

Industry Observer: Progressive and State Farm NFL Quarterback Ads Could Hike Market Share

By Renee Kiriluk-Hill

OLDWICK, N.J. //BestWire// - The Super Bowl will wrap up a football season that saw Progressive and State Farm score big with ad campaigns starring National Football League quarterbacks Baker Mayfield, Aaron Rodgers and Patrick Mahomes.



Baker Mayfield in an ad.

Online searches, which predict eventual changes in market share, spiked for the brands and products by as much as 300% after the commercials aired during a game this season, said Kevin Krim, president and chief executive officer of marketing and research data, measurement, and analytics company EDO. Normally a 10% to 20% increase is considered significant, he added.

State Farm's quarterback campaign was strongest in the run-up to the Feb. 7 Super Bowl, Krim said. Mahomes will take the field that day as quarterback of the defending champion Kansas City Chiefs, who square off against QB Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Commercials during the game are more than 4.6 times as likely to generate engagement compared to a standard prime-time spot, said Krim. Last year, he said State Farm, Progressive and New York Life aired spots and were rated in the "middling to second half" of advertisers.

The Progressive "At Home with Baker Mayfield" ads were released in episodic fashion every few weeks. They generated pop-culture buzz. When "writers and analysts are all discussing ... ads, you know you did something right," said Matt Dillon, Progressive's business leader of creative development.

The spots generated a 94% positive sentiment, he shared. It also helped that the Browns had a winning season. "Winning cures everything," he said.

First Progressive put the Cleveland Browns quarterback through a rigorous tryout. Picking the company hometown star athlete was a natural place to start the search, but Progressive wanted to gauge Mayfield's ability to be quick on his feet, said Dillon, and get a better feel for his values.

"Baker and the Cleveland Browns had a lot of excitement surrounding the team, and we felt the timing was right as we were able to ride the wave of that potential," he said, but only after the carrier tossed him potentially uncomfortable questions.

"We quickly found out that not only can he play football, the man can act!" said Dillon "We would throw him a line and an inflection and he'd nail it, usually on the first take. Many times he would ad lib or take a line and make it his own," bringing authenticity to spots intended to be relatable and funny.

The premise of the Mayfield spots is he's encountering common, mundane homeowner situations, he just happens to do that from the Browns stadium, aka the couple's "home." His wife Emily Wilkinson appears throughout. "Their chemistry was evident on screen. They played off one another naturally by having fun

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and creating impromptu banter that worked and rang true” in in-context, said Dillon. “There were points in the filming where we simply kept the cameras running.”

Progressive said it doesn't have a Super Bowl ad scheduled presently, but won't close the door on the possibility.

This year some ever-present brands have said they're dialing back or forgoing pricey Super Bowl slots, so there might be some last-minutes deals on unsold spots, Krim said, confident a State Farm Mahomes commercial would outperform anything else in its advertising arsenal.

State Farm has had a decade-long relationships with another Super Bowl champion, Rodgers of the Green Bay Packers. It started the Mahomes partnership in 2019. Both on built on their commitment to excellence on and off the field and brand values alignment, spokeswoman Gina Morss-Fischer said.

The largest personal automobile and homeowners insurer in the country said it's “no accident” its brand has “become synonymous with sports.”

Consistent advertising with Rodgers and Mahomes is instantly recognizable in sports programming, Morss-Fischer said, ranking those ads among top performers in their category for memorability and brand linkage.

Krim's company monitors, records and crunches and analyzes data on commercials shown 24/7 on 120 national networks, more than 70 million to date. He agreed State Farm's consistent execution is important, increasing the strength of its message by centering its spots around reintroduced archetype-of-an-agent Jake, whether the “great rate” conversation is with a delivery person or a star quarterback.

Insurers are steeped in not only TV advertising, but sports partnerships. Nationwide's official NFL sponsorship includes a role as presenting sponsor of the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award. Earlier advertising featured retired Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning ([BestWire, Jan. 31, 2017](#)).

Allstate has focused on college football. Its good hands logo appears on the field goal nets of 94 college and university stadiums and at championship and bowl game events, the company says on its website.

Krim said it sends a clear signal each time a field goal or extra point is scored, and is one more example of the ever-present advertising impact of football.

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