

ProPlayerConnect Goes After Celeb Endorsement

By Ty McMahan

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After 13 years in the NFL, Jason Kyle is tackling the Internet with a Web site that links professional athletes with endorsements, free products and opportunities for celebrity appearances.

ProPlayerConnect.com Inc. is backed by venture capital firm Arizona Bay, former NFL quarterback Vinny Testaverde and Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip. The company told VentureWire it has raised \$600,000 with an eye toward a new round of venture capital later this year.

“You see a lot of guys at the top who get a lot of deals and a lot of opportunities that 98 percent don’t get,” said Kyle, the company’s chief executive and a longtime linebacker with the Seattle Seahawks and Carolina Panthers. “Out of that need, I put it online to fill it.”

With more than 150 pro athletes registered on ProPlayerConnect.com, the Web site has already served more than 3,000 offers between businesses and athletes. Kyle said offers have ranged from endorsements, free products and discounts to requests for celebrity appearances. ProPlayerConnect is available to active and retired pro athletes from baseball, basketball, boxing, football, golf, hockey, mixed martial arts, motor sports, the Olympics, rodeo, soccer, tennis and the X Games.

Companies can view athlete profiles posted by the athletes themselves and contract with those athletes directly for appearances and events or offer them free products or sponsorship opportunities.

Alternately, businesses can post requests for endorsements, sponsorships, free products, discounts, job offerings and appearance opportunities. After creating a profile on ProPlayerConnect, athletes can access and contact registered businesses to participate in their sponsorships, events or organizations and take advantage of offerings. Athletes can contact one another directly through the site, and businesses can post career opportunities for retired athletes to search.

“Being in the NFL for over 20 years, I was excited to find a way to connect with guys I played with,” Testaverde said.

Kyle said the business model is simple: Companies pay to get their products in front of athletes.

The Scottsdale, Ariz.-based company currently has a team of 10.

<http://www.proplayerconnect.com>