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MELT, LLC and Thompson Featured in Special ADWEEK Sports Marketing Section!

Vince Thompson, CEO of MELT Profiled as He Shares His Expertise in Developing Sports Marketing Strategies!

ATLANTA, GA (February 7, 2011)—MELT, LLC, an award winning, Atlanta based fully-integrated marketing agency announced today that the company and its CEO, Vince Thompson, have been featured in ADWEEK, BRANDWEEK and MEDIAWEEK's special sports marketing section in the February 7, 2011 issue!

The article, entitled "Brands Build Excitement On and Off the Field" highlights MELT's breakthrough in the sports marketing world by making the "Coke Zero Countdown", the concert preceding the NCAA Men's Final Four Basketball Tournament, the first concert ever streamed live through Facebook Connect from a major sporting event.

Thompson also discusses the importance of leveraging digital, social media and mobile effectively so brands can use sports to build and enhance long-lasting fan experiences! Thompson explains, "The goal of multimedia sports marketing campaigns is to generate more activity at retail and on the shelf. The ability to sell something is paramount, and we have to understand what we can and can't do in a sports environment."

The ADWEEK, BRANDWEEK, and MEDIAWEEK article can be viewed in the February 7, 2011 print edition and online at <http://www.meltatl.com/MELHome.php#press> <<http://www.meltatl.com/MELHome.php#press>> and click on "ADWEEK-MELT Sports Marketing Feature". To view the exclusive ADWEEK Video Interview with Thompson, visit <http://www.adweekmedia.com/aw/custom-reports/sports-marketing-2011/index.jsp> <<http://www.adweekmedia.com/aw/custom-reports/sports-marketing-2011/index.jsp>>.

About MELT

MELT, LLC (Marketing, Entertainment, Lifestyle, Trends) is an Atlanta based, fully-integrated marketing agency offering clients advertising, original content development, digital, social media, event and experiential marketing, retail and consumer promotions, brand strategy and sports property evaluation and activation. Founded by CEO and President Vince Thompson in 2001, MELT represents major consumer brands and corporations including The Coca-Cola Company, Fox Sports, MAXIM, Avon, State Farm, Lance, and The Southeastern Conference. To learn more about MELT's clients, services and results, please visit their web site at www.meltatl.com.

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Unlimited Power

Technology helps sports marketers reach fans from all possible angles

By Richard Brunelli

On Jan. 27, Comcast's deal to control 51 percent of NBC Universal finally became a reality. About a week before the deal closed, NBC Universal (NBCU) illustrated how the vast marketing capabilities would be leveraged when it announced the formation of the NBC Sports Agency. The in-house unit will stitch together broad-based, multiplatform marketing campaigns that marry the considerable sports-related assets of NBCU with those of Comcast, including Versus, the Golf Channel, ExerciseTV and more than a dozen regional sports networks.

John Miller, the NBCU executive who has been tapped to build and then run the Sports Agency, says the agency will maximize the potential of new media platforms.

Ron Seaver, the president of the National Sports Forum, an organization that stages pan-league summits and the annual ADchievement Awards, agrees. Seaver believes sports marketers need to engage with their audience in a 360-degree experience that comes before, during and after events. He says today's technology tools are ideal for doing just that.

"Social and mobile are great ways to get out in front of your audience and stay there," he says. Many of the large advertisers in the sports-marketing arena—automakers, banks, real estate firms and investment houses—have scaled back on programs. As a result, teams and leagues are looking at new business opportunities that can raise their profile.

Case in point: In an unconventional gambit, Major League Baseball's San Diego Padres signed on to sponsor military appreciation activities at a recent Torrey Pines golf tournament. "We have to get away from the same, old way of doing things," Seaver contends. "That's not going to cut it anymore."

Indeed, the entire sponsorship area appears to be showing impressive resiliency, despite the tepid economic turnaround. A report released in January by IEG found that sponsorship spending in 2010 fared better than expected and that 2011 would also be strong. Sports sponsorships, which IEG estimates accounts for 68 percent of all sponsorship spending in North America, generated \$11.66 billion in 2010, a 3.4 percent increase over the previous year. This

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—Ron Seaver, National Sports Forum

year, spending will rise another 6.1 percent, to \$12.38 billion.

Another potentially fertile ground for sports-minded marketers is taking shape on the media side. ESPN continues to expand its offerings. The cable sports channel already has birthed highly targeted online hubs around cities including Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and New York. The network followed that up recently with a novel arrangement with the University of Texas. The 20-year, \$300-million initiative, which is expected to launch in September, will cover about 200 sporting events per year as well as a variety of academic and cultural happenings at the Austin school.

Richard Didow, the owner and CEO of Catch the Moment, a Houston-based event marketing firm, says such blockbuster deals enable advertisers to reach their target in unprecedented ways. Didow says new media platforms are integral to marketing success, particularly among tech-savvy younger consumers.

"Anything that allows brands to engage consumers in a meaningful way and then allows them to begin sharing the experience with friends via social networking channels has become paramount to our clients," he says. "When you consider the role mobile devices play in everyone's lives, it's apparent that incorporating another fun way for fans to use their devices and tie that action into your brand is important."

Likewise, Vince Thompson, president and CEO of Atlanta-based integrated marketing agency MELT, knows about the strength of mobile and social in the sports marketing world. The company has developed innovative campaigns for Coca-Cola, including event marketing programs tied to the NCAA Men's Final Four.

"Technology allows fans of all generations and ages to follow a favorite sport, team or athlete constantly," Thompson says. "That high level of communication fuels the fan's desire to purchase tickets and to consume media at home, on the road or in the stadium or arena. From an advertising and marketing standpoint, that will create more opportunities to customize the consumer experience of the sporting event." ■



Brands Build Excitement On and Off the Field

Beverage giant **Coca-Cola** understands the power of sports marketing. It took its efforts to a new level last year with the 2010 Coke Zero Countdown at the NCAA Men's Final Four in Indianapolis last March, developed by Atlanta-based integrated marketing agency MELT.

To generate even more excitement around the college basketball championships, Coke's "Countdown to Zero" featured a three-hour show that included a performance by rock band Daughtry and a pep rally hosted by Ryan Seacrest. To extend the concert's reach, the event was promoted via social media sites of all the celebrities and companies involved.

"By producing the first concert to be streamed live through Facebook Connect from a major sporting event, we helped Coke conquer uncharted territory," says Vince Thompson, president and CEO of MELT.

Katie Bayne, Coke's president and general manager, Sparkling Beverages, says it was "fun to watch new models of media take shape. We wanted to take this event to people globally so all the fans who couldn't be in Indianapolis could still enjoy this experience."

In addition to 50 million impressions from pre-promotion efforts, the Countdown to Zero program delivered a highly engaged audience that watched for an average of 32 minutes and shared the experience with more than 450,000 Facebook friends, reports Thompson.

"This was a great example of collaboration," he says. "By bringing so many disparate people and properties together, we were able to globalize a local event and integrate multiple brands under one property."

Thompson says one of the lessons for brands from the Final Four promotion is that social media strategies can significantly extend fan involvement with live sporting events. "A decade ago, fans would watch the NCAA final games on Saturday and Monday nights," he

says. "Now it's a weekend-long activity that can be shared with friends around the country, providing substantial incremental value to brands. We have even bigger plans for this year's Final Four."

In developing marketing strategies, Thompson says MELT looks at the assets of the brand, the event and the teams to develop a personalized experience for the consumer. "We look at it as building a long-term engagement with the fan," he says. "The networks have elevated the TV viewing experience, and more consumers participate in fantasy leagues and sports gaming, raising the overall level of fan sophistication."

By leveraging digital, social and mobile effectively, Thompson says brands can use sports to build long-lasting fan experiences. For example, MELT created a branded digital and broadcast TV network—Full Throttle Television (FTTV)—that focuses on National Hot Rod Association events sponsored by its client, Full Throttle Energy Drink, a Coca-Cola product. "We brought in multiple partners, including Ford, the U.S. Army, Summit Racing and Carhartt, and spun other shows out of FTTV," says Thompson.

A global content distribution platform, FTTV offers fans an up-close look at drag racing drivers, crew members and teams, while offering interactive experiences at all 23 NHRA races. "Coca-Cola was looking for a more innovative way to drive brand preference, maximize its return on investment, and better connect with the 22 million U.S. fans of the NHRA," says Thompson.

In its first year, FTTV has generated more than 15 million impressions worldwide with access to 20 million viewers. In 2010, FTTV premiered on male-oriented networks MavTV and TUFF TV, reaching an additional 40 million viewers. Also, more than 1 million fans at NHRA races took part in the "Full Throttle Hard Working Garage" activation, which included beverage samples.

For Coca-Cola and other brands, the goal of a multimedia sports marketing campaign is to generate more activity at retail and on the shelf. "The ability to sell something is paramount, and we have to understand what we can and can't do in a sports environment," Thompson says.

MELT, an acronym for Marketing, Entertainment, Lifestyle and Trends, is an agency whose capabilities include social media, original content development and production, events and experiential programming, brand strategy, consumer research, retail promotions, and cause and social ethics marketing. For more information: www.meltatl.com. ■



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—MELT president and CEO Vince Thompson