

Jeter's All-Star embrace from Nike

DEREK JETER'S FAN CLUB

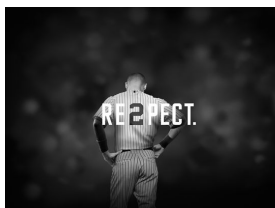
All these celebs make cameos in Nike's new, 90-second Brand Jordan spot to air during the All-Star Game:



Source: NIKE
Karl Gelles and Julie Snider, USA TODAY



Bruce Horowitz, USA TODAY 6:11 p.m. EDT July 15, 2014



(Photo: Brand Jordan)

Every few decades — when timing, talent and circumstance coincide — the All-Star Game becomes a must-watch marketing event.

With a literal and cinematic tip-of-the-hat by a boatload of celebrities to retiring All-Star Derek Jeter, Nike is once again turning the All-Star game into the marketing buzz bowl. This go-round, it's Nike's Brand Jordan, with a 90-second ode to Jeter that instantly became a social media rage with its posting on Monday.

"Might be the coolest commercial I've ever seen," tweeted JT Jakubik IV.

Or is it?

Long before the social media age, Nike caused a similar All-Star Game stir in 1989 with its famous "Bo Knows" ad that featured gobs of celebs — including Michael Jordan, hockey great Wayne Gretzky and even R&B legend Bo Diddley — extolling the talents of Bo Jackson, who played pro baseball and pro football in the same season.

"Bo knows basketball," Jordan says in the ad. Each celebrity then repeats the same "Bo Knows" mantra for his or her own specialty.

No, the All-Star Game is no Super Bowl. Folks don't typically turn it on eager to watch its ads. All-Star Game ads on Fox are fetching roughly \$550,000 to \$600,000 per 30-second slot this year, media buyers estimate. That's a far cry from the \$4 million, or so, that Super Bowl ads went for earlier. But for the first time in many years, this All-Star Game has a powerful sub-theme — the last season of Yankee superstar and perennial nice-guy Derek Jeter.

Nike is taking that to the bank. "What better moment than the All-Star Game to tell his story: respect," says Brian O'Connor, VP of global brand.

The spot, by the New York office of Nike's longtime ad agency Wieden + Kennedy, is built around Jeter's most endearing habit: When he steps into the batter's box, his ritual is to always tip his hat.

And so it goes. The ad opens to the roar of Yankee Stadium, with Jeter digging into the batter's box and tipping his hat. Unexpectedly, we next see Red Sox pitcher Jon Lester tip his hat back.

For the next 90 seconds, the famous, the unknown and the anonymous tip their hats back to him. Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods do. But so do a couple of hesitant Boston Red Sox fans. New York icons Rudy Giuliani and Spike Lee do. So do three New York Mets players with their faces and numbers obscured – plus their mascot, also with face obscured. Even rapper Jay-Z gets into the act.

"Derek is both a lifestyle and a lifestyle brand," notes David Schwab, senior vice president of Octagon, which matches brands with sports personalities. "The ad shows he's bigger than a baseball player."

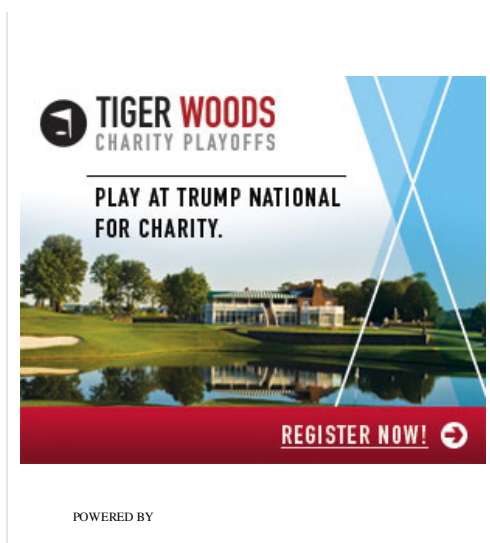
Perhaps that's why, 19 years ago, Jeter was the first non-basketball player to be enlisted by Brand Jordan. Now, with about 90 days left in the second half of his final season, Nike is pushing all of its marketing and retail buttons for Jeter. It's selling Jeter cleats for \$99.99, a T-shirt and a cap for \$35 each. And in September — when Nike hopes the Yankees make the playoffs — special-edition sneakers are due out.

O'Connor says the drumbeat will continue through the rest of season on the Twitter hashtag #RE2PECT. (No. 2 is Jeter's number. In the ad, the 2 looks a bit like a backwards "S.") The brand also will market around Jeter's last home game at Yankee Stadium and his final regular season game in Boston.

"Nike will probably promote the Jeter brand as long as it can," says Rob Prazmark, president of 21 Sports Marketing. "It's like corporate responsibility and smart marketing rolled into one."

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The advertisement features a scenic view of a golf course with a clubhouse and a pond. A large blue 'X' graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image. The text is positioned in the upper left and center, with a red call-to-action bar at the bottom.