



MEDIA TIPS FOR ATHLETES

Working with the media is an essential tool for athletes for a variety of reasons. By ensuring good communication and relationships with media organizations and contacts, athletes can get their story out there, promote sponsors and raise their profile.

Where do you start?

As a starting point it is a good idea to create a list or database of the media organizations and key contacts that can help you get your message out.

- Start by simply going through those media organizations that you are familiar with – local newspaper, local radio stations, provincial TV, national websites etc.
- Now that you have your list, try searching the internet for the organization's website and a key contact for each. The best contact person is most likely going to be the sports editor or the chief sports reporter.

Tips for getting media coverage...

- Make an appointment and go to see the sports editor or sports reporter. Tell him or her about your sport, your achievements and the types of events and other interesting things that are coming up during the year. Building a relationship is important.
- Deadlines. Every media outlet works to deadlines. These are absolute and usually will only be extended if absolutely necessary. Find out from your contact what their deadline is and then submit any material at least couple of hours before, if not the day before.
- Deliver. If your contact offers to receive material from you, or you offer to provide it, then do it. Honour the deadline and provide a write up a professional format. Some outlets like material to be emailed directly to the paper. This reduces the need to retype text into the outlets own computer system.
- Make it interesting. Your story has to be interesting. Find an angle that will grab the reader's attention. Focus on people; your achievements; it does not have to be about the person who kicked the most goals. It could be about how you overcame adversity, showed exceptional leadership or it could include information about your background or links to your community.
- Don't worry about being too journalistic. Leave that up to the media, but do make your article readable. The editor can knock it into shape, but give them something decent to work with. Keep it to the requested length or word count. Double check the spelling of names and your facts and signal somehow in the article that you have checked them.



Creating your key message...

Key messages are essential tools in all media relations work. They open the door to direct communication with the reporter and your audience, because they bridge what your audience already knows and where you are trying to take them.

You have a point to make—whether you are successful or not so successful in your competition. A good key message helps you with your interview because you already know what to say before you say it. It allows you to be comfortable in the interview process and helps you to focus regardless of how you are feeling.

Your key message will help your audience understand you and your sport and will create a clear and concise idea. By prompting your listeners to ask questions, key messages immediately get audiences involved in your story. Your message will get the audience curious about what you have to say.

The only way to find your key message is to repeatedly ask yourself "Why? How?", until you come to the core, the very reason for why you do what you do. Asking yourself these questions will reveal the information you can take for granted that your audiences need to know and understand.

Key messages are...

- **Concise:** avoid jargon and acronyms
- **Active:** make every sentence active and alive
- **Positive:** talk about what one can do, not what you can't
- **Short:** one memorable sentence, 10-15 seconds to say
- **Specific:** address a particular topic
- **Prepared:** be organized, know and understand your key message

Sample key messages for athletes...

"I have spent countless hours at the gym and knew that I was completely prepared for the competition today. Physically, I was as fit as I have ever been and mentally, I was tremendously focused."

"I always have and will continue to believe that I have put in every aspect of my training on the line today. Regardless of the outcome, the sacrifices have been worth it."

"This is a team of no regrets. We have created an atmosphere of all for one and one for all. There is no one of us greater than the whole team. Our focus has always been to end up on the top of the podium."



Tips for writing a media release...

Here are some general tips to help you get started if you are going to write an a media release:

- If you only had once sentence to tell your story, say it in the first one. The rest of the story will flow from there. Don't feel that you have to write a novel.
- Create your angle and put it up front. Think about a fruit shop. They put their best fruit out the front where you'll see it and go into the store for a look. You need a great angle, something more than just a result or placing.
- It is better to be clear and concise than brilliant.
- Word economy. Avoid using big, complicated words, when simple words will do. Go for a simple explanation of what you're trying to get across.
- Leave the clever writing to the journalists.
- They will work your article into shape. Your job is to give them the best possible foundation material from which to build a great story. From you, they want the facts of the person, place, event or and why it's a great story for their readers
- Check your facts, and then check them again.
- Write simply, state the facts, explain the concept and, show how it is news worthy.
- Always include your contact details so they can follow up if they have questions or need further comment or quotes.

Tips for media Interviews...

- Arrive on time for the interview and make sure you look professional.
- Take your time while speaking during the interview, there is no rush.
- There is no such thing as "off the record" - you are always on the record so don't say something you may regret later.
- Let your personality shine through, don't be a robot.
- Don't be afraid to smile or laugh and be energetic.
- Anticipate in advance the kinds of questions you may be asked.
- Think about a message you may wish to get across and how you might be able to work it in. Make sure you a clear and concise.
- Make linkages to something personal about yourself and your experiences.
- Think fast - talk slow. Use short, to-the-point answers.
- Avoid technical jargon and acronyms from your sport
- Don't get sidetracked with your answer. Always keep your cool.

For more information contact BC Athlete Voice at info@bcathletevoice.ca