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NHRA broadcasts will rock the sofa

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The NHRA has signed a new sponsorship deal that has the potential to change the way sports fans experience events at home.

The drag racing organization cut a two-year sponsorship deal with Guitammer Co. that allows the technology company to capture sounds and sensations at races and send signals along with the ESPN race broadcast that shake the couches and chairs of viewers at home, allowing them to feel the race the way spectators and drivers feel it at the live event.

The two-year deal is the first test of Guitammer's 4D Sports technology and its ButtKicker device. 4D Sports is the broadcast technology that Guitammer uses to capture audio and sensory experience at live events, and the ButtKicker is a \$300 device that receives the 4D Sports signal and shakes the couches or chairs of viewers at home.

"It's one more tool for the production team to engage the fan at home in a compelling way to bring live sports to life," said Mark Luden, CEO of Guitammer.

Financial terms of the deal weren't available. The agreement allows Guitammer to attach sensors to cars and work with ESPN to transfer the sensory information to viewers at home. It also includes at-track activation rights and advertising inventory during race broadcasts on ESPN2.



The ButtKicker will receive signals from the track delivered through ESPN broadcasts.

Photo by: GUITAMMER / HORIZON COMPANIES



Luden said that the company signed its first sponsorship with the NHRA because the sport was receptive and its broadcast partner, ESPN, was interested. It also tested the technology during hockey games last year, outfitting seats in a Philadelphia Flyers suite with ButtKicker devices and shaking them each time players collided with the boards.

"The next step is to go after contact sports and offer that feeling at home so that when

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[broadcasters] show replay after replay of a big hit and say, 'Can you feel it?' the couch shakes," Luden said.

Guitammer first got into sensory technology through the music business. It developed a platform that shakes and vibrates along with the bass and drum, so that drummers and bass players can feel each other's beats during concerts. It later exported the concept into IMAX and home movie theaters. Luden said bringing that sensation to sports viewers at home was a natural extension.

The company in 2011 patented the broadcast technology that allows it to convert audio into a signal that can shake a couch or chair, Luden said. It also created the ButtKicker, a hardware device that can be wedged under the leg of a couch or chair, to shake viewers' furniture.

Under Luden's business plan, Guitammer will sign agreements with broadcasters and sports properties, allowing 4D Sports to provide a sensory experience at home through the ButtKicker and similar hardware devices. He envisions a day when viewers at home can pick a player on their fantasy football team and pay a fee to "feel" that player play the game.

"It's much bigger than a thing with a funny name that shakes the couch," Luden said. "We believe it opens the fan to the player and sport in the most personal way, and we'll give a brand-new revenue stream to the entire [sports and broadcast] ecosystem."

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