

Of all the topics I thought I might cover in my blog, I never imagined that blog etiquette would be one of them. Yet here I am...

One of the beautiful things about blogging is that I can present ideas, concepts, situations or hypotheticals about anything and then open it up to comments. Often I have found the comments offered by readers to provide more value and insight than what I originally wrote. Sometimes they prove me right, sometimes they prove me wrong. Either is a value add to the original blog post.

One of the nuisances of running a blog is having to delete extraneous comments and spam. Every blogging service is fighting commercial spam in its comments. We are getting better at excluding them.

Even the spam from the juvenile, the "you suck" or "eat shit and die" variety is manageable because it doesn't take that long to delete it.

This week was the first time I had to deal with "babba booeey" (sp ?) spam from a website. For those who aren't fans of Howard Stern's radio show, his fans would often call other talk shows or live events and spit out the now infamous line to the host. A nuisance for sure, but not much more.

This week on the ESPN.com Page 2 column, Eric Neel decided to do a parody of what a David Stern blog might contain. No question that it was a fun premise. Unfortunately, part of his article suggested that the readers come over to blogmaverick.com and post the comment "nice hair" on every post.

And they did.

I spent hours deleting posts from the idiots that took what he wrote literally. Great threads were pushed aside and filled with this spam.

Collateral damage and just the cost of writing a blog? Sure. Avoidable, yes. Especially from a major media organization like ESPN.

I expect the Naked Short idiots to flame the site when I write something they don't agree with. I expect Republican and Democratic swarms from zealot websites to spam the site when I write something they don't agree with. That's part of the deal. Cleaning them up is part of the expectation when I write the post.

What I never expected was that a Howard Stern moment would come from the Disney Company. That a call to spam would come from one of the largest media companies in the world. The last thing the blogosphere needs is one outlet trying to diminish the voice of another by initiating an avalanche of spam.

I don't think Eric Neel was trying to do anything nefarious or intended to flood blogmaverick with spam, however that's exactly what happened.

The lesson learned is that we as a medium need to set some ground rules on comment spam.

For commercial blog hosting sites like weblogsinc, livejournal, blogspot, or other portal offered sites, one of the terms of service should preclude spamming or spam promotion.

For media or corporate websites, it should be an editorial common sense.

Otherwise, we might find ourselves sliding down a slippery slope that ends up silencing what some might think is the most valuable part of a blog user comments.