

Danica and Tony Stewart team for GoDaddy



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(Photo: Garry Eller HAROLD
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GoDaddy may be revamping its image, but it apparently still has miles to clock with Danica Patrick.

It's about to pair Patrick in a new commercial, scheduled to debut this week, with Tony Stewart -- the NASCAR star and co-owner of her racing team. In the ad, the two keep trying to out-prank each other. It's the first time the racing stars have appeared together in a GoDaddy spot.

For Patrick, the journey just keeps rolling. The race driver has appeared in some 25 GoDaddy commercials since 2007 -- and also has starred in a record 13 total Super Bowl commercials, more than any other celebrity.

While GoDaddy has not committed to returning to the Super Bowl in 2015, Patrick says, if it does, she wants to be right there with them. "It's the high point of the year for me, every year," says Patrick, in a phone interview.

For the moment, GoDaddy remains slightly cagey about its Super Bowl ad plans. "We have to go through analysis," says Barb Rechterman, chief marketing officer. "You don't do 10 Super Bowls in a row just because they're fun."

For GoDaddy, it's a new marketing ballgame that may or may not mesh with the Super Bowl. Its new image and campaign theme is all about appealing to owners of small businesses -- who might want GoDaddy's domain name and web hosting services. That means out with the sexy, racy stuff and in with the funny, how-we-can-help-you messaging.

Last year, GoDaddy began the ad shift to focus on how the company helps small business owners with online tools to create websites and to help make sure consumers find the businesses online.

After all, nearly six in 10 small businesses are run by women, notes Rechterman. They don't just want racy images and punchlines, she says. They want answers. "Now, we provoke -- without being provocative."

The new spot, rewritten but not produced by GoDaddy's new agency, BFG9000, offers answers -- with a smile. In it.

Patrick is seen in Stewart's race car garage, trying to explain to viewers that they can get a free domain name when they purchase the Website Builder from GoDaddy. But each time she tries to talk, Stewart purposely starts using his noisy air wrench, and cuts her off. This happens several times, before a clearly-annoyed Patrick finally manages to explain the deal.

But Patrick gets the last laugh. The ad end's with Stewart's car up on blocks -- with all four tires missing. A guilty-looking Patrick smirks, while holding the air wrench in her hands.

Keeping Patrick -- who is kind of like a small business owner herself -- under contract could be key for GoDaddy, says Denise Lee Yohn, a marketing consultant and author of the book *What Great Brands Do*. "Guys want to date her and gals want to be her."

Patrick says she prefers GoDaddy's new brand direction. But would she go back to ol' sexy stuff if GoDaddy asked? "I'd be surprised if they did," says Patrick, who is under contract through 2015. "But I'm on board for anything they do."

Also, Patrick says, she even took on Stewart on the set in a car shop version of arm wrestling. Patrick and Stewart each held a heavy air wrench up in the air -- with the loser dropping an arm first.

Sound a bit macho? Well, she may just be blowing hot air, but Patrick says, she won.

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