



KRISTA VODA

PIT REPORTER, NASCAR ON FOX

“Every sporting event has the potential to have ‘a moment’ no one forgets,” says Krista Voda, pit reporter for the award-winning NASCAR on FOX.

Voda kicked open the door for women as the first female pre-race host in NASCAR. She’s now seen all over the sport – from trackside in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series to the steps of the NASCAR Hall of Fame for its induction ceremonies, to co-hosting the glitzy NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Awards Ceremony in Las Vegas. She’s also been a fixture on the sport’s signature daily programs on SPEED and FOX Sports Net.

Due to Voda’s expansive knowledge of all things NASCAR, many fans believe she’s been a lifelong race fan – the “ultimate compliment,” she says.

In reality, the Iowa native was more a fan of “stick-and-ball” sports. Her NASCAR fluency comes from a rabid curiosity and thorough planning. Those two-minute pit reports are the culmination of hours combing the garage for leads.

The pit reporter has always been a pit bull in finding the next story. She fell into NASCAR after graduating from the University of Northern

Iowa and taking sports anchor gigs at several small TV stations.

“I gravitated toward what I’ve enjoyed and am good at – English, creative writing, and debate; anything with the written or spoken word,” Voda said. “NASCAR is about cars and parts, but at its core, it’s a people sport. I’m really in sales – selling myself to the drivers and crew chiefs to get interviews. Being on the air is the easy part.”

Her career advice is to take risks in a small market. “That’s where you’ll learn by doing – shooting your own stand-ups and editing your own video,” she said.

Voda is proof the approach works. She started at a small AM radio station and would shut off the lights and transmitter before leaving for the night.

She calls hers a “non-traditional job” – hitting the road every week in search of the next big story, and those elusive, yet very special moments: “I’m living the dream, after studying something, sticking with it, and making a career of it,” she concluded. ▲

■ Andrew Giangola is author of the book, *The Weekend Starts on Wednesday: True Stories of Remarkable NASCAR Fans*, available in the NASCAR.com Superstore.



PHIL METZ

MUSIC & TALENT RELATIONS, NASCAR

WHEN YOU HEAR KELLY CLARKSON SING our National Anthem before the Daytona 500 or Nicolas Cage commanding the starting of engines, think of the guy who brings the stars to the cars: Phil Metz.

From NASCAR’s Los Angeles office, Metz, who manages Music & Talent Relations for NASCAR, navigates the intersecting entertainment, sports and corporate worlds.

“My job is to put our sport in mainstream pop culture via entertainment,” Metz said. “We work to match pop culture touchstones with opportunities in the sport.”

After graduating from Syracuse University in 1998, Metz had worked at a music label. In 2003, NASCAR was looking to better connect with the music industry. The kid from Queens wound up in the racing business.

“I grew up a big fan of music, entertainment, and sports. I’m very lucky to be doing something aligned with my passions. It’s really hard to get bored in this job,” Metz said.

Metz, 34, has helped stars like Adam Sandler, Kevin James and Will Ferrell, and bands such as the Black Eyed Peas, Rascal Flatts and Zac Brown Band to cross-promote with NASCAR in an authentic way.

While it’s hard for him to name a specific career highlight, a high point was helping orchestrate a first for the sport – Red Hot Chili Peppers’ landmark concert within a race at the NASCAR Sprint All-Star Race at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

“At the time, the Peppers had the No. 1 record, *Stadium Arcadium*, and the No. 1 song, ‘Dani California,’” Metz explained.

“The biggest rock band in the world was playing NASCAR and using the sport to promote a big new album. It was a validating moment for our entertainment strategy.”

Metz got a taste for the kind of work he’d be doing when promoting concerts at Syracuse University. He recommends a liberal arts education for pursuing a career in talent relations.

“Get a good education and you can find work that plays into your passions in a professional setting,” he advised. “Learn how to think on your feet, communicate and solve problems. Because as fun as these jobs are, there will always be issues to successfully work through.”