

The Game: Fans Grade D-Wade An 'A'; Favre QBs Rayovac Campaign

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THE letter "A" comes before "D" in the alphabet, but D-Wade—as in Dwyane Wade—is ahead of A-Rod—aka Alex Rodriguez—when it comes to public perception about talent and image, according to a recent poll.

Both men are in demand by marketers. Miami Heat guard Wade, represented by CSMG, Chicago, recently added T-Mobile to an endorsement roster that includes Lincoln, Gatorade, Converse and Topps. New York Yankees infielder Rodriguez, whose agent is Scott Boras, includes on his heavy-hitter list Nike and Pepsi. Both are MVPs: Wade in the 2005-06 playoffs during Miami's championship drive; Rodriguez in 2003 (with the Texas Rangers) and 2005 (Yankees).

But there is a separation between the two players in the arena of public opinion. In a survey conducted in late October by E-Poll Market Research, Encino, Calif., 65% said of D-Wade they either liked him or liked him a lot, while only 3% said they disliked him. A-Rod's numbers were less favorable: 35% either liked him or liked him a lot while 25% disliked him. Concurrently, just 2% of those surveyed said Wade was "overexposed" while 23% pinned that tag on A-Rod—although 55% called him "talented."

E-Poll surveys 1,100 people per week and has research on the public's opinions of 2,300 athletes and celebrities.

Wade's "likeable" score jumped 9% from an E-Poll survey in January, aided by his success on national TV during the NBA playoffs. Rodriguez's numbers have remained steady since he joined the Yanks in February 2004, despite what seems to be a rise in his number of local critics. But the numbers are down significantly from an E-Poll in April 2003, when he was with Texas; then, 46% either liked him or liked him a lot and only 12% disliked him. As Wade can attest, championships are gold.

E-Poll's list of best-liked athletes in surveys conducted over the past year includes Michael Jordan, Brett Favre, Peyton Manning and Cal Ripken, Jr.

(Which other athletes are favored by consumers? See the E-Poll top 25 at Brandweek.com.)

Favre Takes Charge

Speaking of Brett Favre, the Green Bay Packers veteran quarterback will star in a campaign for Rayovac batteries, touting something with which he is familiar: strength and durability. "More power for your money," via Hanon McKendry, Grand Rapids, Mich., includes TV breaking Nov. 8 on network and cable; Internet and POP support. Spend was not given. The spot sees Favre in a store buying batteries. A voice reminiscent of an NFL Films documentary details his moves. When he goes to pay Favre asks the cashier, "Does he always do that?" Turns out the voice is the store manager on the PA system.

Favre signed a two-year deal in August with Rayovac's parent company, Spectrum Brands, Atlanta, which is looking to boost its image after having disclosed in July "that full year 2006 earnings will be substantially lower" than previously determined. "Moving forward with Brett Favre will strengthen Rayovac's brand recognition and be a catalyst for driving their performance and value propositions home to the consumer," said Bill Danhof, evp-client services at Hanon McKendry. Favre's agent is James "Bus" Cook.

Extra Innings: T-Mobile will be the first presenting sponsor of NBA all-star game voting. Ballots will drop Nov. 13 at T-Mobile locations and NBA arenas—13 of which will have, for the first time, the ballot in Spanish. A T-Mobile sweepstakes with D-Wade supporting its "Fave 5" platform will offer a trip to the all-star game Feb. 16 in Las Vegas. Separately, 2K Sports will be presenting partner of an all-star ballot sweepstakes, also dangling a trip to the game.

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