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'Girls & Sports' Strip Attracts Young Readers -- and a Big Syndicate

By Dave Astor

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NEW YORK A self-syndicated comic carried by more than 175 papers will be distributed by Creators Syndicate starting Jan. 1.

Justin Borus and Andrew Feinstein co-created "Girls & Sports" in the late 1990s. They built a clientele of 75-plus campus papers before starting to seek general-circulation papers in October 2004. They now have more than 100 non-college clients -- an unusually large number given that many dailies shy away from self-syndicated strips.

"Girls & Sports" has many fans that are 18 to 34. "We hear over and over from newspaper editors that they want features that appeal to younger readers," Creators National Sales Director Margo Sugrue told E&P. The comic's large list of college papers shows that it's reaching that young-adult demographic, added Creators Senior Editor Kathy Kei.

The strip focuses on dating, relationships, "the bar scene," sports, working out, and the like. Sugrue said the idea for the "Girls & Sports" title came up when Borus and Feinstein -- now in their late 20s -- were studying in Europe. They were conversing on a long bus ride when another passenger suddenly said: "Is that all you think about -- girls and sports?"

Despite the name of the comic and the gender of its co-creators, the feature has many female readers. Why? Some of the comic's humor is at the expense of men, replied Kei. "Women seem to respond to that."

One example of this self-deprecating humor is a strip showing the JoAnn character asking Marshall: "How was your weekend?" He replies: "Awesome! I got totally hammered at the football game." JoAnn: "What are you doing tomorrow?" Marshall: "Going out for drinks with the boys." JoAnn: "Any plans for this Friday?" Marshall: "Are you asking me out?" Then Marshall is shown in the last panel, several days later, telling the Bradley character: "So she dropped me off at an AA meeting on Friday."

Usually, cartoonists submit their comic to a syndicate in hopes of getting signed. In this case, Creators approached Borus and Feinstein after syndicate President Rick Newcombe saw the feature in the New York Daily News. Among the comic's other major-market clients is The Denver Post.

Both cartoonists are from Denver. Borus still lives in that Colorado city, while Feinstein now resides in Los Angeles.

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