

MSR passes 2 million pageviews

Written by Jim Ecker

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Carl Whiting and I have had a running gag ever since we launched the Metro Sports Report website on Jan. 3, 2011.

At the beginning, we tried to guess how long it would take before we had 1,000 pageviews. Then it was 5,000 pageviews. Then 10,000.

Well, along came Joel Northrup and his deep-felt conviction that he would not wrestle a girl at the state tournament. That was in February of 2011 and helped put us on the map, with media outlets all over the country citing the MSR for breaking the story.

We hit 10,000 pageviews a lot faster than we ever would have imagined, thanks to Joel.

Today I'm delighted to report that we've surpassed two million pageviews a lot faster than we ever would have dreamed. It took a little over two years, which we think is pretty good for a humble little website that Mike Koolbeck and I run out of our homes in Cedar Rapids.

We reached 2,000,000 pageviews this past Thursday. Believe it or not, I had Thursday in the pool for when we'd reach the magic number. Carl says I win a free subscription to the Metro Sports Report website, which is darn generous of him, considering everyone gets it for free.

Carl is our director of advertising and marketing. He's one of the calmest people I know and

handy to have as a friend and sounding board every time I think the sky is falling.

Carl always assures me that everything is going to be OK. So far he's been right, in more ways than one.

We had about 750,000 pageviews in Year 1 of our little project. We reached 1,000,000 pageviews on April 4, 2012, so it took 15 months to get our first million. It took only 9 1/2 months to get our second million, so we've picked up the pace quite a bit.

Jarrold Uthoff decided to bolt the University of Wisconsin after one year and a big part of that story fell into our laps, giving us more national attention and more readers. We broke the part about Wisconsin Coach Bo Ryan adding all of the ACC schools and Florida to Uthoff's no-transfer list, prompting a severe backlash against Ryan.

We engaged in a little advocacy journalism to help "Save the Mississippi Valley" as a football conference and won more friends along the way.

We broke the story about Washington High School parents complaining to the school district about football coach Tony Lombardi, a story that risked making some people mad but had to be written.

We launched the website two years ago by covering the seven major high schools in Cedar Rapids and Marion, then added Cedar Valley Christian in August of 2011.

We added Kirkwood Community College to our lineup this November, a move that's been very popular at Kirkwood and among KCC fans. A number of people liked our story about Doug Wagemester reaching 400 wins as the Kirkwood men's basketball coach, and we've received some nice feedback from Saturday's story about Kim Muhl reaching 700 wins as the women's basketball coach.

Many of our most popular stories have been written by Tom Fruehling and Sher Jasperse, a pair of superb feature writers who have an uncanny knack of telling a great story and getting their subjects to reveal fascinating details of their lives.

Go back and read Tom's story about Ryo Ueno, a foreign exchange student from Japan who is swimming for the Washington Warriors this season. You also should read Sher's story about Friday Chuol, whose journey has taken her from Kenya to Kirkwood.

Many people appreciated our stories about Kennedy student Drew Wall, the incredible young man who lost his battle with cancer this fall. He only had a short time on earth, but Drew touched many lives and is still being felt in the community with the "Just Drew It" shirts you see all over the place.

One person I know saw a "Just Drew It" shirt on a mannequin at Lindale Mall. Members of the Iowa City West boys basketball team wore "Just Drew It" T-shirts when they hosted Kennedy last week.

Everybody who attended the "Celebration of Life" services for Drew remembers the "Letter of Recommendation to God" that Kennedy Principal Mary Wilcynski read to the celebrants that day. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, which made writing it all down a little difficult.

Without a doubt, the articles about Drew Wall were among the saddest we've written. They belong in the same category as the stories we've had about Tasha Roundtree, the former Washington basketball player who was murdered last September. The case remains unsolved.

We've cried a little along the way, but mostly we've had a lot of fun. Mike Koolbeck and I are the co-owners and have hogged all the important-sounding titles like president, vice president, editor and managing editor, but don't let any of that stuff fool you. It's been a team effort by several dozen talented and dedicated people - writers, photographers, advertising sales representatives and website administrators.

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The Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association gave the Metro Sports Report a nice honor this month, giving us the media award for Eastern Iowa for our coverage of high school baseball in 2012. That was very kind of them and much appreciated.

We're not done yet. We anticipate making some major announcements in the next few weeks about upcoming projects as we continue to expand the company. There's nothing we can say publicly yet, but please stay tuned.

As of Sunday afternoon, Carl tells me we've had 2,015,160 pageviews since Jan. 3, 2011. We've also had 718,343 total visits and 222,954 unique visitors.

We thank each and every one of you.