

# Jordan Palmer helping players develop iPhone apps

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In this photograph taken on May 28, 2009, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Jordan Palmer displays a photo stored on his iPhone at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati. Palmer spent the offseason working on a business venture with two California friends. Their company develops individualized iPhone applications for athletes, allowing them to connect with fans on the go. (AP Photo/Al Behrman)

(AP) -- A small icon of Chad Ochocinco's smiling face is the doorway to the receiver's latest media venture.

Touch the [iPhone](#) screen and enter Ochocinco's frenetic world. See photos of the Cincinnati Bengals receiver. Link to his Twitter feed. Watch video of him working out. Check out his favorite tunes. See a map that shows where he is today.

All Ochocinco, on the phone screen.

"It's cool," the receiver said.

And he has his quarterback to thank for it.

No, not Carson Palmer. His younger brother.

Bengals backup quarterback Jordan Palmer spent the offseason working on a business venture with two California friends. Their company develops individualized iPhone applications for athletes, allowing them to connect with fans on the go. They rolled out one for Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez, and expect to have Ochocinco's app approved by Apple and launched before the season starts.

Then, who knows?

"I'm a big advocate of the iPhone," Jordan Palmer said. "I'm all about it. I'm always reading about it and pushing its capabilities and seeing what's coming out next. We looked at the business and what's going on with the applications and the growth. The growth is through the roof.

"We found a niche, and we're trying to take it over."

Rock Software, Inc., builds social networking applications tailored to the individual, but designed to work through an iPhone exclusively. Anyone can submit an application for use through an iPhone, but it must meet Apple's requirements and the company holds approval rights.

Jordan hopes to add more high-profile customers soon. His company has talked to Seattle Seahawks receiver T.J. Houshmandzadeh - a former Bengal - about getting an app. Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban is interested in launching one once the NBA season starts.

"It's a unique starting point for possibly extending how I interact, not just with people interested in business, but with customers and others as well," Cuban told The AP in a text message. "With any new technology, you have to do what you can to test it, and see what the law of unintended consequences reveals to you as an opportunity you never expected."

Cuban is not the only one intrigued. With communication technology evolving so fast - think of Twitter's emergence - those who follow the industry are curious about how athlete apps will do.

The potential financial return comes from the public: Once an athlete launches an app, fans who have iPhones can buy it, with Apple, Rock Software and the athlete each getting a percentage. Fans pay \$1 for Sanchez's app. Ochocinco's will cost between \$3 and \$5 because it will offer extra features.

"This gives that athlete a great way to connect with fans that they never had before," said Tim Bajarin, an analyst at Creative Strategies, Inc., which monitors the technology industry and does strategic planning. "It'll be fun to watch. If they get the model right, this could have a lot of potential. It could obviously bring about copycats as well."

Jordan Palmer said athletes tend to have two main concerns about launching their own [applications](#).

"First, what are my obligations?" Palmer said. "And second, how much money am I going to make? There's very, very little obligation from the pro athlete side of it. They don't have to invest anything in it. And they can make a lot of money."

Rock Software produces the apps and handles the approval process. The athletes provide the content - which will be the main challenge, in the

view of one industry follower. Each athlete's app will be different and could include any number of content features, such as links to Twitter or other interactive sites, personal biographies and statistics, photos or video that the athlete shoots.

"You can imagine the potential drawbacks here," said Steve Jones, a professor of communications at the University of Illinois-Chicago. "Certainly the most obvious one is that it's going to take time, and do they want to spend the time?"

"I think it will be an interesting experiment. We'll see where it goes."

Ochocinco doesn't mind the time commitment. The flamboyant receiver is on Twitter constantly and has done several Ustream shows.

"You can actually see the real Chad and see the things that I do, some of the things I like and actually interact with me and talk back and forth," he said.

From an athlete's perspective, that's one of the attractions: They get another chance to interact directly with fans rather than through the news media.

"It's one area you can control, if you do it right," Jordan Palmer said. "You can control how it's spun."

Palmer and his two boyhood friends, John and Sam Shahidi of California, also are branching into other entertainment areas with their apps. Palmer's contacts in pro sports have helped the venture in that way, but he's trying to keep things on a business level.

"I'm not calling up all my buddies in the NFL and saying, 'Hey, can you help me out?' I'm not going that route," he said. "This is a business, and I

wouldn't want somebody to approach me or my brother like that."

And no, Jordan Palmer hasn't thought about giving himself an app.

"I don't have the fan base," he said. "But it would be fun."

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