

MSR bouncing back with new business model

Written by Jim Ecker

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First of all, I'd like to thank everyone who has supported the Metro Sports Report since we launched the website in 2011. And I'd also like to thank everyone who reacted with sadness and disappointment when we announced March 13 that the company was broke and having to curtail operations.

Your words of support and encouragement made me try even harder to find a way to keep the Metro Sports Report alive. I'm a stubborn guy, and too many people had worked long and hard to simply let go.

For those reasons and many others, I am delighted to announce that we'll be bouncing back this month with a new business model that will reduce our expenses, improve our bottom line and keep us on the job.

The idea hit when I was driving around Cedar Rapids about a month ago: What if we switched from "general" advertising revenues that supported our entire operation and moved toward "targeted" advertising that would support our coverage of a particular school or team?

It's no secret that our advertising support was stronger in certain parts of the Metro area than others. For example, there was financial support for our coverage of schools A, B and C, but little support for schools D, E and F, but we were trying to stretch our resources to cover everyone as fairly and equally as possible.

Unfortunately, we went broke trying. I'm no financial genius, but I was smart enough to pull the plug as our checking account approached zero with little or no additional money on the horizon. I was willing to operate with a thin checkbook, but I was not willing to go into debt and owe people money. That simply was not an option.

So here's our new business model: The Metro Sports Report will only cover the schools and teams that have significant financial support from their business friends in the community. It

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probably means that we won't be covering everyone in the future, but we'll cover as much as we can. It's not the optimal way to provide blanket coverage of our Metro schools and teams, but quite frankly it's the only way for us to survive until we win the lottery.

I've set the financial bar at a moderate level, in my opinion, to make it possible for the community to rally around their favorite school or team and for the Metro Sports Report to stay in business.

Starting this month, we will cover any high school or college in the Metro area that has at least \$10,000 in advertising support from their friends in the community on an annual basis. The deal is being extended to Jefferson, Kennedy, Linn-Mar, Marion, Prairie, Washington, Xavier and Cedar Valley Christian. It's also being extended to Kirkwood, Coe and Mount Mercy.

We're also making the same offer for coverage of the Kernels, RoughRiders, Titans and Rampage. We'll cover those teams if we can receive at least \$10,000 in annual targeted advertising on their behalf.

In addition, we'll cover other organizations for a lesser amount if their season lasts for only a few months. Those deals will be negotiated separately.

It's rare for a media outlet to bare its soul like this in public, but we've always been honest with our readers and sponsors. This is what we need to stay in business, and we're appealing to the community for help.

The new business model is already working. We already have three "clients" in place and are working hard to secure others. We'll announce who they are in the near future and will begin covering them later this month.

There's something else that needs to be said in advance: Although the vast majority of our stories will continue to be "positive" in nature, we will not shy away from controversial topics when they arise. If we need to write stories about high school football coaches who have been accused of abusive behavior, we certainly will. And if one of "our" coaches gets ejected from a

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game, we'll write about that too.

As they say in the business: No fear, no favors. And if it costs us an advertising contract, so be it.

We've never stopped covering Kirkwood and we've been keeping an eye on the state investigation of the Linn-Mar football program. We'll be spreading our wings again in other directions in the near future, so please hang with us a little longer until we're rolling again.

And please let me know if you'd like to purchase advertising on our website in support of your favorite school or team. The money is not going to come from the schools, not when some of them don't have enough money for school librarians. The money needs to come from friends in the community who care about a particular school or team.

You can always reach me at (319) 390-4236 or by e-mail at Jim.Ecker@MetroSportsReport.com.

Thanks again for your support.