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Tuesday, January 18th, 2011 at 11:00 am | 3 responses

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All-Star Amore For Amar'e

The Knicks lead a campaign for their first All-Star starter since '92.

by Kyle Stack / @KyleStack

It's been 19 years since a New York Knick started an All-Star Game. By reaching out to a world-renowned DJ, incorporating their fans into a new marketing campaign and creating VoteKnicks.com, the Knicks hope that streak won't have a chance to reach 20.

On Dec. 15, the Knicks launched their "Vote Knicks" All-Star campaign, in which they encouraged fans to vote for Amar'e Stoudemire, Raymond Felton and Danilo Gallinari as All-Star starters. The campaign was led by the "One Step At A Time" video mashup, created by DJ Steve Porter, which showed Stoudemire, Felton and Gallinari making highlight plays on the court and interacting with Knicks fans off of it. Many NBA fans are already familiar with Porter, who's integrated famous NBA press conference sound bites into his Press Hop mashups.



The Knicks' early-season success, driven by free agent additions Stoudemire and Felton, gave the team a new identity. With fans desperate for team success — the Knicks' six-year playoff drought is tied for the longest in the League with the Minnesota Timberwolves — the Knicks felt emboldened to use their renewed fan interest by getting at least one player named an All-Star starter. The VoteKnicks website leads that charge.

"It's another key step in our fan engagement strategy," said Howard Jacobs, executive vice president of marketing and sales for the MSG Sports division of Madison Square Garden, which owns the Knicks. "We really felt this was an opportunity to set up this digital platform built around VoteKnicks."

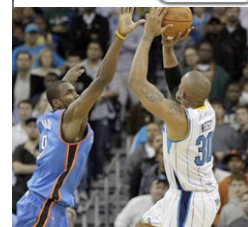
Although the mashup led the march in the "Vote Knicks" campaign, the Knicks planned an Internet-based strategy that has taken advantage of its social media platforms. They have used their more than 355,000 Facebook page fans — the seventh-highest number of all NBA teams — to draw interest not just on that page, but through Facebook links on VoteKnicks.com and KnicksNow.com.

A visit to the Knicks' Facebook page brings up a VoteKnicks.com advertisement down the left side of the front page. The mashups are even incorporated into the team's wall, so that fans can view the videos straight from the Facebook page. A fan wishing to access the Knicks' home website is first presented with a landing page that enables fans to vote for Stoudemire, Felton and Gallinari through the NBA's website or by text message.

Like the first mashup, Porter's subsequent "#1 Reason To Vote" piece — the video shows Knicks fans, including celebrities such as Tracy Morgan, encouraging fans to vote — has been distributed through television, ESPN Radio, fan text messaging, dozens of team events and multiple times each home game on the scoreboard. Still, the mashups are the most identifiable part of the campaign. Porter wrote in an e-mail message that he wanted the mashups to produce a vibe that symbolized fans' excitement of the Knicks.

"There's a really strong feeling going around that the Knicks are on their way back to becoming a

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championship-caliber team," Porter wrote. "My goal was to create a piece that had a strong sense of inspiration, and back it up with strong highlights."

It's evident Stoudemire takes the lead role in "One Step..." with his declaration that the Knicks are in the "start of a new era." Porter recognized that particular comment as the perfect fit for the mashup's hook.

"Amar'e actually has a really great voice for this kind of stuff," Porter wrote, before noting he was fortunate that Stoudemire made the "new era" comment. "It doesn't always go that way, and when you have only weaker vocal tones to work with, you just do your best to make them shine."

Jacobs explained that Porter's pop culture relevance meshed perfectly with the Knicks' own pop culture appeal. When the franchise is successful, it attracts crowds of New York City celebrities, who represent industries stretching from the financial sector to pop music.

While Gallinari is a stretch to even make the All-Star team, and with Felton in contention only for a reserve spot due Dwyane Wade and Derrick Rose's expected starting spots at guard, it's Stoudemire who was expected to benefit most from the Vote Knicks campaign — that expectation has turned out well.

Stoudemire is averaging 26 points per game — tied for his career best mark — and nine rebounds per tilt. The impact those numbers have had on the Knicks' record — they were 16-9 the day the Vote Knicks campaign launched — led Stoudemire into a battle with [Kevin Garnett](#) for the second forward on the East squad. ([LeBron James](#) has been the undisputed front runner at forward, and for the entire East squad, for that matter.)

On Dec. 16, one day after "Vote Knicks" commenced, the NBA released its first All-Star ballot. It showed that Stoudemire had earned 327,626 votes, trailing Garnett's 456,111 votes. (James had 607,994 votes.) Yet Stoudemire nearly doubled his votes by the second ballot return Dec. 30, with 637,486 to Garnett's 712,555. That's a 95 percent increase in votes compared to Garnett's 56 percent rise.

Stoudemire experienced a modest 33 percent increase for the third ballot's return on Jan. 6, up to 826,628. Yet Garnett's vote increase stalled even more than between the first and second ballots, going up to just 850,687 as Garnett missed games due to a right calf injury suffered Dec. 29.

The fourth ballot's results, announced Jan. 13, displayed the "Vote Knicks" campaign had perhaps taken a significant effect on Stoudemire's All-Star starter candidacy. His votes shot back up 38 percent, as he surpassed Garnett's 1,049,544 votes with 1,143,391 votes in his favor.

Felton and Gallinari surely appreciate the Knicks' efforts to increase their All-Star votes. "It's a good thing," Felton said after the Knicks' Jan. 14 game against the [Sacramento Kings](#). We'll see what happens at the end of the month. It's great."

However, Stoudemire is still the focus. Even though Garnett has finally made his return to the [Celtics](#) lineup after missing nine games, Stoudemire's momentum might seal his position as an All-Star starter. And Knicks fans might get to see their first starter in the big game since Patrick Ewing donned the East uniform in Orlando in 1992.

"One Step At A Time":

"#1 Reason to Vote":

Rajon Rondo's first SLAM cover shoot.

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[THE REAL RIGGS](#) Posted: Jan.18 at 11:18 am

gallinari? lol what?

greg Posted: Jan.18 at 11:33 am

this guy is really good i do this stuff at school all day for my program but this guy could be the prof

[dfrance21](#) Posted: Jan.18 at 5:53 pm

I'm KG's biggest fan, but Amare deserves to start, he's killin it this year.

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