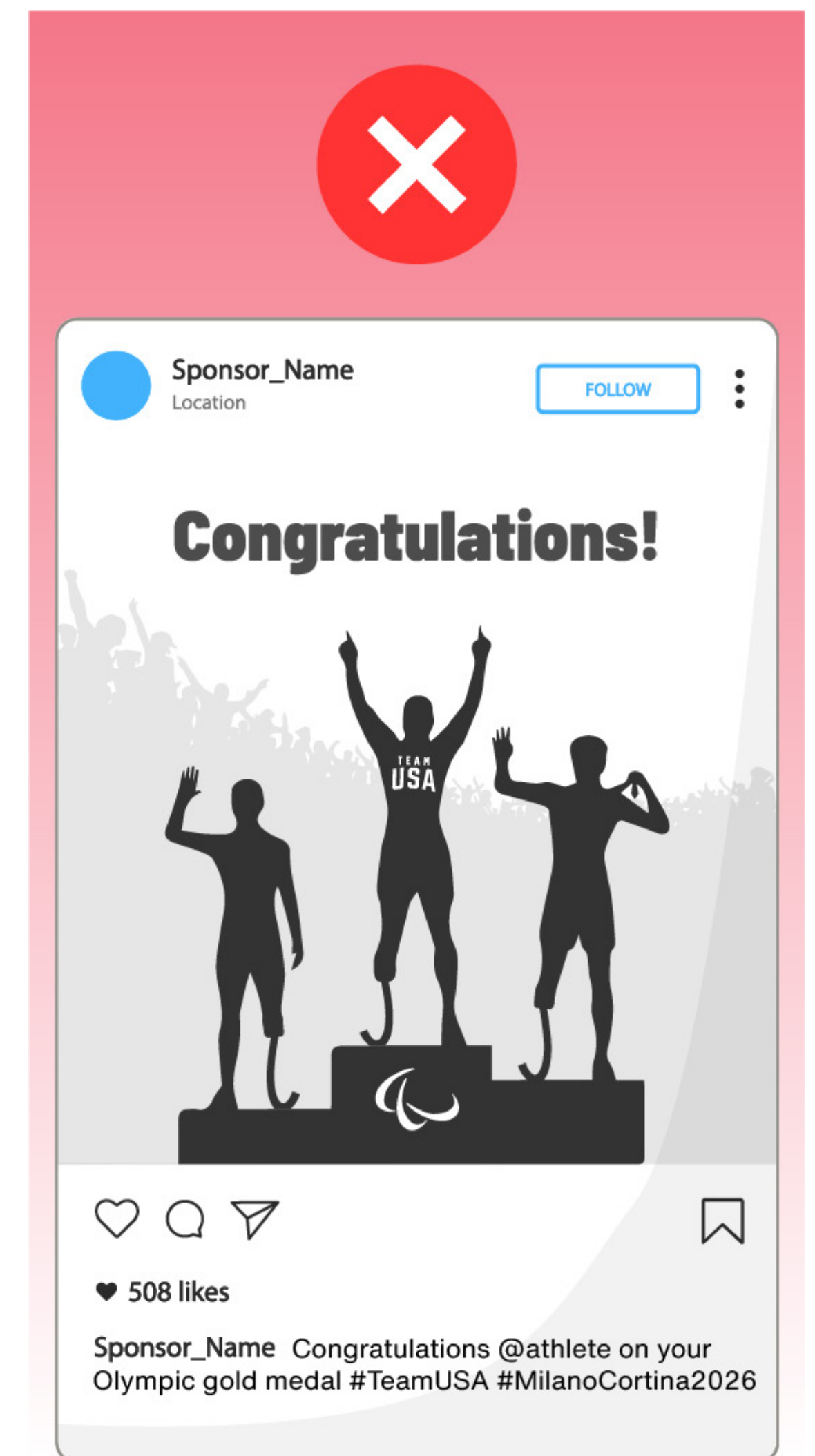
NOT PERMITTED:

- “Congratulations @athlete, Olympian.”
- “Congratulations @athlete on your Olympic gold medal.”
- “Go get ‘em @athlete. #TeamUSA.”
- “Today’s your day to shine @athlete #Team[company].”
- “Congratulations @athlete.” [accompanied with image using Company product to simulate Olympic Rings].
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Let’s celebrate with 30% off [product/service].”
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Company slogan].”
- “Congratulations @athlete. [Proving [product X] is faster than [competitor product].”



WHY

- Post uses a generic image and copy with no sponsor branding.
- Sponsor posts just one congratulatory or well-wishing message per athlete.



WHY

- Post uses an image (still or moving) taken from within the Games.
- Post image includes Team USA-branded apparel.
- Copy includes Games IP (e.g. Olympic gold, #TeamUSA, #MilanoCortina2026).



QUESTIONS

For cost-free, confidential, independent advice regarding athlete rights or responsibilities related to marketing, contact the Ombudsman Office:

Phone: (719) 866-5000

Email: ombudsman@usathlete.org

Website: usathlete.org

For general athlete and agent questions about the Rule 40 permission process or athlete marketing, contact:

athlete.marketing@usopc.org

For Athlete Personal Sponsor Rule 40 compliance questions or creative review requests, contact:

Rule40Compliance@usopc.org

THANK YOU

TEAM
USA

