

A Winthrop & Weinstine blog dedicated to bridging the gap between legal & marketing types.

[Sed Quid in Infernos Dicet?](#)

Posted on May 13, 2011 by [Dan Kelly](#)

It has been some time since we have visited [AlphaWatch](#), and today we turn our attention to an ad I spied on [ESPN's website](#) this week:



This takes me back to law school and a Latin phrase common in legal parlance, *res ipsa loquitur*, which is commonly translated, "the thing speaks for itself." The legal principle arises in negligence cases, for instance, when a surgeon leaves a sponge or other tool inside of a patient after a surgery. That sort of thing does not happen without someone having dropped the ball. Some overzealous lawyers, though, stretch the phrase *res ipsa loquitur* beyond its proper meaning, prompting others to expand, "*res ipsa loquitur, sed quid in infernos dicet?*" ("The thing speaks for itself, but what in the hell is it saying?")

So, ESPN is now getting aboard the bandwagon [that has not worked very well for Gatorade](#), and even has Gatorade aboard as a "founding partner." (Could be a case of the blind leading the blind.) Standing alone, given the willowy curves of the W, I begin thinking that this might be a roll-out for ESPN W for "women," but then I spy this banner ad:

BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE AN ATHLETE WITHIN.

CLICK TO EXPAND



Wait a minute. ESPN "Within"? Maybe an amateur site? Don't know. At this point, I've had to think *waaay* too much for being on the ESPN site, and I'm off clicking somewhere else. They had about 3-5 seconds to hook me, and I just ended up confused. (And it looks like [my initial surmise was correct](#), but now I don't get "because we all have an athlete within." Now I'm really confused.)

This is the problem with single-letter branding. One letter says a lot, but what in the hell is it saying?



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