

**CANADIAN COLLEGES ATHLETIC
ASSOCIATION**



**MEDIA RELATIONS
TIPS AND GUIDELINES**

Dear Athletic Director,

As the Athletic Department of your institution, your teams and/or student-athletes generate a high level of public interest and media attention. Your athletic programs benefit from tremendous local, regional and sometimes national media exposure and coverage. Therefore, it is important to understand the media, the value of positive media relations and how to best deal with the media.

The image of your Athletic Department affects the reputation of the entire institution, and as such, it is important that all those involved exercise care when making statements to the media. Whether you are the Athletic Director, a coach or a student-athlete, you have a responsibility to your institution and your Athletic Department to cooperate with the media whenever possible.

To assist you, your coaches and/or your student-athletes in dealing with the media, the CCAA has prepared this brochure for you. Not only will it provide a better understanding of the media and the job they are trying to do, but it also provides tips, suggestions and common principles for dealing with the media. Please spend some time reading and reviewing it, then sharing it with your coaching staff, your student-athletes, your statisticians, etc..

MEDIA AND/OR PRESS KIT

a. What is it?

A media and/or press kit is simply an information packet about a business or product, ie. it is like a resume for a company, organization and in your case, your institution's Athletic Department. The purpose of the media kit is to provide the media with relevant information regarding your sports programs, coaching personnel and your student-athletes. As such, it contains a collection of information and articles aimed to address questions from the media. The ultimate goal of the media kit is hence to grab the reader's attention, make a lasting impression and create enough interest that they will contact you for more information.

b. What to include and why?

There are many items that can go into a press or media kit, depending on the situation, the audience or the use. Once your media contact list is accurate and up-to-date, you want to develop and send each editor and/or reporter a media kit containing details and information they will need to write a story about your sports programs and/or your student-athletes. You want to provide information that is newsworthy as well as the necessary tools to increase media coverage about your team(s).

Note that, although a media kit should be comprehensive, do not include every promotional item or piece of marketing collateral ever produced by your Athletic Department. You must remain focused in content development and only put information that is current and most relevant to your target reader.

Outlined below is a list of standard items to include in your media kit. This is simply a comprehensive list and intended only to provide ideas for what is needed for your target audience. Consequently, it is not necessary to include all of them in your media kit - adapt the information accordingly. While you must respect a media editor's time, length and/or number of pages are irrelevant. The information presented must be current, clear, concise and pertinent to your audience.

Key elements to include are:

- Athletic Department history and profile (mission, objectives, etc.);
- Roster(s);
- Calendar of events, ie. sport-specific schedules, exhibition and tournament schedules, championship events, etc.
- Coaching Personnel profiles and contact information (if permitted);

- Player profiles;
- Athletic Department contact information;
- Previous year's results and/or statistics;
- Records;
- Previous major award winners – All Canadian, Academic All Canadian, Player of Year, Coach of Year, etc.;
- Conference statistics;
- Website address;
- Recent press clippings and/or coverage – print press releases on department letterhead, and colour copy or professionally photocopied recent articles for inclusion.
- Story ideas – athletes and/or teams to watch, etc.;
- Media advisories and/or press releases – upcoming news, announcements and/or events;
- Audio and video files of radio or TV interviews, speeches, performances and any other media-covered event;
- Photographs and/or graphics;

Start assembling part of your media kit, based on available materials. You can then add to it as you see fit and develop new materials. Once you've gathered all the information you desire to include, assemble it in a logical and well-organized format. The first piece of your information packet should be an introductory and/or informative letter that briefly explains what's inside, while also offering to provide additional information and/or answer any questions as required. You should also include your business card.

c. How to get noticed?

Busy editors sort through piles of press kits each day. Getting your press kit noticed is the key to publication and action! Package your materials in a unique way and make sure the materials are presented professionally. When choosing a pocket folder to hold all your information, it is important to ensure that your team name and/or logo is immediately visible.

It's also crucial to follow up to make sure your intended recipient received your media kit. Follow-up calls also provide the perfect opportunity for editors and/or reporters to ask questions or schedule an interview. Use this opportunity to build relationships with the media, hence improving your chances of publication or acceptance by your intended audience.

MEDIA ADVISORY / ALERT vs MEDIA RELEASE

a. What is it?

Media Advisory / Alert

A media advisory and/or alert is a brief notice announcing an upcoming news event and/or activity. Advisories and alerts provide basic information to generate media interest. It tells what, when, who and why of an event, and provides the name and telephone number of a contact person.

Media Advisory heading should be used when notifying the media at least a week ahead of time.

Media Alert heading should be used when reminding the media less than three days prior to the event.

Media Release

Sending out a media release is the best way to attract journalists' attention to a story. It is often times, the only source of information the media has about your activity and/or event.

Similarly to a media advisory and/or alert, media releases provide details about a subject and must contain, usually in one to two pages, what journalists call the five "W"s: *who is involved, what happened, where did it happen, when did it happen, and why or how did it happen.*

Most reporters and/or editors decide whether to read the release based on the first paragraph. It is hence important to answer these questions in one or two sentences in the lead paragraph, making it clear and concise. To further intrigue or generate interest of the media, you should use interesting and/or anecdotal facts (e.g. Eight-time national champion Red Deer College will be competing for their seventh straight CCAA championship title, etc.)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2006

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: Champlain College Saint-Lambert will be hosting a press conference to officially unveil the new football team colours

WHEN: Wednesday, September 6th, 2006 – 1:00 pm (EST)

WHERE: Boston Pizza – 1231 Boul. des Promenades, Saint-Bruno, Québec

DETAILS: The College will officially unveil their inaugural football team colours and coaching staff, as well as their new corporate partners.

Player interview and photo opportunities will also be available.

Champlain College Saint-Lambert will kick off their inaugural AA football season on Sunday, September 10th. The Cavaliers will face off against Collège Jonquière's Les Galliards at Seaway Park in Saint-Lambert. Game time is 13h00.

-30-

Champlain College Saint-Lambert has 2400 students and field teams in Men's and Women's Rugby, Soccer, Basketball and Volleyball, as well as Men's Football. Student-athletes also compete in Golf and Cross Country Running. Proud members of the Fédération Québécoise du Sport Étudiant (FQSE) and the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA), the Cavaliers compete in the A, AA and AAA leagues.

For more information, please contact:

Dean Howie, Athletic Director
Champlain College Saint-Lambert
Tel: 450.672.7360 ext. 259

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CCAA welcomes a new corporate partner – The Running Room

(Cornwall, ON – October 4, 2005) The Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) is pleased to welcome The Running Room as Presenting Sponsor of this year's Cross Country Running Open Championship.

Following the success of the 2004 CCAA Cross Country Running Open Championship hosted by Grant MacEwan College, the CCAA is delighted about this new partnership. "It is wonderful to have The Running Room on board as Presenting Sponsor of the 2005 CCAA Cross Country Running Open Championship," expressed Fred Batley, CCAA President. "Their association will assist the CCAA to further showcase the sport of cross-country running within the community and across the country. We appreciate their involvement and enthusiasm for this great event!"

The success of the CCAA Championships is due in large part to the generosity, encouragement and continued support of Corporate Partners such as The Running Room. The CCAA looks forward to a growing collaboration and partnership with The Running Room in the future.

The 2005 CCAA Cross Country Running Open Championship will be hosted by Sir Sandford Fleming College from November 11-12, 2005 in Peterborough, Ontario.

-30-

The Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) is the national governing body for college sport in Canada, providing high-level competition through intercollegiate sport that recognizes excellence in academics and athletics.

For more information, please contact:

Stéphanie Legault, CCAA Coordinator of Marketing and Media Relations
Tel: 613.933.6080 ext. 2211 / Email: stephanie@ccaa.ca

Please note: The following information was gathered and re-printed with permission from the *Canadian Interuniversity Sport CoMSID Best Practices Guide*, as well as *The Canadian Press Stylebook – A guide for Writers and Editors* and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling Guide*.

WRITING – THE BASICS

While a press release is the best way to attract journalists' attention to a story, editors and reporters receive several media releases daily. Consequently, it is important to conform to their standards and expectations just to have a media release read and published.

Majority of newspapers across the country currently use CP Style, a general and neutral style of writing developed by the Canadian Press, a news agency cooperatively owned by the media companies that own Canada's daily newspapers. To increase the chances of your media releases being published and distributed over the wire service, it is hence important to provide the information that is required in a format that is usable to journalists. Using CP Style ensures consistency in your writing, including spelling, capitalization, word usage and space/length requirements, while also providing journalists with a "ready-for-print" release that requires minimal editing.

a. CP Style and Sports Release

While your release should follow the same standards as general news writing, there are specifics to note when writing a sports media release.

- Be concise – Focus your writing on and build your story around one or two key areas of interest, whether it is human interest or a game report. Additional information such as scoring plays and/or player performances can be summed up in a short paragraph to complete your release.
- Try to limit your release to around 400 words - Space on the sports pages is limited, especially during the weekend and on Mondays.
- It is vital that the sport involved be identified early in every story.

b. CP Style key points

The following is a list of key CP style points and techniques to keep in mind when writing media releases. Refer to the *CP Stylebook* as your complete reference.

- CP Style uses the Canadian Oxford Dictionary for its authority on spelling. Exceptions may be found in the *Caps and Spelling Guide*.
- Hometown and/or Place of birth – Do not use postal code abbreviations. For Canadian provinces and territories, use the following abbreviations after the name of a community:

Alta. N.B. N.S. Que. B.C. Nfld. Ont. Sask. Man. N.W.T. P.E.I.
- For months used with a specific date, abbreviate only **Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.** and **Dec.** Spell out standing alone or with a year alone.
- City names used as team names take singular verbs; team titles usually require plural verbs – for example: Vancouver is last. / The Canucks are last.

- Long-established and well-known leagues and/or organizations such as the National Hockey League and the Canadian Football League may be referred to in first reference as **the NHL** and **the CFL**.

Initials are permissible on second reference for well-known minor professional leagues such as the American Hockey League as well as organizations such as the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association and its five regional associations. In this case, the name of the league and/or organization should be spelled out in the first reference followed immediately by its initials in brackets. On second reference, refer to them simply with their initials, ie. CCAA.

- Capitalize major sport events and/or trophies, such as the **Olympic Games**, the **Canada Games**, the **Grey Cup**, etc. On second reference, refer to them simply as **the Games**, **the Cup**, etc.

National and world championships are NOT capitalized – write National basketball championship.

- Unless there is more than one championship banner and/or trophy being awarded, it is singular. For example, CCAA Men's National basketball championship / CCAA Golf Open Championships.
- The word **final**, meaning the last round of a competition, is singular.
- In general, spell out whole numbers below 10 and use figures for 10 and above.
- Symbol usage – Always use per cent in the body of your release; % is used in headlines. Similarly, do not use the # symbol; rankings should appear as the Red Deer Kings are the CCAA No. 1 ranked volleyball team.
- While CP generally uses metric to measure distance and calculate speed, personal measurements continue to use the imperial system. Do not mix imperial and metric in one sentence. When referring to heights, write **The six foot eight centre**; as an adjective, it's **the six-foot-eight centre**; when the context is clear, use: **Stienstra, 6-8, 235 pounds, was named athlete of the year**.
- In times, use a colon between hours, minutes and seconds; a period before decimal fractions of a second (1:52:38.44 = one hour 52 minutes 38.44 seconds).
- Gender – be careful to avoid sexist language. Use **women's, men's, male** and **female** and not ladies, gentleman, girls or guys.
- Dates – CP does not use **today, yesterday** or **tomorrow**. To avoid confusion, use the specific day of the week. Using the "seven-day rule", name the day if it falls within seven days of the current date: **on Wednesday, next Tuesday** or **last Saturday**. Outside of the seven-day rule, use the date (May 5). For significant events and in sports schedules, it is customary to give the day and the date.
- Time – Typically, the exact time of an event is unnecessary. Instead, simply give the reader a sense of time by describing the scene. If time is a vital component of your sporting event, give a specific time. **The game will tip-off at 7 p.m., while the final game is scheduled for Saturday afternoon**.
- Write **5 a.m.**, not **5:00 a.m.** Time is written in figures, except for **noon** and **midnight** (not 12 noon or 12 midnight). Specify time zones in stories involving the time of live radio and/or television programs broadcast nationally.

c. The use of quotes

Quotations add credibility, legitimacy, immediacy and impact to your media release. While they should be used often, more importantly, you should use them correctly. Quotations should hence be used to enhance and/or emphasize your point, but should not be your only point. Use quotes to bring passion and emotion to your release, drawing your reader into the event.

Standard practice requires quoting verbatim and in standard English. However, it is appropriate to correct obvious slips in grammar and remove vulgarities, needless repetition and verbal mannerism such as *ah's*.

Quotation Do's and Don'ts

- Where there is a risk that a quote is not exact - paraphrase.
- When exactness is essential, ie. if it is one person's word against another's - quote verbatim.
- When a speaker uses an obvious wrong word and/or when the quote does not make sense, check back with the speaker or do not use the quote.
- Use quotes in same context as provided to you – failure to do so can impact credibility.
- Similarly, failure to indicate tone can skew a quote – include an explanation and/or brief description; **A heated coach Stanley, still reeling from the officials missed call stated, "we just can't catch a break."**
- When clear and concise, use a full quote where possible.
- Make only cosmetic changes to a quote, ie. changing spelling or capitalization to CP style.
- If you remove words from within the quotation, indicate so with the insertion of an ellipsis (...).
- Slang or other substandard language may be used if the meaning is clear.
- Do not include in a quote words that the speaker could not have spoken; **Mark Kosak said he was "pleased with the event."**

d. Resources

The *Canadian Press Stylebook - A Guide for Writers and Editors*, *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* and other good writing resources can be purchased online at www.cp.org.

Other useful resources:

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary - Edited by Katherine Barber. Published by Oxford University Press, 2004.

Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation - Written by Lynne Truss, Published by: Gotham Books, 2004.

USING A MEDIA RELEASE

a. Types of media releases

While it is important to be familiar with the writing style and/or requirements used by journalists, it is also important to understand the different types of media releases that can be used to promote your institution's sports program.

i. Announcements

Announcements include award nominations and/or recipients, new personnel, recruitment, new and/or improved athletic facility, etc. When writing an announcement, remember to also incorporate information that you feel is relevant to the announcement.

ii. Game and/or event recaps

There are three purposes to a game and/or event recap:

- To provide information to the media who did not attend the event, with the hope they will still report it;
- To complement the information gathered by the media who did attend the event, but might have missed a detail, statistic or quote; and
- To provide content for your institution's website, as well as your provincial and/or national association's website.

Other things to note:

- As with any media release, the information must be presented in order of importance.
- Should be written using neutral language.
- Try to avoid very detailed play-by-play descriptions, but rather focus on highlights.
- Timing is very important, ie. the recap should be sent as soon as possible following the completion of the event.

iii. Previews

There are two purposes to a preview:

- To serve as a reminder to the media; and
- To provide all the necessary information to the media should they wish to publish and/or prepare a preview of their own, set-up pre-game/event interviews, etc.

Other things to note:

- You need to include all information relevant to the upcoming game, ie. details about the particular game such as teams, date, time, location, top players, etc., as well as historical information such as results of previous head-to-head match-ups, all-time head-to-head records, etc.

- Include anecdotal facts;
- Timing is everything, ie. you want to send the preview with sufficient time for the media to react if they want to interview athletes and/or coaches, prepare a preview of their own, etc. However, be sure not to send the preview too early – it may be put aside and forgotten about. Wednesday is probably the most appropriate day to release a preview on a game and/or event coming up on the weekend.

iv. **Human-interest stories**

Unfortunately, collegiate sport is only one of many sporting associations competing for daily media coverage. That being said, while media may not always be interested in a competition, human-interest stories often attract the attention of journalists and ultimately, their readers.

Subjects for human-interest stories include an athlete overcoming an illness and/or injury, family ties, athlete involved in noble humanitarian cause, etc.

v. **Pitching a story**

To further get coverage of your event and/or to broaden your audience reach, it may be necessary to contact media representatives directly and “pitch” a potential article and/or story to them.

Tips to note when “pitching” a story:

- Contact the appropriate person, at the appropriate publication and/or program, at the appropriate time;
- Send the media release and/or media alert, as well as any background details, approximately one week prior to your event;
- Contact each reporter two to three days prior to the event, asking they plan to attend. Confirm whether or not they have received the information or if they require you to send it again;
- Recognize media deadlines, responding to requests for additional information or interviews as quickly as possible;
- If you are unable to answer a reporter’s question, admit you do not know the answer. You can then indicate that you will find the answer promptly and/or direct the reporter to a person who can respond; and
- Be prepared to provide information and/or answer questions in detail.

b. **How to write a media release**

Below, you will find tips and guidelines to remember when writing a media release.

- Decide why you are writing your media release and determine your focus;
- Press releases are written in block style, and as such, no indentation is necessary.
- Keep it short and to the point;
- Write in everyday English and explain unfamiliar terms;
- Don’t hide bad news under fancy words;
- Print the words “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” in the top left-hand margin in all caps. If you want to hold off on distributing your release, type “FOR RELEASE ON (insert date)”.
- Create a headline and center it in bold type just above the first line of the body – limit your headline to no more than one line. Headlines typically highlight the most important and/or significant fact in the release;
- Create a dateline, ie. the first line of your media release should include the city where the release is generated and the date you’ll be sending it out;
- Try to answer the questions all readers ask: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* What is happening? Who says? Who is involved? When will it happen? And where? How or why is it happening?
- Don’t try to answer all six questions in the first sentence, but make certain the first paragraph contains the essential details and/or information.
- Center these marks, “###” or “-30-”, at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of your release;
- Follow your media release with relevant contact information, ie. name, title, address, phone number, fax number and email address;

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

TYPES OF MEDIA - KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO

Newspaper Beat Writers: These newspaper writers cover your institution on a daily basis – they are a valuable link between you and your fans. They often write post-game stories and player feature stories which may require more in-depth interviews.

Newspaper Columnists: Columnists cover all stories and are not assigned to any specific sport. Newspaper columnists are more subjective than beat writers, injecting their own opinions and viewpoints into the stories. You might not always agree with what a columnist writes. Don't take their criticism personally; they are just trying to do their jobs. As with beat writers, take your time and think answers through.

Television News Crews: Most people get the bulk of their news from the television newscasts. Remember, most times you can't take a re-do or take a while to think up your answer – keep any answers quick and to the point. Speak clearly, answer honestly and don't forget to smile.

Radio and Radio Game Broadcasters: Much like TV interviews, radio interviews require good sound bites. Remember to take your time and speak clearly. It is the way you pronounce your words, not your expression, that is most important on radio.

Photographers: Photographers for newspapers and magazines and TV camera operators tell their stories visually. So while you must be careful in your comments to the media, remember that your actions can be captured on video or film too.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

While the role of the media is to report the facts, it is important to cooperate with them, ultimately enhancing your chance of coverage and/or exposure. Consequently, it is important to understand the needs and requirements of your media, while also building a strong professional relationship. Below, you will find a list of "best practices" for working with your media, which was adapted from the *ComSID Best Practices Guide*.

- Make contact with your reporters, confirm their needs and/or get to know them. Questions to ask include: When is their deadline? How do they prefer to receive the information? What is the best way to contact them? What is your primary focus – results, human-interest stories or both? Etc.
- Do not play favourites;
- Thank and/or acknowledge reporters when you receive good coverage or when you are pleased with their work;

- On the day of the event, reserve and/or assign seating location for media and make sure that they have all the necessary information, ie. game rosters, background information, etc.;
- At the beginning of the season, send each reporter a media kit and/or provide a list of resources available;
- Host a media "meet and greet" at the beginning of the season, providing opportunities for media to meet with both coaches and student-athletes;
- Ask for feedback and/or their opinions;
- Invite them to department functions, ie. banquets, dinners, etc.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

It is important to understand that the role of the media is not to be a cheerleader, but to report the facts. However, they are also not the enemy. You will find that the more cooperative you are with the media, the better chance you will have of the media presenting positive stories about you, your teams and/or your institution. The better you treat the media, the better they will treat you.

Interviews can be a very valuable part of a student-athlete's life, as they serve as great learning and growing experience for them.

The most important thing to remember when dealing with the media is to present an image that is consistent with the ideals and high standards of your institution and your Athletic Department.

In the following pages, you will find hints and/or tips that may help you to know your rights and responsibilities when dealing with the media. Whether you are the Athletic Director, coach or student-athlete, it is important to understand and use the tips and guidelines outlined.

Please note: *The following tips and guidelines have been gathered and adapted with permission from the University of Oklahoma, the University at Buffalo and the College of New Jersey Student-Athlete Handbooks.*

HINTS FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

1. **Pause before speaking.** While it is never wise to keep the media waiting for any extended period of time, an athlete has a right to pause before speaking, to shower, towel off, get treatment for an injury or even sip a drink before fielding any questions. Practice saying, "I'd like to think for a moment before answering your question." or "It's been a tough game. If you don't mind, I would like to shower, dry off, get this cut on my arm taken care of and dress before answering any questions. I will be right back. Thank you for understanding."
2. **Do not feel obligated to answer every question.** Not every question can or should be answered. In the face of loaded and unclear questions that fail to provide fair options, the athlete has a right not to answer. Practice saying, "I don't think I can answer your question" or "I don't understand what you are asking." After telling a reporter that a question cannot be answered, nothing else needs to be said.
3. **Set time limits.** At the outset, an athlete has a right to set time limits for an interview.
4. **Be prepared to provide an opening statement.** An athlete has the right to begin every question-and-answer session with an opening comment. This allows for the introduction of important ideas, feelings and perceptions that the athlete wants understood. Information of this type sets the tone for the interview. It sets the agenda and previews subjects the media might want to probe.
5. **Call reporters by name.** It is a matter of common courtesy to refer to a reporter by his or her name. Such a practice personalizes comments by emphasizing that a relationship exists between the athlete and the reporter. Such a practice is a right, not a responsibility. Many athletes may not know names or feel comfortable in this role.
6. **Show appropriate emotions for the circumstances.** After a difficult game or practice, an athlete has a right not to smile and appear happy. At the same time, frowns, sarcasm, and mean looks never add anything positive to an answer. In victory and defeat, the good communicator controls emotions and language.
7. **Select and employ your own words.** Just because a reporter selects certain words does not mean those same words have to be repeated in an answer. Athletes have a right to select their own words to explain thoughts and feelings. Unclear, offensive words and negative language should never be repeated or included as part of an answer.
8. **Defer certain questions to other people.** In media interviews, an athlete should never speak for someone else. In this type of situation, an athlete has a right not to comment on things outside personal experience, knowledge, and expertise. Defer all third-party questions to other people.
9. **Speak slowly and be yourself.** Many questions can be answered quickly, but you have a right to answer questions slowly. Simple words should also be selected for usage - these words should be familiar to both athlete and reporter.
10. **Never "bad mouth" an opponent or the referees.** The public does not like "trash talk", and as such, nothing is to be gained by doing so. Similarly, any negative comments about officiating will be interpreted by the public as excuses.
11. **Avoid saying "you know" during an interview.** This is perceived by the public as an indication of stupidity. You are not stupid - you are a bright, student-athlete.

12. **Be cooperative.** Reporters need your comments for stories. Make yourself available to answer their questions.
13. **Do not be defensive.** Attitude is everything. Stay calm; remain in control in all situations.
14. **Think before you answer.** Reporters are often in a hurry because of deadline pressures. Do not feel rushed or forced into giving quick answers. Speak clearly with the proper rhythm. Avoid clichés.
15. **Listen to the question carefully.** Make sure you understand the question before you answer. If you do not understand, ask for clarification or have the interviewer repeat the entire question.
16. **Personal appearance counts.** Maintain good eye contact with the reporter and do not worry about the camera. Keep your voice strong and animated. Dress appropriately.
17. **Say "Thanks."** Your final actions in the interview may leave the strongest impression with the reporter. Make every encounter a memorable one – chances are you will receive more favorable stories in the future.

Print Media Interview Specifics

- Be prepared for a longer interview than with television or radio.
- Print reporters are still looking for short, quality quotes. You can give longer answers than you can with radio or TV, but understand that the longer your answer is, the more control you are giving to the reporter to determine what part of your responses to use in the article.
- Print media reporters often use a tape recorder to conduct interviews. Don't get nervous.
- It's OK to pause and collect your thoughts – pauses don't show up in print!

Television Media Interview Specifics

- Be aware of how you sound and how you look. Most of the time, you will be interviewed in your uniform or practice gear. If you are in street clothes, remember to be clean and neat and to wear something with your institutional logo, if possible.
- Look at the reporter, not at the camera, and speak in the direction of the microphone.
- Remember that they are looking for short 15-20 second sound bites, so don't ramble on and on.
- If the TV or radio interview isn't live, don't hesitate to stop and ask if you can repeat your answer or start over. Unlike a live interview, a taped interview can be edited.

Radio Interview Specifics

- Be aware of how you sound, including the tone of your voice and how fast or slow you speak. Speak clearly.
- They are also looking for short 15-20 second sound bites, so don't ramble.

COMMON SENSE PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

1. **Act ethically.** Never lie to a reporter. An athlete should always answer questions honestly. Beyond this, the athlete is under no obligation to volunteer additional information.
2. **Provide short answers.** Short and simple answers are the best - they are easy to quote. Answers with a central theme that is clear can prevent an athlete from rambling for minutes. When answers drag on, the likelihood increases of being misquoted, words or phrases taken out of context or saying something that was not intended for the media. Adhere to the 25-second rule in media interviews. Effective interviewees answer in sixty words or less.
3. **Say what you mean at the beginning of an answer.** Audiences normally remember the first thing said, not the last. Key ideas should be placed at the beginning of each answer where they appear isolated. Details are presented only when there is need, interest, and time. It is important to remember that straightforward questions deserve straight-to-the-point answers.
4. **Avoid jargon.** Effective communicators speak English and not sports-specific terms. Whenever possible, stay conversational.
5. **Never speak "off the record."** This type of statement can be interpreted as an open admission that the athlete is not always open and honest with people. Athletes who attempt to speak in private tones appear to be dishonest and manipulative.
6. **Never say, "No comment."** No comment is a poor answer because it can create suspicion and mistrust in the minds of the audience. If an athlete has nothing to say, no answer should be forthcoming. Simply say, "I'd rather discuss something else." If the reporter persists, politely end the interview.
7. **Never joke with a reporter.** While questions may appear funny, answers should always be serious.
8. **Keep your cool.** Athletes should never feel intimidated by cameras, tape recorders or microphones, being interrupted, differences in opinions, offensive language, stupid or accusatorial questions, statements of so-called facts, or reporters leaving in the middle of an answer. They should "keep their cool" when pressure mounts.
9. **Act professional at all times.** Such a pose builds integrity and enhances credibility in the eyes of the audience.
10. **Never embarrass a reporter or ridicule a question.** If a question is poorly worded or has been asked before, an athlete should be patient. Practice understanding - attempt to understand why the question is being asked and answer the best you can.
11. **Do not spend too much time talking about a negative or a loss.** Audiences assimilate and remember negative information more accurately than positive information. Whenever possible, share positive accounts and information.
12. **Be alert to reporters' needs.** It is always a good practice for athletes to look at reporters, measure their response, and adjust accordingly - speak more slowly and/or repeat key words to ensure accuracy, if necessary.
13. **Support teammates and your school.** Honour the natural bonds that exist in relationships. You should respect and always support your teammates. Remain sensitive and never make negative remarks regarding others' performances.

Think before you speak and consider these points...

- What point do **you** want to get across?
- Who is the audience - not the person asking the questions?
- How can you turn a negative subject and/or question into a positive answer?
- You can't control the questions, but you can control the answers.
- Anticipate the tough questions before you sit down with a reporter.
- Practice the answers to tough questions before you begin your interview.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Source: Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity - CAAWS)

Consistency is important when dealing with the media. The following are examples of questions the media may ask you in an in-depth interview. While they may seem simple and straightforward, thinking about the answers before an interview will help you feel comfortable and well prepared:

Questions for athletes:

1. What attracted you to your sport?
2. What do you get out of competing at this level?
3. What are your other interests?
4. What do you think you would be doing now if you weren't competing?
5. What are your goals in school/work/sport?
6. What are your chances of winning a Championship medal? Who's your competition?
7. Who's helped you along the way? Family, friends, a mentor?
8. Who's your coach? What's he/she like?
9. Who supports you?
10. Describe your training regimen. How do you train?
11. What's been your most memorable game/event/accomplishment?
12. What are your plans after university and/or college athletics?

Additional questions for female athletes:

1. What does your performance mean to girls who are watching, listening to or reading about you?
2. Do you believe that girls and women who are interested in sport have enough role models?
3. Do you think that women athletes enjoy the same opportunities as male athletes?
4. Does the media cover women's sports fairly?

Questions for coaches:

1. Give us a rundown of how you expect the team to do.
2. What are the strengths/weaknesses of the team?
3. How tough is the competition? How well prepared is your team?
4. Was there any special preparation for the tournament? Please give us details.
5. Considering the results today, how well do you think the athletes were prepared for the competition?
6. What went wrong today, and how are you going to fix it?
7. The opponent did extremely well; what are they doing better than we are?
8. Enough excuses. How are we going to get back on top?

INTERVIEW DO'S AND DON'TS – A SUMMARY

Interview Do's

- Keep your head up and smile. Have a positive attitude.
- Speak clearly and enunciate your words. Avoid “ums, you know, etc.”
- Be courteous. Understand that the media is just trying to do their job.
- Use the interviewer's name in your answers.
- Be on time and be presentable in your appearance.
- Practice modesty in victory and self-control in defeat – *Act professionally at all times.*

Interview Don'ts

- Joke or use sarcasm. You can't control the tone in which it is written or the context in which it is aired.
- Say anything that you wouldn't write down, add your signature to or feel comfortable showing your coach or your teammates.
- Provide locker room material. No trash talking.
- Pretend you are a coach. Let your coaches answer questions regarding who will start, game plans and strategies.
- Miss class or practice for any interview. Know your schedule.

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS AND/OR VOICING CONCERNS

Reporters, both print and electronic, are interested in reporting the games and personalities as facts, and as they interpret those facts. They are not necessarily there to make you look good, nor are they there to make you look bad. They have a job to do and it is important that you understand and cooperate wherever possible. How effectively one deals with the news media reflects directly on how they feel about you or your team.

All interview requests should be arranged through the Athletics Department's communications representative and/or equivalent. A student-athlete should never receive calls or visits from the media that have not been arranged by the Athletics Department.

If someone shows up at your door in the dorm, as politely as possible, explain you are not permitted to do an interview under such circumstances and refer the person to the Athletics Department.

On rare occasions, the general tone of the interview is such that you may not be comfortable continuing the interview. If you have concerns about the reporter, his or her questions or the tone of the interview, please notify your Athletic Director, Sport Information Director and/or Communications officer.

Hopefully, this booklet has provided further insight in understanding the media and the value of positive media relations, while also offering the tools and resources necessary to best deal with the media.