



My mother taught me not to brag, so this column could be difficult to write. On the other hand, Dizzy Dean said it ain't bragging if you can back it up.

Sorry, mom. It's time to brag a little.

The Metro Sports Report marks its six-month anniversary today on July 3. We officially launched the website on Jan. 3, not knowing exactly what to expect, but here we are.

To be completely honest, we did not expect all of this. We thought, and hoped, the Metro area would enjoy our little venture, but the response has been phenomenal.

Yes, that's the right word. Phenomenal.

We've had 356,008 page views on the Metro Sports Report website in six months. Let me say that again, in case you dozed off ... 356,008 page views in six months.

Please remember, we're serving a Metro area in Linn County of roughly 211,000 people, according to the 2010 census, and some of those kids can't read yet. So 356,008 page views seems pretty good.

We've had 105,436 visits, according to Google Analytics, including 39,255 unique visitors. You probably want to know the definition of a "unique visitor," and according to Google it actually means a unique computer address.

Google cannot count how many people look at the website, because people share computers and there's no way of knowing how many or how often. Instead, Google counts the number of "unique computers" that visit the website, based on a computer's unique address.

Confused? That's OK, we've been wrestling with that definition for about six months.

Here's another of my favorite statistics: During the month of June, we attracted 231 brand-new unique visitors every single day. Every single day!

Think about that number for a minute. That means we had more than 1,500 new visitors every week and nearly 7,000 in June alone. More people are finding us every day, and they keep coming back.

We have readers in Minneapolis, New York City and Chicago, all on our list of top-10 cities. Cedar Rapids is No.1, as you probably guessed.

Here's another eye-popper: We've had readers in more than 50 countries and territories outside of the United States. Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom top that list, and it's truly worldwide.

There's somebody in Guam who spends a lot of time on the website, so if you're reading this column, we'd like to pass along special greetings from the Heartland of America.

By now, you probably know what the Metro Sports Report is all about. It's quite simple, really.

Written by Jim Ecker

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We're trying to cover the heck out of the major high schools in Cedar Rapids and Marion. All seven major schools, all 21 varsity sports, 365 days of the year.

We have game stories, photos, features, columns, breaking news, standings, stats, schedules, poll questions, alumni reports. You name it, and we try to supply it.

We've put together a roster of talented, passionate writers, photographers, contributors and sales people who have a commitment to the local community, people who take great pride in their work. We think it shows.

The feedback from the community has been gratifying. People stop us at games and say thanks for covering their school, their teams, their sons and daughters, their neighbors. They thank us for providing information they can't get anywhere else and wish us well. That's always very nice to hear.

By the way, we'll be adding the Cedar Valley Christian School to our lineup now that they've joined the Iowa High School Athletic Association and Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union. And yes, we'll be covering their eight-man football team this fall.

Cedar Valley Christian will join Jefferson, Kennedy, Linn-Mar, Marion, Prairie, Washington and Xavier with a regular presence on the website, giving us an elite eight in the Metro area. We welcome them aboard.

On behalf of Mike Koolbeck, my partner with the Metro Sports Report, we'd like to thank everyone for your support. This has been a labor of love for both of us, and for many others who have made major contributions to the MSR.

We've got some interesting feature stories planned in the next two weeks, and we'll be jumping into the baseball and softball playoffs with all the local teams. We'll follow them all the way to the state tournaments and back again.

MSR tops 350,000 page views in 6 months

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We'll turn our attention to the fall sports once we hit August, and then we'll start a full cycle of sports during the 2011-12 school year.

The first six months have been a blast. Thanks for making it a happy anniversary.