



Food & Sports

The Man Behind the L.A. Kings' Hilarious Twitter Account

By Pamela Chelin

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Photo by Hannah Barnick

Pat Donahue Jr.

Game four of the 2014 Stanley Cup finals is tonight, and the L.A. Kings could complete a sweep of the New York Rangers. Though Kings players like goalie Jonathan Quick and defenseman Drew Doughty receive a lot of attention, one of the biggest stars of the team, Pat Donahue Jr., is actually never on the ice at all. During games, he sits quietly on his computer.

As the Kings' manager of digital media and the voice behind the team's famously sassy Twitter feed, Donahue Jr., with his quick wit and playful tone, commands the attention of the Kings' highly engaged community of about 400,000 Twitter followers.

Donahue Jr. started out as an intern in 2011, and at first co-wrote the L.A. Kings Twitter account with Dewayne Hankins until Hankins left to work for Portland Trail Blazers. Over the phone today from Madison Square Garden, Donahue Jr. recalls an infamous Kings tweet from the 2012 Western conference quarter-finals, before they would go on to win the Cup. When the Kings beat the Vancouver Canucks in the first game of the series, Donahue Jr. tweeted, "To everyone in Canada outside of BC, you're welcome."

Retweeted thousands of times, receiving accolades, scorn and much media coverage, Donahue Jr. calls it "the perfect storm. I still don't know if we'd be so highly regarded if it hadn't happened. We were the eighth seed team playing the number one seed and no professional team had ever conducted itself like that. At the end of the day, it is why I still work here and why it works online is that we're the only team that does it full on."



A California native who studied film, marketing and public relations in college, the 29-year-old Donahue Jr. tries to ensure that the L.A. Kings' Twitter voice continues to evolve as necessary. For example, as opposed to 2012, Donahue Jr. says the current feed is a little less sarcastic and, instead, more "upbeat, fun and light-hearted." After all, he says, the L.A. Kings are no longer the underdogs that they had been in 2012. "I'm still tweeting the kinds of things that go on in my head during the game, but I tell people that I'm now tweeting with a ring on my finger. We're not eighth seed. We're champions and we're going to win again."

Donahue Jr. explains that fans can easily get scores by watching the games or checking Internet sites. Facts are facts. But they lack heart and vitality. Donahue Jr. tries to inject a funny and distinctive perspective to make the facts and highlights more engaging and original. "I'd much rather add to or create the conversation," he says.



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bad guys score.



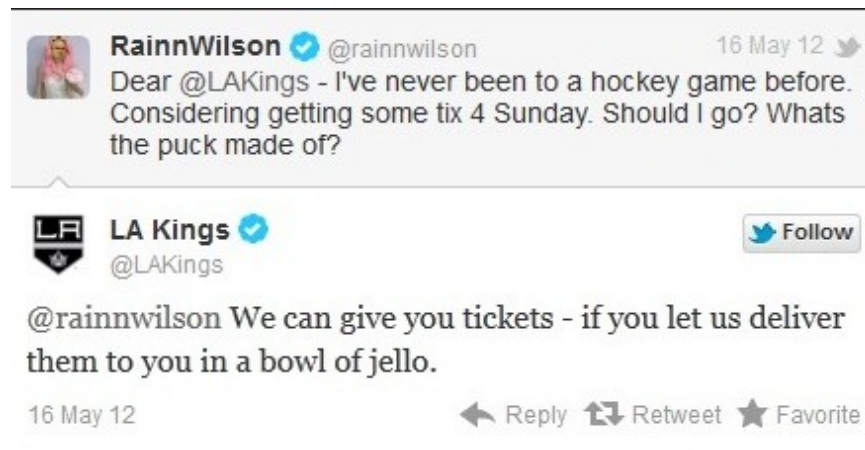
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One especially useful way to connect with fans is to utilize pop culture. For example, when the New York Rangers scored a goal recently, Donahue Jr. tweeted "bad guys score" and attached a photo of a movie still from *Gangs of New York*. "Sure, we might have just been scored on and Kings fans are bummed about the goal, but this is hockey," he says. "Let's have some fun. I think it is funny to provide a photo of a movie bad guy who someone recognizes. I just turn it into something funny that people have a connection to."

When *The Office* actor Rainn Wilson tweeted the Kings saying he was considering getting tickets to a hockey game, Donahue Jr. responded with a cheeky reference to an episode in which Rainn's character's stapler was sheathed in a Jell-O mold. When the Kings delivered the tickets just as Donahue Jr. had promised, Wilson posted a photo to his Instagram account.

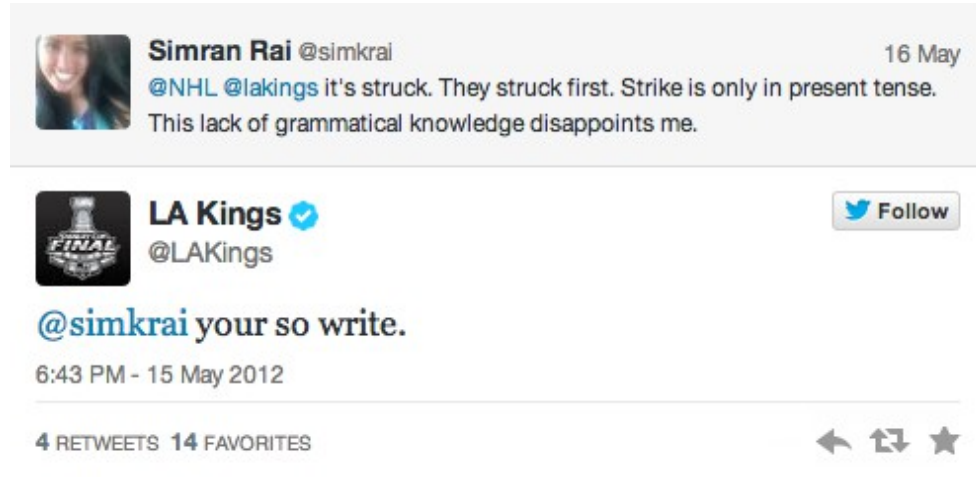


Last month, when a Vancouver Canucks fan's tweet accused the Kings of stealing the "We Are All Canucks" slogan - after the NHL Twitter account tweeted a photo of the Staples Center adorned with a "We Are All Kings" banner - Donahue Jr. responded, "ok, we'll change it to 'We Are In The Playoffs.'"



Equally as important as employing a sense of humor, according to Donahue Jr., is to be accessible and conversational with fans on Twitter. "There's a person

behind this account - it's not just a generic message," he says. "I respond to almost everyone. I hold a Q and A during the first intermission and I will answer 50 to 100 questions. It's social media and I take that to heart. I am also always checking my phone. It's a full-time job just reading L.A. Kings mentions on Twitter and responding to people. And, during Stanley Cup finals, it is a 24/7 kind of thing."



Describing himself as shy and not one to seek attention for himself, Donahue Jr. says that while he may be "goofy and weird" on Twitter, he has to be cognizant that he's employed by the L.A. Kings organization. "When I tweet, every tweet has the L.A. Kings name and logo and there are employees and owners and sponsorship partners," he says. "It's a lot of pressure when I think of it. There are a lot of eyeballs watching what I do."

"The LA Kings account is like my baby that I've raised," he adds. "We even have a lot of people who aren't even necessarily Kings fans. I've favorited two or three hundred tweets where they said they are rooting for the Kings to win just because of their Twitter account."

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