

Social networking now big part of NASCAR world

Staff reports

NASCAR's social-networking numbers are impressive.

On Twitter, NASCAR says has 6,800 followers. Each of NASCAR's top three series have accounts along with 13 Cup drivers, nine Cup teams and 21 tracks where at least one of the three top NASCAR circuits run.

When it comes to Facebook, NASCAR's following has grown from 40,000 fans to 170,000 fans since the start of the year. Eleven Cup drivers have pages along with 23 tracks that host NASCAR events.

Then there is NASCAR's Citizen Journalists Media Corps.

With 30 Web sites given access to cover NASCAR, the Citizen Journalists are a group of reporters that range from professional to amateur experience covering NASCAR. One common theme is that each site is dedicated to providing information about NASCAR to a growing readership.

"We have been overwhelmed by the positive response since our initial announcement to form the NASCAR Citizen Journalist Media Corps last month," NASCAR Managing Director of Corporate Communications Ramsey Poston said earlier this month. "More voices speaking about NASCAR is good for the sport and is fan friendly. We intend to make the most of the changing media landscape."

"The National Motorsports Press Association comprises journalists dedicated to informing the public about motorsports," added Dustin Long, president of the NMPA. "We welcome citizen journalists to the media center in hopes that it increases the depth of knowledge of the fan base."

CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

Autoracing1.com/nascar.asp; Badgroove.com; Benchracing.onpitrow.com; Bleacherreport.com/nascar; Bump-drafts.com; Catchfence.com; Dalyplanet.blogspot.com; Everyjoe.com/topic/auto-racing; Thefastandthefabulous.com; Finallapradio.com; 4ever3blog.com; Frontstretch.com; Greenwhitechecker.typepad.com/green-whitechecker; Haddockintheaddock.com; Hardcoreracefans.com; InsiderRacingNews.com; Paddocktalk.com; Racedriven.com; Racejournalonline.com; Racetake.com; Racingnewsdigest.com; Racintoday.com; Rowdy.com; Rubbingsracing.com; Speedwaymedia.com; Thehotlap.com; Theracinggeek.com; TruckSeries.com.

"The sport is there, the fans are there, the need for information is there," said Jim Pedley, managing editor of Racintoday.com and NASCAR Citizen Journalists Media Corps member. "As more and more fans turn from newspapers to new sources for their racing information, and as more Web sites become more professional, NASCAR had to take notice and act. You've got to believe the fans will be the beneficiaries."

After a lengthy review which included evaluating independent Web sites on professionalism, reporting and commentary and use of social networking tools, 28 sites were invited to be part of the new media corps. In addition, NASCAR Public Relations has launched a page on Delicious.com (<http://delicious.com/NASCARSays>) that provides links to each of the Citizen Journalists Web sites.

Members of the corps will have the opportunity to apply for media credentials but like all media, will be expected to abide by the standards of professional conduct. They will also have access to other media-driven events and teleconferences and NASCAR's media-only Web site.

TWITTER

NASCAR P.R.@NASCARSays; NASCAR Nationwide Series P.R.@NASCAR_NNS; NASCAR Camping World Truck Series P.R. @NASCAR_Trucks; NASCAR Touring Series P.R.@NASCARHomeTrack; NASCAR Foundation@NASCAR_Foundat; NASCAR Hall of Fame@NASCARHall; Sprint@MissSprintCup; Nationwide@nationwide; AJ Allmendinger@AJDinger; Kyle Busch@mmsracingand@RidinWithRowdy; Robby Gordon@RobbyGordon; Kevin and DeLana Harvick@KevinHarvick and @DeLanaHarvick; Sam Hornish Jr.@SamHornish; Bobby Labonte@bobby_labonte; Juan Pablo Montoya@jpmontoya; Ryan Newman@RyanNewman39; Max Papis@maxpapis; Kyle Petty@kylepetty; David Ragan@UPS Racing; Elliott Sadler@ElliottSadler; Michael Waltrip@m55; Hendrick Motorsports @HendrickInfo; Joe Gibbs Racing@JoeGibbsRacing; Richard Childress Racing@RCRacing; Richard Petty Motorsports@RP-Motorsports; Bristol Motor Speedway@BMSupdates; Daytona International Raceway@DISUpdates; Dover International Speedway@MonsterMile; Indianapolis Motor Speedway@IndyTalk; Martinsville Speedway@ms1947; Pocono Raceway@poconoraceway; NASCAR.COM@NASCAR.COM; SPEED@speedtv.

NASCAR will provide access to the information, it's up to the journalists to tell the story.

The traditional media that cover the sport on a day-to-day basis will continue to be the cornerstone of NASCAR news and information. However, as traditional news coverage continues to decline across the board for all sports, it is important to recognize the emerging media sources that provide unique points of view to growing audiences.

Back to social networking.

UPS Racing is embracing social media to connect with fans and customers and build the personality and brand of its new driver, David Ragan. On Twitter, fans will be able to keep up with what Ragan does during off weeks and what's going on with his car and pit stops during the race.

At candy company Mars, M&Ms Racing has taken the lead in "digital engagement marketing" with Kyle Busch as its driver.

M&Ms is launching an ambitious social media program to generate conversations among race fans. It includes outreach to fans on message boards, blogs, microblogs like Twitter and social networking communities. M&Ms will execute online promotional giveaways and a creative blogger relations strategy. Mars hired FanScape to handle

FACEBOOK

Greg Biffle (The Greg Biffle Foundation); Kyle Busch (M&M'S® Racing with Kyle Busch); Carl Edwards (Carl Edwards); Bill Elliott (Motorcraft and Quick Lane Racing); Kevin Harvick (Official Kevin Harvick Page); Jimmie Johnson (Jimmie Johnson); Bobby Labonte (Bobby Labonte Official Page); Juan Pablo Montoya (Juan Pablo Montoya); Ryan Newman (Ryan Newman); David Ragan (UPS Racing); Brian Vickers (Brian Vickers); Penske Racing (Penske Racing); Red Bull Racing (Red Bull Racing Team); Richard Petty Motorsports (Richard Petty Motorsports); Roush Fenway Racing (Official Roush Fenway Racing Fan Club); Stewart-Haas Racing (Stewart-Haas Racing); Auto Club Speedway (Auto Club Speedway); Bristol Motor Speedway (Bristol Motor Speedway); Darlington Raceway (Darlington Raceway); Daytona International Raceway (Daytona International Speedway); Dover International Speedway (Dover International Raceway); Gateway International Raceway (Gateway International Raceway); Homestead-Miami Speedway (Homestead-Miami Speedway); Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Indianapolis Motor Speedway); Las Vegas Motor Speedway (Las Vegas Motor Speedway); Martinsville Speedway (Martinsville Speedway); Pocono Raceway (Pocono Raceway); NASCAR on ESPN (NASCAR on ESPN); Chevrolet (Team Chevy); Ford (Ford Racing)

day. Waltrip posts pictures and videos on a regular basis and directly responds (interacts) to fans. As of mid June, he had 11,400 fans on Facebook.

Kevin Harvick Inc. has launched "Kevin Harvick Fan Central," an online community and social networking site for fans of Harvick, the driver of the Richard Childress Racing No. 29 Chevrolet, and the co-owner of Kevin Harvick Inc.

The site launched on Jan. 26, 2009, and more than 1,900 fans have already signed-up. An average of 170 new fans join every day. Members have joined from nearly every state and across Canada

Office Depot has a new driver in Tony Stewart, piloting the No. 14 Office Depot/Old Spice Chevrolet. Office Depot is increasing its NASCAR online presence to hasten the transition, including the new OfficeDepotRacing.com. The site showcases the new team with exclusive content, customer promotions and special offers like "Tony's Smokin' Deals" — products and deals available to fans only at Office Depot.

Dale Earnhart Jr.'s Web site (dalejr.com) combines racing and lifestyle news, along with a gift shop and entre to fan club membership (\$34.88). The site will re-launch soon, with more fan elements/greater focus on "community." "Dale Jr.: the What and the Whatnot" has an online forum offering more fan interaction.

Earnhardt Jr., the sport's most popular driver, is a computer nut and an avid online gamer.

"He can take a computer apart and rebuild it," said Thayer Lavielle, VP Marketing and Brand Development for JR Motorsports. "We are firm believers that Dale Jr.'s fans deserve respect and a share of voice due to the time, energy and dedication they have invested in him and his family."

Infield Parking is a social network for all NASCAR fans co-founded by Earnhardt Jr. Open to all fans and drivers, Infield Parking is like a Facebook for NASCAR fans. It currently has about 60,000 members.

its NASCAR social networking and online activities.

M&Ms is getting deeper into Facebook and MySpace with pages for the No. 18 team, including behind-the-scenes video of Busch and Steve Addington, his crew chief, on Facebook and YouTube. Videos will include a tour of Joe Gibbs Racing, fun interviews with the pit crew and their practice sessions.

Brian Vickers and his limited liability company have built a social networking Web site called Club V.

Vickers, New York City resident, and driver of the No. 83 Red Bull Toyota, is a self-admitted tech geek, who hangs out at the Apple Store in Soho, near his NYC apartment.

Uniquely, on CLUB V fan comments are not censored — there's no moderator/web master. Vickers figures the site will be self policing and he has enough loyal fans to embarrass/shame off hecklers. If anyone uses an obscenity, an automatic feature changes the word.

Michael Waltrip was one of the first NASCAR drivers to create a Facebook profile as an effort to connect with his fans more closely.

Michael has been on Facebook since January and checks both his personal Facebook page and fan page multiple times a

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