



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

*A Practical Handbook of Media Relations
for Sports Organizations*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The media: why bother?	I
How to use this manual.....	I
Six months to go: appoint a media relations chair; become an expert on your sport and event.....	2
Three months to go: compile a list of media contacts	3
Three months to go: gather information for media release	5
Three months to go: discuss media relations policy with the NSO/PSO office.....	5
Don't plan a media conference	6
Do mention your sponsors	6
One month to go: write media release.....	7
One month to go: send out first public service announcement (psa).....	12
Twenty-one days to go: get publicity photos.....	13
Twenty-one days to go: gather biographical data on event personnel.....	13
Fourteen days to go: assemble media kit	13
Ten days to go: telephone media.....	14
Nine days to go: line up a photographer	14
Eight days to go: deliver public service announcements	16
Five days to go: deliver final media release and media kit	16
The last days to go: keep your eyes and ears open for new stories.....	16
The last days to go: watch out for factual changes	17
One day to go: telephone your media contacts.....	17
One day to go: check on the coffee!!.....	17
Zero hour: the day of the event.....	18
One day after the event: correct errors made by media.....	19
One week after the event: send reports and clippings to the PSO/NSO offices	19
Preparing your athletes for the media	20
Do's & Don't's.....	21



THE MEDIA: WHY BOTHER?

Someone once said that not advertising is like winking at someone in the dark. It happened, but nobody knows about it. The same can be said about interesting the media in your event. If they don't report your event, it hasn't happened, and most of the people who live in your community don't now about it. On the other hand, if they do report it, people have the opportunity to read, hear or see news about an interesting happening in the community. They have the opportunity to learn about the people who have taken part. They learn about your involvement in organizing and staging the event. They learn about your sport, and about Ontario amateur sport's deep roots in the community. And almost certainly, you will attract some new interest – from potential sponsors, volunteers, participants – as a result.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

You'll find this manual useful whether you're new at media relations or whether you have 20 years' experience under your belt. If you're a novice, read the manual carefully and follow its advice. It will stand you in good stead. If you're experienced, you may want to skip parts of the manual. On the other hand, you may want to read it all to remind yourself of some of the fundamentals. In other words you can consider it a 15-minute refresher course. Whatever you decide, you'll find it will serve as a handy checklist.

NOTE: *Although our checklist begins with “Six months to go” before your event, you can start earlier or later. It depends on the size and importance of your event. A World Championships or International Open can have a much longer leadup than six months; a local fastball tournament only a few weeks. The important thing is to check off each step, then, if you leave one out, it will be because you decided it was unnecessary, and not because you forgot or did not know about it.*

This manual concerns itself primarily with media relations for events. However the general principles and common-sense practices it describes apply equally well to general ongoing, relationships between a sports organization and the media.



SIX MONTHS TO GO: APPOINT A MEDIA RELATIONS CHAIR:

BECOME AN EXPERT ON YOUR SPORT AND EVENT

This may sound elementary, but it's necessary. Every organizing committee does need a media relations person, and he or she should be the sole contact for the media. It's a *job* – not an ego trip! And for the media relations person: become an expert on your sport if you aren't already. After all, when you approach the media, you are going to be the expert not only on your particular event, but on your sport in general – at least within Ontario, but Canada and World background can be vital, especially if your event will host teams from abroad. Study everything you can about your sport – Web pages are the quickest fact sources these days. Make sure you know everything that's important about your own event...key people, who is coming, how many are coming, what VIPs are expected (you'll be expected to bring your VIP guests and the media together!)

Have your subject matter, and the way you intend to approach it, well thought out. Be prepared to substantiate your facts. However, in your efforts to impress the media with the fact that you are a reliable, expert contact, never go so far as to con them. If they ask you a question you can't answer, don't fake the answer. If you don't know something, there's nothing wrong with saying: "I don't know, but I'll find out." Then find out. Fast.



THREE MONTHS TO GO: COMPILE A LIST OF MEDIA CONTACTS

An up-to-date list of media people in your community and wherever else you want to reach out to is a must. If you have access to one of the two media bibles – *Matthews List* and *Bowden's Media Directory* – you'll find them valuable. They both list all the media in your community as well as the names of the key people who work there with phone, fax and e-mail addresses (e-mail is the preferred means of distribution these days. Chances are that your local library will have one or both of these directories on its shelves. However, you can probably get along quite nicely with the yellow pages of your telephone book. Make a list of all the daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, television stations (including cablevision) and community magazines in town. If you don't know the names of the sports people, phone and find out. People who deal with the media regularly do just that from time to time to update their lists. Whatever you do, be sure your list doesn't include the names of any people who have retired, died or left town. That's a sure-fire way to a) look amateurish and b) have your material deleted unread.

The Sport Alliance of Ontario can help you with this task, by disseminating material on an Ontario-wide basis on your behalf, and by serving as a consultant/advisor.

Don't forget that the contacts for Public Service Announcements – the fax numbers or e-mail addresses for the 'What's On' listings – will be different from your sport journalist contacts.

Don't forget to include local MPs, MPPs, and the communications departments of local city governments, major local organizations and firms on your distribution list.

Newspapers

Newspapers are the oldest medium of mass communication. They are read by millions and provide concentrated coverage of events taking place in the areas in which they circulate.

Dailies: Chances are a daily newspaper is published in your community. About 45 are published in Ontario. A story in it about your event will reach most of the people in town. Make a point of calling on the sports editor and his correspondent(s) as soon as the event begins to take shape.

Weeklies: There is almost certainly at least one weekly published in your community. About 300 of them are published in communities across the province with a total weekly circulation of more than 3 million. Generally, weekly



newspapers are more receptive to community news than daily newspapers are. However, they may *only* want news of direct interest to their community.

Radio Stations

If there's one rule to keep in mind when dealing with radio stations, it's this: **Be brief.** The information you give to radio must be to the point. Remember, it's better to be brief than to be ignored. Television stations, and especially newspapers, require more detail. And speaking of television stations...

Television Stations

At last count, 97.8 % of all Canadian homes has a television set. About 35 stations across the province provide national and community programming in every province and territory. Many of the most successful stations are heavily community-oriented...and that's good news for you.

Cable Television

There are over 50 cable television companies in Ontario servicing most communities. Not only do they run public service announcements (see page 19) – a perfect opportunity for you – but many of them do a small amount of programming.

Magazines

Dozens of magazines are published in Ontario. More than 20 of these are community magazines carrying stories about events that have just taken place in town...or are about to take place. If a magazine like this is published in your community, don't miss the opportunity to tell them about your event. You might be surprised at how interested they are.

And last but not least—the World Wide Web

Five years ago this section would not have appeared in a handbook. Today the Web is one of the most important means of information distribution that there is. No matter how small your event is, it can probably afford a Web site, if only one done by the local high school as a class project (but these can be some of the nicest sites!) From your point of view as media relations officer, you want to make sure that the site is kept current with up-to-date news, whether copies of your media releases or special articles for the site, or both! Make sure your Webmaster puts the latest news where it is immediately visible, preferably at least a first paragraph or a link right on the home page. The event's website should be your on-line reference library and bulletin board – it will take a big load off your shoulders.

There is one thing to remember about a Website – it is *passive*, not *active*, information, although it can be used interactively. That is, unless people know



about it, and know where to find it, they won't know to look at it. That's why the "New Economy" companies still depend a lot on good old-fashioned print advertising to tell people where to find their sites! All your media releases should be posted to your site of course, but the site is no substitute for an actively-circulated release. Make sure that your media releases contain all the most important information, and refer the media to the site only for background detail. Make sure that your event letterhead, and every media release and piece of correspondence that goes out from the organizing committee includes the address for the site.

THREE MONTHS TO GO:

GATHER INFORMATION FOR MEDIA RELEASE

Don't be confused. A **media** release is the same thing as a **press** release. There are radio and television people who feel that the word "**press**" excludes them. Don't take a chance on insulting them. Call it a media release. The media release is dealt with in some detail later in this manual. Now, though, is the time to make sure you have all the information you need when you sit down to write the release. You'll find you can jot down all the key pieces of information in point form on a single sheet of paper. Exactly when will your event begin and end? Exactly where will it be held? Exactly how many athletes will be taking part? Where are they from? Who is the organizer? Who are the officials? Who will be the spokesperson in the media release? The VIP guests? Get a brief comment from one of them that you can include in the release. Above all, try to think of what it is that makes your event particularly interesting and newsworthy. Is this the first time that this event has been held in your community? Is a cultural exhibition included? Is one of the participants the mayor's son? – or the Premier's?—or a famous newsmaker's? In other words, look for what newsmen call a hook. Something interesting to hang your story on to.

THREE MONTHS TO GO: DISCUSS MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY WITH THE NSO/PSO OFFICE

Make sure that your Organizing Committee and your National and/or Provincial Sport Association are all on the same wavelength. There's nothing more embarrassing than a public contradiction or mis-statement from different levels of a sport and it can happen all too easily. This can happen especially where there may be unclarity or complexities of eligibility rules. Make sure that what you are going to say is in line with the policies of your sport. In turn, make sure that the provincial or national offices know what is going on. Communication is the key.



DON'T PLAN A MEDIA CONFERENCE

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?? That's right, **DON'T** hold a media conference. If you had one in mind, think again. The story probably isn't big enough for a news conference. If you tried to hold one you'd likely be embarrassed by a room full of empty seats. Like all rules, this one has exceptions. If you're holding a hockey tournament and Wayne Gretzky says he'd love to do a news conference, by all means have one. And if you need a little guidance on how to organize it, give the **Sport Alliance of Ontario** a call. We'd be happy to help.

DO MENTION YOUR SPONSORS

In any release that goes out, try to mention your sponsors somehow, if only in a final paragraph that lists them. Journalists will usually not use that paragraph but at least your sponsors will see that you're acknowledging them in good faith. A better tactic is to try to work one or another sponsor into the body of a release, as long as the sponsor has done or said something relevant to the point of your release. Finally, of course, if you name your event after your lead sponsor, that will practically guarantee that their name will be mentioned in almost any report on the event.



ONE MONTH TO GO: WRITE MEDIA RELEASE

You are ready to write your media release. There is nothing mysterious about it. It is simply a news story, the only difference being that it is written by you rather than by a reporter. The media release is the most accepted manner of getting facts and figures to the media.

However, that doesn't mean that just because you write media release you're guaranteed that the media will use your story. Just as even the best salesmen spend a great deal of time on sales talks that don't end in sales...and even the best authors are unable to publish everything they write...more media releases find their way into the wastebasket than into print or on the air.

It's no wonder either. Every morning, the mail, fax and e-mail bring another wave of media releases. The Toronto Star receives an average of 6,000 every week! If you've ever been in a newspaper office, you know that the wastebaskets are huge, and you might not see how the print is worn off the DELETE key! That's no accident. There are a few things you can do, though, to maximize the possibility of your release being used.

Timing Can Help You Avoid the Garbage

To begin with, you'll have a much better chance of avoiding the wastebasket if you try not to come nose-to-nose with the competition. In other words, if there were 23 hockey games last night, forget about your release being used today. There's only so much space and time available. Feel free to adjust your schedule by a day or two to avoid such a day.

The Mechanics of the Media release

Make your media release look professional by following some basic conventions. If you look like you deserve attention, you'll have a better chance of getting it. And you'll look like you deserve it by doing the following:

Media releases sent through the post office are a thing of the past. Use FAX or e-mail. Some papers prefer one, some the other. Check if you can to see who prefers which. E-mail is becoming more and more common.

By FAX

- Use plain letter size paper with or without letterhead
- Type on one side of the page.
- Double space. Better yet, triple space.



- Don't use script or other fancy type. Thanks to a certain software giant, Times New Roman and Arial are the most common typefaces around. They may be boring but they're clear and readable and everyone has them – use them. Save the fancy stuff for your letterhead.
- Limit your release to one page, or two at most.
- Make sure your fax machine is clean, that the paper is feeding straight, and that all your fax numbers are correct. If you're faxing from a computer, have your database checked before shooting off the release. There's a temptation to set the computer to fax all night so the machine (and phone line) isn't tied up in the daytime. Better to do it in the daytime if you can. Faxes (and e-mails!) to a darkened newsroom have a way of going astray...and unattended computers have a way of screwing up. (That's Murphy's Law at work!). Also, if your stuff comes in overnight, it will compete with a ton of other stuff that came in overnight. If you transmit during office hours (morning/early afternoon) you've a much better chance of being noticed.

By E-mail

- You may be tempted to create a snazzy media release in Word or WordPerfect or Adobe Acrobat (PDF) and send it out as an e-mail attachment with logos, pictures etc. **DON'T DO IT!** An attachment full of graphics is a big download, irritating to anyone in a hurry, but more important, some newsrooms do not use Windows. Send your media release as **plain text** in the body of the e-mail. Save the fancy formatting for your Website.
- The Subject Line should read: 'Media release: REGIONAL VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS TO TAKE PLACE SEPTEMBER 11-13 IN WEST GWILLIMBURY'.
- Always blind-copy (bcc) the e-mail to your distribution list. There's nothing more irritating than wading through two pages of addresses before you get to the subject and text of the message.

Photographs

Whether you send the media release by fax or e-mail, any accompanying photographs can almost always be e-mailed. With scanners and digital cameras, there's almost no need for hard-copy 8x10 glossies any more.

- If scanning, make sure your colours, brightness and contrast are well-balanced. Most papers will print in black and white, but make sure the colour quality of your original is good. Photos should be scanned at 300 dpi resolution, and saved in high-quality JPG format.



- If sending photos from a digital camera, you may want to tweak photo quality (brightness/contrast), but don't resize or change the resolution. The graphics shop at the paper will resize to their needs.

Writing the Release

There's no such thing as a crash course in writing. The ability to write a media release – or anything else, for that matter – can improve only with practice. Reading this, therefore, will not make you an expert at writing media releases. However, it will familiarize you with certain fundamental rules and concepts.

The Inverted Pyramid: The media release, and most news stories, are written in a style known as the **inverted pyramid**. The metaphor refers to the fact that the most important part of the story – the broad base of the pyramid – comes first. The next most important fact comes next. And so on, until the story is finished. Theoretically, the editor can chop off the bottom half of the story, or at least the last two sentences, or everything except the first two sentences, and what is left will still contain the essence of the story. The broadest base of the pyramid, the information that comes at the beginning, or top, of your release - the pyramid is inverted, remember - is called the lead.

The Lead–The Five W's: You've most likely heard of an old public affairs television program called W5. However, you may not have realized the significance of the title. W5 refers to the five W's – Who? What? Where? When? Why? – that are answered in the first sentence or two of any news story. (Actually, the question "Why?" is sometimes not answered.)

e.g. More than 120 area youngsters will compete at a regional swim meet this Saturday at McKay Pool.

There is the essence of the story in one sentence, the first one in your release.

More than 120 area youngsters (WHO?) will compete at a regional swim meet (WHAT?) this Saturday (WHEN?) at McKay Pool (WHERE?).

Sharpen Your Focus: Try to keep the attention of the story, your media release, focussed on one thing. If you find that your attention seems to be divided between two or more stories – let's say that 1) there will be a soccer tournament on Saturday and 2) most of the youngsters are expected to attend the provincial soccer championships at the same site on Sunday – chances are you should be writing two releases.



Use Simple, Active Sentences: You can't go wrong by following the rule that simple sentences and words are better than complex ones. Similarly, it is much easier to write clearly using active sentences rather than passive ones.

e.g. *The city championship was won by Robertson last year. (weak)*

Robertson won the city championship last year. (much stronger)

Avoid Jargon and Cliches: There is no doubt a great deal of jargon used in your sport. There is in every sport. Don't use it in your media release. What is commonplace to you will be puzzling to others not directly involved in the sport. You may know what "push-in", "judogi" and "FITA" mean. Others don't. Be explicit. Your job is to enlighten, not confuse.

Objectivity and Attribution: You are writing a media release, not an editorial. There is no room for your opinion. You can write:

e.g. *More than 100 area youngsters will compete in the West Gwillimbury Volleyball tournament.*

because that is a statement of fact, not opinion. You cannot write

The tournament will be the best one ever held in the city.

because that is your opinion. However, if you attribute the opinion to someone in authority, you turn it into a statement of fact.

e.g. *The Tournament will be best one ever held in the city, according to Wayne Emmons, the organizer.*

"The tournament will be the best one ever held in the city," said organizer Wayne Emmons.

Your statement is now a fact. It is a fact that Emmons has that opinion. The rule of thumb is: Keep your opinions to yourself. But quote the opinions of others if they are in a position to know the facts.

Some Rules of Style:

- Include a simple, straightforward headline at the top of your release. Remember, it should be a statement of fact. You are not writing an editorial. The headline will offer the editors/reporters reading your release a concise summary of what it contains. However, don't expect to see your headline in print. An editor will almost certainly rewrite it if your story is used. It helps to type the headline in all capital letters especially if it is going out by e-mail.
- If you are FAXing, and your release is two pages long, type "more..." at the bottom of the first page. If your headline is, say, "Volleyball Tournament Here Saturday", type "Volleyball Tournament-2" in the top right corner of the second page. (This doesn't apply to e-mails).



- Type “The End” or “30” or “##” at the end of your release.
- Always, always, always, include a reference name ‘For information please contact:’ at the end of the release. If the media wants to talk to someone about the story, they must have a name and telephone number. In fact, they should have more than one telephone number. They should have one where they can reach you during the day, and one where they can reach you in the evening. (If you don’t want to be bothered at home, do everyone a favour. Ask the organizer to find another media officer.) The reference on your media release should look like this:

For information please contact:

McKay Elementary School

Elaine Snider, Media Officer

Tel: 000-0000 (bus.)

000-0000 (res.)

Fax: 000-0000

E-mail: esnider@somewhere.com

- When you refer to a person in your media release, always include the first and last names. Initials won’t do, unless, of course, you’re talking about W.C. Fields or J.R.Ewing. The first time you refer to a person, use his or her full name, not preceded by Mr. or Mrs. or Miss or Ms. Subsequent references should use only the person’s last name.

e.g. Gwen Tolley, Physical Fitness Director at the Recreation centre said the Festival will give many local children a chance to take part in Olympic sports and cultural activities for the first time. Tolley said that...

- You should obviously take pains to spell everything correctly, especially proper names. If you use a name that looks incorrectly spelled, it is a good idea to type the word “correct” in parentheses after the name (e.g....Ralph Willson <correct>...) to assure the editor that you are aware of possible confusion and that the spelling is the proper one.
- In a media release, you will usually use numerals for numbers 10 and larger. You will use words for numbers smaller than 10.

e.g. The 128 boys registered to participate in the Festival include three Swedish boys who are visiting here on a school exchange program.

There are, as usual, exceptions. Ages, fractions and game scores will be written in numerals, even if they are smaller than 10. Very large numbers – a billion, for example – will be written in words. You will never begin a sentence with a numeral, whatever the number.



- At the top of a release, you will type the date and the phrase “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”. Some advocate the use of “release dates”. That means that you would distribute the release on, say, September 10, but would type “For release Sept. 11” at the top of the release. Forget it. Most news people don’t feel obligated to honour release dates. And they’re probably right. Their logic is that if they wait a day or two to release a story, as instructed by the release date, they are withholding news. You can’t go wrong by assuming they your contacts will disregard release dates, so don’t distribute a release until it can be used.

Don’t lose a story in the details!!!

If you have a blockbuster story, **take advantage of it!!!** Let’s say Simon Whitfield is planning to put in an appearance at your event. Don’t start your release by saying the “more than 140 city youngsters will take part in a regional judo competition this Saturday at Rogan Collegiate and Vocational Institute” and save Simon for sentence two. Hit them with it right away. Your release will have much more impact if your first sentence is: “Olympic gold medallist Simon Whitfield of Kingston will be the guest of honour Saturday when more than 140 city youngsters take part in a regional judo competition at Rogan Collegiate and Vocational Institute.”

A sample media release is included in our Toolkit.

ONE MONTH TO GO:

SEND OUT FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

You do this mainly for the sake of stimulating ticket sales. Likewise, if you’re buying ads or having them donated, this is the time to submit them. A sample PSA is included in the Toolkit.



TWENTY-ONE DAYS TO GO: GET PUBLICITY PHOTOS

If particularly noteworthy people are associated with your event – officials who are celebrity athletes, for example – it's a good idea to have photos available for the press. Your best bet is to stick to front-face head and shoulders photographs, though recent action shots can be good for variety. Use scanned or digital photos if at all possible.

TWENTY-ONE DAYS TO GO: GATHER BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ON EVENT PERSONNEL

About those people you've just had photographed: Who are they? What is their connection with the sport? What credentials do they have to do the job? If they are athletes, what is their competitive background? Who is the event administrator? What is his or her position in the community? Are there other people connected with the event who might be of interest to the media? Find out some pertinent facts about them. Six or eight facts each ought to do it. You'll need these facts when you assemble your media kit. And, by the way, don't rely on memory – yours or someone else's. Get the information first-hand and make absolutely sure that it is accurate.

FOURTEEN DAYS TO GO: ASSEMBLE MEDIA KIT

Your media kit should include:

- Your media release(s).
- A Media Fact Sheet (Item II of the Toolkit) You can type in the specific information on your own event, and photocopy these pages to use in your media kit.
- The photos you gathered last week, printed out with caption. You might want to include a diskette with the digitized pictures.
- Background information about your sport and its history in Canada and the province.
- Biographical notes on your event personnel.



TEN DAYS TO GO: TELEPHONE MEDIA

Telephone all the media on your list. Alert them that your event is approaching and invite them to attend. Tell them in a couple of sentences what the event is about, and tell them that you will be delivering a media release and other related material in a few days. Find out if there is anything you can do to help them cover your event. And do it! Incidentally, don't be discouraged if the person at the other end of the telephone line sounds bored stiff. Keep two things in mind: 1) Reporters and editors deal with news all the time and 2) They're busy people.

Because they are indeed busy people, quite often a Media Advisory is faxed around as well. It is a one-pager giving the vital facts about the event – NOT repeating the background material in the press release. E-mail is ok but FAX is better; it gives the journalist a piece of paper to put in his/her pocket the day of the event. Send this around about a week before (see below).

The George Plimpton Gambit

It won't always be possible, but there will be times when inviting the media not just to cover but *to take part* in your event will yield tremendous results. The chances are that if a reporter actually tries his or her hand at water polo...or judo...or fencing...the result will be a fascinating story.

NINE DAYS TO GO: LINE UP A PHOTOGRAPHER

Even if a local newspaper has promised that a photographer will be there the day of the event, it's imperative that you arrange for your own photographers too. If something else comes up on the day of your event, and the newspaper's photographer has to be re-assigned, you'll be left without any photographs.

But there's a more important reason than that to have your own photographer. The newspaper's photographer doesn't work for you. Just like you, his loyalty is to his employer. He has a pretty good idea of the kind of photograph his newspaper will want. You can make a gentle suggestion or two, of course, but you can't tell him what photographs to take. The photographer you hire, on the other hand, will take exactly what you want. While we're on that subject, always try to shoot some photographs with the event or sponsor name (on banners, etc.) in the background. Or the foreground. And, of course, don't forget to get plenty of action shots as well as photos including the VIPs and sponsor representatives.

Don't just hire a photographer and turn him loose– unless he's incredibly familiar with what you're doing, he'll end up missing important moments. Give him a



detailed schedule and have someone stick with him and show him what (and WHO!) needs shooting. Help him pose group shots. DON'T try to be a Director of Photography – the photographer knows his trade and the lighting conditions, and the capability of his equipment and will do his professional best. You may not get Sports Illustrated-quality photos (we won't even *discuss* what it takes to make pictures like those!), but you'll be sure that your event is well-documented – and your photographer just might get that one stunning shot that wins him or her a prize and makes your sport look great!



EIGHT DAYS TO GO: DELIVER PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Almost all media devote some time or space to public service announcements. These include the notices rolling across the bottom of the screen on your local Cable TV Channel, community notebook features on most radio stations and “**noticeboard**” newspaper columns. It isn’t difficult to have your event mentioned two or three or four times during the week before it takes place. The people responsible for these announcements don’t want a media release from you. They just want the facts: what your event is, where it is and when it is. As a rule, they need to receive the information a week or so before your event. Some have precise guidelines about the length of the announcement. Be on the safe side. Phone them and find out! Public service announcements of all types are a tremendous opportunity for you not only to let people in town know about your plans...but even to attract the attention of some youngsters who want to participate.

A format for a PSA is included in the Toolkit.

FIVE DAYS TO GO: DELIVER FINAL MEDIA RELEASE AND MEDIA KIT

By far the best way to get your media release and media kit into the hands of the media is to deliver them yourself. You’ll know your material has arrived; you’ll know it has arrived on time; and you’ll get to meet the people you’re dealing with. Whatever you do, don’t show up at the newspaper/radio/television station at deadline time. Instead of making friends, you’ll be making enemies. If you don’t know when deadlines are, find out! All it takes is a phone call. Ask your contacts when the best time would be to deliver your material to them.

THE LAST DAYS TO GO: KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN FOR NEW STORIES

Don’t sit on a story. If something unusual or interesting appears to be unfolding, be sure to let your media contacts know about it.



THE LAST DAYS TO GO: WATCH OUT FOR FACTUAL CHANGES

If there are any changes in the facts about your event - the number of participants expected, for example – let the media know. Don't let them use inaccurate information because you didn't bother to update it.

ONE DAY TO GO: TELEPHONE YOUR MEDIA CONTACTS

Call the people on your list just to remind them that your event is tomorrow and you'd be happy to see them there.

ONE DAY TO GO: CHECK ON THE COFFEE!!

It's a small thing...but an important one. Make sure coffee will be available tomorrow for the media visitors as well as any special guests who are there. Doughnuts or pastries and juice would be nice, too. If you had any thoughts of offering liquor and beer to the media, forget it! You can't buy media with a pat on the back and a scotch on the rocks. In fact, you can't buy media coverage at any price.



ZERO HOUR: THE DAY OF THE EVENT

Be There, Be Helpful!

Most of your work is done. But there are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, be there to greet the media. If your car catches fire and the roof blows off your house, make sure someone else is there in your place. Whatever you do, make sure the reporters aren't left to wander about aimlessly because nobody is there to show them where to go. Second, be as helpful as you can be. With all the work you've done over the past few weeks, it would be a shame to blow it now by not seeing that a reporter has the information he needs...or has a chance to interview the organizer...or the Minister...or Walter Gretzky...or whatever.

Be On the Lookout

Keep a sharp eye open for human interest or humorous incidents. They can result in nice little stories. Morning men at radio stations are always looking for amusing anecdotes, especially involving youngsters. Many newspapers have an "Around Town" columnist who would love to include your item in his column. The sports columnist might like it for the "tidbits" section at the end of his column.

e.g. A regional fencing competition was held at the University of Windsor on Saturday, and before it began a young fellow of 8 or 9 was spotted wandering through the building, obviously lost. "Are you looking for the fencing competition?" a university administrator asked. "Nope" he replied firmly. "Then what are you looking for?" he was asked. "I'm lookin' for the sword fighting'." he said.

That's a true story, and it was used in half a dozen places. Including here.



ONE DAY AFTER THE EVENT: CORRECT ERRORS MADE BY MEDIA

The only legitimate complaint you can have about the media coverage of your event is an error in fact. If the error was incidental, forget it. If it was serious, a *courteous* telephone call or letter is in order. If the corrected information is used, fine. If it isn't, fine. Under no circumstances should you argue or complain rudely.

“You can never win an argument with someone who buys ink by the barrelful”

–James Brady, former Press Secretary to Ronald Reagan

Some media relations books suggest you drop a line to those who covered your event and thank them for their stories. Don't. Remember, they didn't cover your event because you wanted them to. They didn't write their stories the way they did to keep you happy. They covered the event and wrote their stories because they thought their audiences would be interested. By thanking them, you're implying that they did you a favour. They didn't. They did their job.

ONE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT: SEND REPORTS AND CLIPPINGS TO THE PSO/NSO OFFICES

Send any clippings, lists of media in attendance, etc. to your PSO and/or NSO offices.



PREPARING YOUR ATHLETES FOR THE MEDIA

Sport is all about athletes. They are the heroes, they are the stories that the media wants to report and the public wants to hear about. So it's surprising that even at National and Olympic level, our athletes are often unevenly prepared to work with the media.

This is just as important at a regional tournament as at the Olympics. Our athletes are the faces of our sports; they are local heroes if only for a day, and how they present themselves to the media will reflect on their sport. More to the point, they have a need and a right to be as fully prepared in this area of competition as in any other. Start them young, and by the time they make the Olympic Team, they will handle the media with confidence. If they never make the Olympic team, it is another part of their sport experience that will stand them in good stead in their careers – another tool for living that sport can and should provide.

The **Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (CAWWS)** has produced a wonderful booklet on this very topic, entitled *Making the Most of Your Opportunities: a Media Guide for Athletes and their Coaches*

It can be ordered from CAWWS at:

Bparker@cawws.ca.

The current price is \$10.00



DO's & DON'T'S

Finally, here are some dos and don'ts to keep in mind when dealing with the media

DO

- ...be friendly and polite.
- ...be honest.
- ...be helpful.
- ...be patient, Good media relations takes time and effort.
- ...be accurate. Every name, fact and figure must be right.
- ...remember, a reporter works for his employer, not yours.
- ...be prompt.
- ...be fair.
- ...be thorough.

DON'T

- ...lie. Ever.
- ...lose your temper.
- ...expect miracles.
- ...demand.
- ...assume you have any control over the editorial content of a story.
- ...exaggerate the importance of your news.
- ...blame a reporter for his company's policies.
- ...give up.



I. EVENT PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Six Months To Go:	Appoint a Media Relations Chair/Become An Expert On Your Sport And Event
Three Months To Go:	Compile A List Of Your Local Media
Three Months To Go:	Gather Information For Media Release
Three Months To Go:	Discuss Media Relations Policy With The NSO/PSO Office
One Month To Go:	Send Media Release and first PSA
Twenty-One Days To Go:	Get Publicity Photos
Twenty-One Days To Go:	Gather Biographical Data On Event Personnel
Fourteen Days To Go:	Assemble Media Kit
Ten Days To Go:	Telephone Media
Nine Days To Go:	Line Up A Photographer
Eight Days To Go:	Deliver Public Service Announcements
Five Days To Go:	Deliver Media Advisory And Media Kit
The Last Days To Go:	Keep Your Eyes And Ears Open For New Stories
The Last Days To Go:	Watch Out For Factual Changes
One Day To Go:	Telephone Your Media Contacts
One Day To Go:	Check On The Coffee!!
Zero Hour:	The Day Of The Event
One Day After:	Correct Errors Made By Media
One Week After:	Send Reports And Clippings To The PSO/NSO Offices



II. SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2002

JUDO TOURNAMENT TO BE HELD HERE

More than 140 city youngsters will take part in a regional judo competition this Saturday at Rogan Collegiate and Vocational Institute (RCVI).

Gary Taylor, head of the physical education department at RCVI and organizer of the event, says that the tournament will involve many of the boys and girls in serious judo competition for the first time.

"I'm sure the young people taking part will benefit from this exposure to competition in a sport they enjoy," Taylor says.

Taylor says that the judges at the tournament will be some of the city's most experienced and successful competitors in the sport.

The tournament judges will be national team member Bobby James, as well as Stan Towers and Brad Coutts, both provincial intercollegiate champions last year. All three are city residents.

Sponsors for the event are MrCool Air Conditioning and Iceberg Lettuce Produce Distributors along with CHUG Radio.

The competition will begin at 9 a.m. and, according to Taylor, spectators are welcome.

-30-

Photo attachment: JAMES001.JPG. <Caption> Bobby James shows his form in winning the gold medal at the 2000 Canadian National Judo Championships. <Photo Credit> Jim Gregson/Judo Canada

...more



JUDO TOURNAMENT 2

For information contact:

Rogan Collegiate and Vocational Institute

Joe Scott, Media Officer

Tel: 000-0000 (bus.)

000-0000 (res.)

E-mail: joe.scott@mrcool.com



III. MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2002

JUDO TOURNAMENT IN (YOUR CITY) (DATES)

NAME OF EVENT:

DATE OF EVENT:

LOCATION OF EVENT:

TIME(S) OF EVENT(S): (Each Day's Start Times, for instance)

SPECIAL EVENTS:

(if you are having an opening ceremony, when and where. If you will be having important or celebrity guests, who and when.)

FOR MEDIA REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Rogan Collegiate and Vocational Institute

Joe Scott, Media Officer

Tel: 000-0000 (bus.)

000-0000 (res.)

E-mail: joe.scott@mrcool.com

DIRECTIONS TO SITE:

(if it's hard to find, include a simple map!)



**IV. SAMPLE PSA
(PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT)
FOR RADIO, TV AND NEWSPAPER
'WHAT'S ON' LISTINGS**

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

NAME OF EVENT:

DATE OF EVENT:

LOCATION OF EVENT:

TIME(S) OF EVENT(S): (Each Day's Start Times, for instance)

SPECIAL EVENTS:

(if you are having an opening ceremony, when and where. If you will be having important or celebrity guests, who and when.)

TICKET PRICE:

TO PURCHASE TICKETS CONTACT: (phone number, e-mail, or Website as appropriate.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: (These days, usually your website address.)



V. MEDIA FACT SHEET (FOR MEDIA KIT)

Q: When will the event be?

A:

Q: Where will the event be?

A:

Q: How many athletes will take part?

A:

Q: How many schools (communities/clubs/provinces/countries) will they represent? Which ones?

A:

Q: Who is organizing the event?

A:

Q: Who will the officials be?

A:

Q: Who will the media officer be? Name, main phone number, cell phone number, FAX number and e-mail address)

A: