

Bode aboard 'MySpace for skiing'

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Alpine skier Bode Miller, his agent Lowell Taub and a California technology firm have created a joint venture that this winter will launch skispace.com, a skiing social-networking site designed to overtake the fractionalized market for online skiing content.

Loosely described as a MySpace for skiing, skispace.com will combine resort and equipment reviews, trail conditions, instruction, user-generated material, video from content partner World Championship Sports Network, and a variety of other content. Miller will serve as chief executive of the new venture, Taub will be the chief marketing officer, and running the day-to-day operation as chief operating officer will be Ryan Blair, founder of PathConnect.com.



"We're not designing this necessarily as a big money-maker, and it's not a Bode brand extension," Taub said.

"There's simply no place on the Web currently for avid skiers to have fun, share ideas and connect. Bode's a big social-networking guy, so the basic idea is to bring that concept to skiing."

The site will combine resort and equipment reviews, trail conditions, teaching and more.

Set to launch next month after an 18-month development period, skispace.com also will be featured on a patch on Miller's skiing uniforms.

Neither the financial arrangements between PathConnect.com and Miller nor the revenue and traffic goals of skispace.com were disclosed. Blair and his investors spent roughly \$1 million to launch PathConnect.com last year.



Skiing content online heretofore has been carved up among more vertically oriented sites that focus primarily on a specific category such as equipment, travel or pro competition.

PathConnect.com runs its own small social-networking site targeting goal-oriented people aged 25-49. It has more than 20,000 members, and is partnered with actress Jessica Biel on her online-based charity, the Make The Difference Network. The firm ultimately aims to transfer the social-networking-led template to other sports.

"If we can crack the code here, we'll move quickly to another sport," Blair said. "Whether it be rugby, water polo or something else, there are a lot of smaller sports where there's a lot of division and room for opportunity."

Other athletes have launched similar social-networking sites for their respective sports. Katie Hoff, Michael Phelps and other swimmers associated with Octagon agent Peter Carlisle launched swimroom.com this year, and skateboarders Jereme Rogers, Paul Rodriguez and Terry Kennedy, who work with Wasserman Media Group's Circe Wallace, recently launched sk8site.com.