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# Fans invade Facebook

## New 'apps' bring NYers together

By Kyle Stack  
 Special to amNewYork

Del Shon needed another way to follow the Knicks. The 25-year-old financial analyst has been a devoted fan despite the team's struggles and controversies.

"I have games on mute [on TV] while I study," said Shon, of Harlem. "I usually get free tickets to their games from season-ticket holders who have no interest in going to the games."

But even as he actively maintained his connection with the team, Shon said he was missing a different kind of fan experience — specifically, "the ability to communicate with other down-and-out Knicks fans."

Now, Shon and thousands of Knicks fans can communicate in novel ways online, thanks to new sports fan applications developed for Facebook.com, the social networking Web site.

"Our aim is to serve the fans of every sports community globally," said Kevin Chou, co-founder and CEO of Watercooler, Inc., the Mountain View, Calif.-based developer who created the leading group of downloadable fan applications, which cover more than 600 pro and college sports teams. Each fan application's home page invites users to interact with each other while showing support for their teams.

Users can post photos and videos, discuss topics on message boards, write and post articles, create and answer team trivia questions and earn points by "recruiting" fellow users to join the team's group or starting a successful online "wave."

Users with enough points can upgrade to the jersey of their team's most legendary player. "I like the concept of acquiring points," Shon



A fan application on Facebook.com allows users to generate original trivia questions.

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## If you're not on Facebook.com

**Other ways to connect**  
 There are several ways besides Facebook for fans to interact with each other online — and with their teams. MySpace offers the ability to form groups of your favorite teams, write blogs and upload videos to your personal page. ESPN.com, taking a page from Facebook and MySpace, allows sports fans to form a free profile for which they can pick their favorite teams, write blogs, search for

friends, send personal messages, write on each others' pages and post their results from ESPN's fantasy leagues. In addition to official Web sites, which tempt fans to register and receive newsletters, many sports teams have independent Web sites run by fans. These fan-run sites vary in quality, but a common feature is a message board where fans vociferously discuss the latest happenings with their teams. (Kyle Stack)

## Fan popularity

- Most-subscribed New York-area pro teams on Facebook.com fan applications:**
1. Giants, 55,687 fans
  2. Yankees, 53,287
  3. Mets, 34,875
  4. Rangers, 30,040
  5. Devils, 17,545
  6. Jets, 14,586
  7. Islanders, 9,493
  8. Knicks, 8,441
  9. Nets, 4,222
- Most-subscribed pro teams overall among the four major sports:**
- NHL: Montreal Canadiens, 235,983 fans
  - NFL: New England Patriots, 226,465
  - NBA: Boston Celtics, 100,410 fans
  - MLB: Boston Red Sox, 84,606 (all totals as of Dec. 19)

said. "Nobody wants to be a water boy," he said, referring to the label for users who have zero points.

"The more you recruit, the closer you become to a legend like Patrick Ewing," Shon said.

Andrew Bua, of Woodhaven, joined the Jets' fan group on Facebook.

"I think the jersey upgrades are pretty cool for recruiting, but nothing beats the trivia," said Bua, 20, a media relations intern with the Mets. "Being a Jets fan all my life and knowing all that small stuff makes it fun to do."

Chou hopes these interac-

tive features maintain the interest of the 700,000-plus users who patrol the applications daily. More than 10 million users have added the sports and 120-plus TV show fan applications since Watercooler released them in July.

Despite the applications' success, certain elements, such as a chat feature, have not worked as planned.

"Real-time chat is a feature we were very excited about," Chou said. "Our usage number there has only been in the few thousands. We're going to revamp the feature and

launch it again in 2008." The early kinks aside, the applications have helped bind together Facebook users who cheer for the same teams. There may even be a psychological benefit to generating, and sustaining, a communication line with other fans.

"Airing out my frustrations with other fans helps me realize that I am not alone," Shon said.

**Our aim is to serve the fans of every sports community globally.**  
 Watercooler Inc.  
 CEO Kevin Chou

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