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THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG SPORTS REPORTERS,
COACHES AND SPORTS INFORMATION DIRECTORS
REGARDING STUDENT-ATHLETE INTERVIEWS

by
Scott Ronaghan

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
June 12, 1997

Approved by

Date Approved 6-12-97

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ABSTRACT

Scott Ronaghan
The Relationship Among Sports Reporters,
Coaches and Sports Information Directors
Regarding Student-Athlete Interviews
Anthony Fulginiti
Master of Arts Public Relations

This thesis sought to determine if sports information directors were preparing their student-athletes for media interviews. The author surveyed SIDs and student-athletes from 30 different ECAC institutions sponsoring men's basketball. Also surveyed were newspaper reporters who cover the respective schools. A major portion of the survey involved the amount of media training SIDs conduct for their student-athletes.

Two-thirds of the 18 SIDs said they trained their student-athletes for interviews. The most common technique SIDs used was one-on-one meetings with the student-athletes. Representing the team in a positive light was the most common subject stressed to the student-athlete by the SID.

Over 70 percent of the SIDs said the head coach does not have the final say for a request to interview their student-athletes. About half the SIDs said they have the final say, whereas almost half the student-athletes indicated they have the final word.

Of the 18 SIDs surveyed in this study, close to 50 percent said they were doing a good job preparing student-athlete for interviews. More than 60 percent of the student-athletes said their SID was doing a good job, while over 70 percent of the reporters indicated the SID was effective at preparing student-athletes for interviews.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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Chapter One

Importance of the Study

The process of training and educating student-athletes to deal with the media is often overlooked at many colleges and universities.¹ It is important for the sports information director to keep the student-athletes on their toes at all times in situations involving the media. Sports information directors (SID) are the public relations people for the college. They are responsible for promoting and publicizing intercollegiate sports at colleges and universities. It is their job to let student-athletes know that besides themselves, they are representing the team, athletic department and the whole institution.

Roger Valdiserri of the University of Notre Dame explained the role of the SID in the relationship between the student-athlete and the media.

The SID should brief players so they understand what interviewers are seeking, what makes for a good and bad interview and how to treat members of the media. Interview situations often create lasting impressions on writers and broadcasters. Positive reactions on their part subtly may influence future handling of stories regarding athletics at (the) school.²

¹Brett Mendel, "Media Matters." *Athletic Management*, November 1992, p. 12.

² Roger Valdiserri, Associate Director of Athletics, University of Notre Dame, "Duties of the Modern SID . . . As Viewed by a SID," *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual*, July 1985, p.11

Marvin West, former sports editor of *Scripps Howard News Service*, agreed with the vital role the SID must play in the relationship between the student-athlete and the media. "(SIDs should) teach players to communicate . . . and brief them on expectations and advantageous reactions - a little more than a yes or no." West also stressed the fact that SIDs need to explain to student-athletes the function of the media in college athletics. He said SIDs should explain the function of the media as they want student-athletes to understand it. In a way, the SID can be the most valuable teacher in the school.³

Kathleen Hessert, founder and president of Sports Media Challenge, a company that trains all levels of athletes on handling media situations, explained the importance of preparing student-athletes for interviews in a November 1992 issue of *Athletic Management*. "Media skills are critically necessary. You can't just throw kids in front of the media without some sort of training."⁴

Shawn Brennan, SID at Iona College, said he realizes teaching athletes the proper interviewing skills is a subject that needs to be emphasized more at the college level. "It is almost an afterthought at some colleges. Some athletes simply do not know what is the right thing to say or the wrong thing." Brennan also pointed out that student-athletes need to know who they are representing when they talk with the media. "We try to tell our student-athletes to put themselves in the best possible spotlight, but to also remember that they are representing the team, the athletic

³ Marvin West, Sports Editor, *Scripps Howard News Service*, "Duties of the Modern SID . . . As viewed by a Sportswriter." *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual*, July 1985, p. 13

⁴ Breu Mendel, "Media Matters." *Athletic Management*, November 1992, p.12.

department and the entire institution.”⁵

Mike Kern, a veteran sportswriter for the *Philadelphia Daily News*, has been conducting interviews with college athletes for the past 14 years, most recently as the beat writer covering Temple University football and men’s basketball. Kern said that the author would probably find that most athletes at Division I athletic programs can usually handle themselves in interviews with the media. Kern explained, “Most Division I college athletes who have been in the spotlight since high school do not have a problem dealing with and understanding the media.”⁶

However, Kern did state that there have been times when he has conducted an interview when the athletes either weren’t prepared for the questions or were uncomfortable speaking to a reporter. He agreed with the idea that all student-athletes should have media training. “SIDs or even a trained speaker should talk to the athletes and teach them the right way to conduct themselves in interviews.” Kern said that in order for an interview to run smoothly, sometimes athletes not only have to be told what kinds of questions to expect, but what to say or do when a certain situation arises.

Several SIDs on the Division I, II and III level had responses as to how much hands-on involvement is required in student-athlete media training. Ken Cerino, SID at Springfield College, stated that it was his responsibility to make sure all the student-athletes at the school were briefed in the preseason on how to handle

⁵ Shawn Brennan, Sports Information Director and Assistant Athletic Director, Iona College, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 7, 1996.

⁶ Mike Kern, Sportswriter, *Philadelphia Daily News*, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 7, 1996.

themselves in interviews.⁷ The SID at East Stroudsburg University, Pete Nevins, also said it was his job to manage all media relations pertaining to student-athletes, including media training and acting as the liaison between the student-athletes and the media.⁸

Will Hancock, SID at Oklahoma State University, said that although student-athletes at the Division I level seem to handle themselves properly in interviews, media training is a key component of the SID's job at any level.⁹ The author used insight from SIDs at different schools to establish the amount of direct involvement the SID had in preparing student-athletes for interviews. Of the 10 SIDs selected for an initial response on this particular topic, all 10 SIDs stated they have some form of media training for student-athletes, whether it was through a preseason seminar or in one-on-one briefings.

Three other current and former SIDs, Dan Sullivan of Monmouth University, Ed Carpenter of Boston University and Al Shrier of Temple University, members of the College Sports Information Directors Association (CoSIDA) Hall of Fame, stated the importance of the perception of student-athletes in the media. CoSIDA is an organization made up of SIDs and athletic professionals that addresses topics concerning the sports media profession. The organization publishes a monthly digest that discusses various topics in sports information and athletic administration fields. They also sponsor a yearly seminar that enables sports media professionals from

⁷ Ken Cerino, Sports Information Director, Springfield College, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 7, 1996.

⁸ Pete Nevins, Sports Information Director, East Stroudsburg University, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 1, 1996.

⁹ Will Hancock, Sports Information Director, Oklahoma State University, electronic mail conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 2, 1996.

across the country to discuss issues and promote new ideas. Each of the aforementioned sports media professionals confirmed the importance and value of educating student-athletes how to effectively communicate with the media.

Sullivan, the assistant athletic director for marketing at Monmouth, was the former SID at New York University and Marist College. Sullivan suggested that student-athletes should be made aware of the fact that it's their responsibility to represent more than just their own image, but the institution's as well. "Student-athletes are basically spokespeople for the college or university. When a student-athlete can speak clearly and articulate their thoughts to the media, it enhances the educational image of the school."¹⁰

Carpenter is the SID at Boston University and also the former president of the CoSIDA board of directors. He said it is important for student-athletes to cooperate with the media to enhance the public perception of the school. "When student-athletes cooperate with the media they can help bring about more publicity and a positive impression of the school."¹¹

Shrier has been working in sports information and college athletics for the past 43 years. He believed that teaching student-athletes to properly communicate with the media is part of the overall education process. "Student-athletes have to be prepared for their future, whether they remain in athletics or not. It should be part of the education experience that students learn how to speak clearly and communicate

¹⁰ Dan Sullivan, Assistant Athletic Director for Marketing, Monmouth University, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, October 30, 1996.

¹¹ Ed Carpenter, Sports Information Director, Boston University, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 6, 1996.

effectively."¹²

A master's thesis written in 1989 by Glassboro State graduate Joseph Rossi entitled, "Teaching the Student-Athlete to Deal With the Media," concluded that media training needed to be stressed more at the collegiate level. From his research, which included a survey responded to by SIDs at NCAA Division I colleges and universities, Rossi made several recommendations that SIDs should follow in educating student-athletes how to deal with the media. Based on his research, Rossi summarized:

The findings indicate that many major college and university athletic programs expose their students to electronic and print media scrutiny without proper training . . . colleges and universities must place greater emphasis on media relations training for student-athletes through mandatory public speaking and interpersonal skills courses, the printing and distribution of media-relations handouts . . . and role playing seminars.¹³

Although Rossi did conduct a legitimate survey to solicit input from SIDs, his study did not establish criteria that the media and student-athletes could use in the communication process. This study sought input from the three major groups involved in the student-athlete and media relationship - SIDs, student-athletes and reporters.

The research done in this study produced a document of guidelines that SIDs, student-athletes and the media could use as a reference for media training. SIDs will be able to use this document of information to teach student-athletes proper media skills. Student-athletes can use the recommendations from this study to understand the techniques they will need to learn in preparing for interview sessions. This

¹² Al Shrier, Special Assistant to the Athletic Director, Temple University, telephone conversation with Scott Ronaghan, November 6, 1996.

¹³ Joseph Rossi, *Teaching the Student-Athlete to Deal With the Media*, 1989, Abstract.

document will also enable the media to get a better understanding of their own relationship with the student-athletes they interview and write about.

Statement of the Problem

For many collegiate student-athletes the game does not end on the playing field. There are additional responsibilities student-athletes have to meet that go beyond the boundaries of competition. Student-athletes are not only representing themselves, but also their team, athletic department and the entire institution. One of the most important ways for student-athletes to enrich the perception of the school and athletic program is through the media. A positive interview with the local newspaper can establish a strong perception of not only the athletic programs, but the overall view of the institution. A negative situation, however, can have a detrimental effect on the public perception of the team, the athletic program and the school.

For example, in 1996, a Rutgers-Camden basketball player was quoted in an interview in *The New York Times* after a loss as saying, "Program? This is not a program. It's just a team. A bunch of kids thrown together to come out and play."¹⁴ A statement like this not only hurts the morale of the team, but it also provides a basis for further scrutiny by the media and public of the athletic program and ultimately the school administration.

Student-athletes must be able to handle themselves in interviews with the media, whether on a one-on-one basis or in front of a group of reporters. It is the responsibility of the SID at each institution to make sure student-athletes are properly trained for their media encounters. The SID has to provide training in media skills that

¹⁴ William C. Rhoden, "Paying for neglect with 100 consecutive losses," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1996, Sec. 8, p. 12.

each student-athlete can use for interviews. SIDs need input from all levels - the school, the media and the student-athletes -about necessary communication skills. Insight about these media skills can help the SID properly prepare student-athletes for interviews.

What are the criteria for teaching student-athletes proper communication techniques in interviews with the media? Detailed conversations with well-respected current and former SIDs and sportswriters form the basis for this thesis.

Delimitations

Previous research and interviews with experienced sports media professionals revealed there is a limited amount of literature related to the sports information field. As a result, the results and conclusions of this study will be based on the returned surveys of SIDs, student-athletes and sportswriters.

This study does not include responses from college officials, athletic directors or coaches. Although these figures have an impact on educating student-athletes how to effectively communicate with the media, this study concentrates only on those individuals who have hands-on experience in media training and interviewing. A study that provides insight into the role a coach or college administrator plays in the relationship between the student-athlete and media would be an excellent topic for future research.

Another limitation of the study is the absence of television and radio journalists in the surveys. The study concentrates only on print media (newspaper reporters). The schools selected receive the most coverage and publicity via the print media. The study dealt with the relationship between a single medium, print, and the student-

athletes they report on.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain practical insight into criteria sports information officers at selected Division I, II and III institutions in the Northeast use to educate student-athletes to properly conduct themselves in interviews with the print media. The conclusions from this study can give student athletes, SIDs and the media a better understanding of the most important topics in preparing student-athletes for interviews.

The author hypothesized he will find that at Division I institutions there is more extensive media training because of the high level of media coverage. The author also hypothesized at the Division II and III level, there will be less SID involvement in media training. However, at all three levels, the author hypothesizes that SIDs have the available resources to train student-athletes for interviews, but do not take full use of these resources.

Procedure

The author conducted searches for relevant literature through computer databases listing books, periodicals, newspapers and dissertations at the Library at Rowan University. In addition, the author also searched the Internet for pertinent information using various search engines. In looking for information through the library databases and the Internet, the author searched sports magazines, sports media journals, newspapers, education magazines and journals, NCAA publications and anything related to sports information or media training at the college level.

Telephone interviews with sports media professionals were conducted for further

information on the subject. The author spoke with SIDs and athletic administrators at Division I, II and III institutions. The school list comprised East Stroudsburg University, Boston University, Monmouth University, Oklahoma State University, Georgetown University, Iona College, Temple University, Marist College, Springfield College, Rowan University, Texas A & M University, Rider University, Pace University and Manhattan College. The author also spoke with sports journalists from *Gannett Suburban Newspapers (NY)*, *The Philadelphia Daily News*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and several members of the Philadelphia Sportswriters Association.

The author used the available literature and conversations with the sports media professionals as a guide to developing the research for his study. Insight from SIDs, athletic administrators and sports journalists enabled the author to pursue research through different avenues in intercollegiate athletics.

Terminology

Student-Athlete - A student at a college or university who participates in intercollegiate athletics. Student-athletes receive media attention and publicity for their accomplishments and for their failures on and off the field.

Sports Information Director (SID) - This individual publicizes and promotes all varsity athletic teams at his or her institution. The position involves the supervision of all matters concerning media relations and public contact. This person is responsible for preparing student-athletes for interviews with the media. The job also entails writing news releases and media guides, recording statistics and event coverage. The sports information director is often referred to as the SID. This abbreviation will be used throughout this study.

Media - Channels through which a message is relayed to the public. The most common media include television, radio and print. For the purpose of this study, the term "media" will represent the newspaper sports reporters who cover intercollegiate athletics.

Institution - Colleges and universities are commonly referred to as institutions of higher learning. Throughout this study, institution will often be used to represent the terms "college" and "university."

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - The large governing body of intercollegiate athletics for colleges and universities in the United States. It is comprised of three general groups of team competition classifications from institutions across the country. The three groups are known as Division I, Division II and Division III. In most arenas, this association is known as the NCAA and will be referred to as such throughout this study.

Division I - All institutions must award financial aid to student-athletes in the form of athletic scholarships to at least 19 males and 19 females. Each school must offer a minimum of seven all-male or mixed team sports and seven all-female sports, or six all-male or mixed team sports and eight all-female sports.¹⁵

Division II - All institutions are allowed to award financial aid to student-athletes in the form of athletic scholarships, but on a more modest basis than that permitted in Division I. Each school must offer a minimum of four intercollegiate men's sports and four intercollegiate all-female sports.¹⁶

Division III - Institutions are allowed to award financial aid to student-athletes based only on the financial need of the recipient. Each school must offer a minimum of four

¹⁵ "Division Membership." 1995-96 NCAA Manual, 1995, p. 361-364.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 370-373.

intercollegiate men's sports and four intercollegiate all-female sports.¹⁷

Media Training - The process of equipping student-athletes with the proper communication skills so they can perform well in interviews with the media.

Interview - A meeting or process in which a sports journalist asks a series of questions to a student-athlete to gather information for use in a published article written about the individual, team or particular athletic contest.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 374-377.

Chapter Two

The author divided his research into three main areas of interest on the topic of determining the criteria sports information directors (SID) can use to prepare student-athletes for media interviews. The areas included previous research in this area, information about National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) resources and information from the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) and its research.

Data searches for relevant literature were conducted through the computer databases at the Library at Rowan University. The author searched the Infotrack Periodical Database System, the Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI) and the CD-Rom catalog for books, periodicals and newspaper articles. The Internet provided search engines to find journals, magazines, newspapers and Web sites containing information on the topic. Temple University's on-line library database was also searched for pertinent literature, theses and dissertation abstracts. Subject keywords used during the library and Internet searches were: sports information, sports media relations, sports public relations, media coaching, media training, student-athletes and media (training), college athletics, College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) and media (training), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and media (training), CoSIDA and media relations, NCAA and media relations, and media scrutiny and college athletics.

Input from SIDs, sports journalists and athletic administrators on the topic led the author to contact the NCAA and CoSIDA for available resources and literature. The NCAA, the governing body of intercollegiate athletic in the United States, published the *NCAA Public Relations and Promotion Manual* in 1985. An excellent reference manual for SIDs, journalists and college administrators, it contains "how to" articles on various topics such as operating a successful SID office, publicity, marketing, hosting a contest, special events and media relations. Articles contained in the manual were written by various SIDs, newspaper and television reporters, editors and producers, athletic directors and college administrators.

Two articles in the *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual* address the topic of preparing student-athletes for media interviews. In an article entitled, "Duties of the Modern SID . . . As Viewed by a SID," Roger Valdiserri of the University of Notre Dame described how the SID could improve the quality of student-athlete interviews with the media. Valdiserri stressed that SIDs must be prepared to make student-athletes available to the media on a continuing basis. "Policies must be established regarding game-week, pregame and postgame interviews because nothing frustrates media representatives more than not being able to gain access to those individuals."¹⁸

Valdiserri emphasized student-athlete preparation for interviews as an important part of media relations. "Sports information directors should brief players so they understand what interviewers are seeking, what makes for a good or bad interview and how to treat members of the media." He also said SIDs should prepare student-athletes for media interviews because interviews result in public impressions

¹⁸ Roger Valdiserri, Associate Director of Athletics, University of Notre Dame, "Duties of the Modern SID . . . As Viewed by a SID," *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual*, July 1985, p. 11.

of the institution.

Interview situations often create lasting impressions on writers and broadcasters. Positive reactions on their part subtly may influence future handling of stories regarding athletics at the college. Special care should be taken to make sure these situations are handled successfully.¹⁹

Marvin West of the *Scripps Howard News Service* explained a sportswriter's view of student-athlete preparation for media interviews in the *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual*. West suggested that SIDs teach players to cooperate with the media instead of allowing them to avoid interviews. "Coach key players to cooperate instead of retreating to training rooms or other hideouts. Trade this courtesy for a touch of sensitivity and understanding of the media."²⁰ He also said scheduling meetings with student-athletes can improve general organization and protection of those involved. "Teach players to communicate. Practice with freshmen. Brief them on expectations and advantageous reactions - a little more than a yes or no."²¹ West said that explaining the function of the media to the student-athlete can make the SID the "most valuable teacher in the school."

Although Valdiserri and Scripps offered practical insight on preparing student-athletes for media interviews, they did not provide actual techniques that can be used by SIDs in media training. In contrast, CoSIDA offers its members the opportunity to share ideas and techniques through its monthly digest and summer workshop programs. The organization has over 1,600 members of sports information

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰ Marvin West, Sports Editor, *Scripps Howard News Service*, "Duties of the Modern SID . . . As Viewed by a Sportswriter." *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual*, July 1985, p. 12

²¹ Ibid, p. 12

professionals. Each SID or assistant SID can become an active member for an annual fee of \$35. Any athletic administrator in intercollegiate athletics whose duties are related to, but not part of, sports information can become an associate member for \$40. A student enrolled in a college or university and employed in the sports information office can be a member for an annual fee of \$25.²²

Two privileges of being a member of CoSIDA are the CoSIDA Digest and the annual directory. The digest contains instructions and suggestions for improving the sports information office, job openings and new appointments in the field, and information on the annual CoSIDA convention. The directory contains the names, addresses, telephone, fax and sports hotline numbers of the SIDs and assistant SIDs at all four-year schools in the U.S. and Canada and junior colleges in the U.S. A listing of all athletic conferences, national sports organizations, magazines and news services and athletic associations also appear in the directory.

The CoSIDA convention serves as a valuable source for those interested in new and better ways of improving public relations. The workshop enables SIDs who face similar problems to obtain help. Its purpose is to give members the opportunity to become more proficient in their jobs by providing up-to-date techniques for improving publications, promotions, communications and media relations techniques.²³

In 1995, media relations specialist Andrea Kirby presented her ideas on media training for student-athletes to the CoSIDA summer workshop in Denver. A former ABC sports broadcaster, Kirby's list of clients includes golfer John Daly, the 1996 U.S. Olympic Team, the NBA's Seattle SuperSonics and Lawrence Philips of the NFL's St.

²² 1997-99 College Sports Information Directors of America Directory, p. 119.

²³ CoSIDA Digest, April 1995, p. 13.

Louis Rams. Kirby discussed various media relations techniques SIDs could use in preparing student-athletes. "You don't have to tell them what to say. You have to teach them to relax, to tell their stories, to make eye contact, to be themselves."²⁴ Kirby advised it is not so much what athletes say, but how they go about saying it. She noted student-athletes words accounted for only seven percent of a viewer or reader's perception. Tone of voice was 38 percent, while body language accounted for 55 percent. Kirby also emphasized three steps for dealing with a controversial question. She advises student-athletes to follow her ABCs. "'A' stands for 'I can't answer your question; 'B' stands for 'because (give reason)'; and 'C' is 'but I can tell you (this).'"²⁵ Kirby's strategies and expertise establish important guidelines for media training, but her methods are suited more for television interviews. This study focused more on newspaper reporting.

Extensive research on preparing athletes, both college and professional, for media interviews was conducted by Kathleen Hessert and the Sports Media Challenge. Hessert is a certified professional speaker, trainer and consultant. She established the Sports Media Challenge, a nationally-renowned speaking, training and consulting organization based in Charlotte, NC, to help athletes, coaches and other sports professionals improve their communications skills. Hessert's list of clients includes Nike Sports Management and the University of Notre Dame. She is the author of "Winning the Media Game: A Guide for NFL Players" and "Power Training: How to Win the Media Game."²⁶

²⁴ CoSIDA Workshop Guide (Denver), July 1995.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "When Winning Just Isn't Enough." [www/http: sports.mediachallenge.com](http://sports.mediachallenge.com)

Hessert described the most frequent mistakes athletes make when interviewed.

Her eight most common interview errors are as follows:

- *Allowing the reporter control over the content of the interview.*

Hessert suggests that athletes have their own principle objective.

- *Rambling for several minutes before stating your position.*

State your point in 20 seconds or less to avoid being paraphrased, misquoted or taken out of context.

- *Sending inconsistent messages.*

Your words say one thing but your voice and body language contradict the message.

- *Assume reporters understand.*

Reporters don't always understand the topic or game as well as you do. Educate them when necessary.

- *Speaking in generalities.*

Precisely explain what your story means to the average viewer, reader or listener.

- *Failing to understand who your audience is or satisfying its needs.*

Audiences are asking "What's in it for me?" Answer them.

- *Lack of adequate preparation and rehearsal of shot spots and questions to be asked.*

If you haven't anticipated the probable story angle and how to respond, you have 80% chance of being caught off guard.²⁷

In addition, Hessert said designing interview preparation checklists can help improve communications during interviews. Some of the topics Hessert stressed were determining the angle of the interview and interviewer, tailoring answers to the proper audience, emphasizing three main points you wish to make, covering difficult questions that may be asked and focusing on one concise answer that conveys a

²⁷ "Eight Most Common Interview Errors." <http://www/sports.mediachallenge.com>

theme.²⁸

Perhaps the most useful advice on media training for athletes is summarized in the Sports Media Challenge's *Pocket Guide to Media Success*. Six points give athletes advice on how to properly communicate during interviews:

• *Be Yourself*

Don't stiffen up. Relax and share your enjoyment in the sport. Be human.

• *20 Second Rule*

Make your point in 20 seconds or less. Elaborate if there's time, interest or need.

• *Be Precise*

Avoid generalities. Use specific examples that clarify and make people care about your view.

• *Don't be Baited*

Never start an argument with a reporter. Remain calm at all costs.

• *Don't Use Jargon*

Use words that the general public can understand. It builds audiences and fans in the stands.

• *Don't Forget: You're Always On*

If you can see a microphone, camera or reporter's notebook, assume your words and actions are being recorded.²⁹

The Sports Media Challenge offers several techniques for SIDs to use to help prepare student-athletes for media interviews. Although the methods mentioned above are practical, they deal with more "big time" college athletics. This thesis was interested in soliciting ideas from the SIDs, student-athletes and the media involved in not only Division I sports, but smaller Division II and III schools.

²⁸ "Interview Prep Checklist" <http://www/sports.mediachallenge.com>

²⁹ "Pocket Guide to Media Success." *Sports Media Challenge*, 1991.

A thesis written by Joseph L. Rossi in 1989 at Glassboro State College entitled *Teaching the Student-Athlete to Deal With the Media* concentrates on the training methods used by practicing professionals. Rossi's study was designed to find ways in which colleges and universities help student-athletes prepare for and perform well in interviews with the media. He conducted a survey of 186 colleges and university Division I SIDs to determine present methods used at colleges and universities. He also examined academic requirements specific to student-athletes, compared Division I schools by geographic region and examined the role of the NCAA in media relations training.³⁰

Issues addressed in Rossi's survey which are pertinent to this author's thesis include programs to teach media relations, interview procedures, media relations handouts for the athletes, use of the *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual* and restriction of media access. Results of his study determined what the majority of SIDs were or were not doing to improve student-athletes' media relations skills. In Rossi's findings, more than two-thirds of the schools did not require student-athletes to take a public speaking course or seminar. Also, almost two-thirds of the schools did not distribute a handout instructing athletes on media relations. Approximately half of the SIDs said they would like to hold a mandatory seminar on media relations but did not. One-third of the respondents said they do not refer to the *NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual* for guiding student-athletes relations with the media. Additionally, 80 percent of the SIDs said they use their own publication for teaching student-athletes to deal with the media.³¹

³⁰ Joseph L. Rossi, *Teaching the Student-Athlete to Deal With the Media*. Glassboro State College thesis, December 1989, abstract.

³¹ Ibid, p. 30.

In his conclusions, Rossi made recommendations for SIDs to help improve their student-athletes' media relations skills. He stated colleges and universities should make more of an effort to educate student-athletes concerning media relations. Rossi also added that a seminar course in public speaking and interpersonal skills should be required for student-athletes. He also concluded that SIDs should distribute a media relations guide to all first-year student-athletes in addition to conducting annual media relations seminars.³² Rossi's study set out to find ways colleges and universities could help student-athletes prepare for and perform well in interviews. Based on his recommendations, he offers schools some practical suggestions to improve student-athletes' media skills.

However, Rossi did not gather opinions or perceptions from student-athletes or the media doing the interviews. He based his conclusions and recommendations on the responses of SIDs only. Nevertheless, Rossi's research was not flawed because of this. He simply wanted to know what SIDs were doing to teach student-athletes to deal with the media.

This author's study follows a similar path to Rossi's research - to determine the criteria SIDs can use to train student-athletes for media interviews. However, this study takes the topic a step further by seeking student-athlete input and media observations. SIDs can gain better understanding of the skills student-athletes need for interviews if the media share their ideas on what makes for a good interview. Additionally, student-athletes can lend a hand to the SID by discussing interviewing problems they face. Training student-athletes to perform well in interviews takes the efforts of not only the SID, but the student-athletes and even the media.

This study sought to determine how student-athletes could become better

³² Ibid, p. 32.

equipped with interviewing skills. The major focus of the research focused on whether or not student-athletes were actually being trained properly for interviews. In studying the three affiliations of competition in the NCAA - Division I, II and III - the author gathered information on the techniques being used at various athletic levels. The research presented in this chapter focused more on the Division I level, especially on schools with highly successful programs. It cannot be argued that top Division I programs receive huge media coverage. Division I athletes speak with the media almost daily. However, media training at the Division II and III level cannot be overlooked. Schools with successful Division II and III teams also receive ample media coverage. A controversial quote at a small Division III school with a large media following can greatly impact the public image of the school. Proper media training at all levels of intercollegiate sports can help student-athletes relay positive messages about the team or school during interviews.

Chapter Three

The author conducted preliminary surveys to solicit responses from SIDs, student-athletes and sportswriters to form questions for the research instrument. The relationship and interaction among these three groups were the main focuses of the study. Several SIDs and sports journalists were contacted to get a better understanding of departmental procedures. As a result, the author was able find out whether the groups involved would be willing to participate in the survey. These responses were used as a starting point in developing the research design for the study.

Sample Selection and Size

There are approximately 1,600 members of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) in the United States and Canada, with most of the members being SIDs at NCAA institutions throughout the U.S. There are approximately 280 members of the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), which is comprised of 15 different athletic conferences. To narrow the study to a smaller sample, the author selected colleges that were members of both CoSIDA and the ECAC. The author narrowed the study further by selecting 30 schools to base the research on. The *1996-97 Blue Book of College Athletics* provided the author with the information on member schools of the ECAC. The names of the colleges or

universities were gathered from the College Sports Information Directors of America Directory, a publication produced annually that contains the name, telephone and campus address of each school's sports information director.

Colleges and universities were also selected according to their athletic affiliation, either Division I, II or III. The author selected schools that sponsor men's basketball in Division I competition. Also chosen were institutions that have a men's basketball program competing in Division II athletics, and those that have a team competing at the Division III level. The different levels of competition enabled the author to analyze the varying media coverage and training being conducted at these schools.

Another criteria included schools with at least two newspapers covering their contests. Each chosen institution has at least two print media outlets reporting on its athletic teams. Reporting includes game coverage as well as feature articles. The print media were selected because all the institutions participating in the study receive the most media attention via newspaper coverage.

Research Methodology

To achieve accurate results for the study, the author surveyed the three groups involved in the interviewing process. These groups include the student-athletes, SIDs and sportswriters. Each was chosen because of their role in training student-athletes for interviews.

SIDs are responsible for all sports media relations at their institution. They help prepare student-athletes for interviews, either through instructional literature or seminars and one-on-one meetings. A survey was mailed, in an 8.5" X 14" envelope, to each SID at the selected institutions. A cover letter described the author's study, and instructional information was provided for completing and returning the survey.

The author also supplied each SID with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and telephone number in case problems arose. The survey consisted of several questions pertaining to media training and media relations.

Topics included in the SID survey:

- Demographics (school size, number of team sports and athletes competing, location and athletic affiliation)
- Available media training techniques and implementation
- Student-athlete accessibility
- Responsibilities of the sports information office in media relations
- Amount of media coverage at athletic events
- Suggestions for improving media training at the collegiate level

One student-athlete from each institution was also mailed a survey. These surveys were included in the same envelope as the SID survey. The author asked the SID to choose a student-athlete who is interviewed frequently by the print media. The topics included in the student-athlete survey were:

- Year in school, sport participating in and year competing in sport
- Attitudes and behaviors toward the media
- Use of available media training techniques
- How often the student-athlete is interviewed
- Coach intervention and cooperation
- Description of past experience with the media
- Priorities of the student-athlete, team and institution
- Suggestions for improving media training at the collegiate level

The author also mailed a survey to the main newspaper reporter who covers each respective institution. The survey was mailed in a 8.5" X 14" envelope with a cover letter designating instructional information and study background. A self-addressed,

stamped envelope was also provided. Before sending the media survey, the author spoke with each SID at the selected schools to obtain the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the sportswriters responding to the surveys. The survey consisted of questions on the following topics:

- Number of years covering college sports
- Name and number of institutions reporting on
- Guidelines for interviewing student-athletes
- Perception of student-athletes and SIDs
- Past experience, including confrontations and cooperation of student-athletes
- Suggestions for media training at the collegiate level

In all three surveys, some questions were open-ended and asked for the explanation of an answer. Other questions simply called for selecting an answer offered by the author. The open-ended questions permitted analysis of opinions, behaviors, attitudes and perceptions of the groups involved. The closed-ended questions sought school, SID, reporter and student-athlete characteristics, availability of media training and use of certain preparation techniques.

Analysis of Data

The author analyzed the data by frequency and percentages. The answers to some questions common to all three surveys were compared in the results. Other questions were common to only two of the surveys. The results of these questions were also compared in the findings. The author also provided corresponding descriptions and meanings of the results.

For those questions calling for an explanatory answer, the author used the responses to describe certain attitudes, behaviors and procedures of the groups

involved. The combination of open-ended and closed-ended responses provided a solid balance of research information. The findings of this study enabled the author to develop a reference document to be used by SIDs to help student-athletes prepare for interviews with the media.

Chapter Four

The author mailed surveys to SIDs and student-athletes at 30 ECAC colleges and universities sponsoring men's basketball during the 1996-1997 academic year. Thirty sports reporters who cover the respective schools were also mailed a survey. The nature of the study required that the author receive a returned questionnaire from the three groups. The author received only eight matches (all three groups from the same institution returned their survey) from the initial mailing list. After sending an additional survey, the author received another 10 matches to base the findings on. The response rate (18 of 30) was 60 percent. Seven matches were from Division I, five came from Division II and Division III yielded six responses.

Response Breakdown

	Div I	Div II	Div III
<u>Responses (18)</u>	<u>F/%</u>	<u>F/%</u>	<u>F/%</u>
	7/39	5/28	6/33

Findings

SIDs were asked to list and explain the main objectives of their sports information department. The reporters were asked their objectives when writing a story on a student-athlete. The reporters were given a list of responses to choose from while the SIDs also briefly explained their objectives. Of the 18 SIDs who

responded, 77 percent listed promoting and publicizing the school and athletic program in one form or another (See Table 1). Five of the 14 SIDs who listed publicity and promotion as their objectives were from Division I schools, three were from Division II and six were from Division III. Four other responses were given: media relations, public relations functions, information dissemination and media attention.

Table 1 - SID who listed publicity/promotion

All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
14/77	5/28	3/16	6/33

The reporters were provided a menu list of objectives. Several of the 18 reporters responded with answers not provided. Two-thirds (12) of the reporters listed information gathering as their main objective. Three of those reporters covered Division I schools, five report on Division II and four were from Division III. A little over 60 percent also listed writing a breaking story as an objective. One-third (6) of the reporters listed accurately writing a story as their objective. This response was not provided on the questionnaire. All six of those reporters covered a Division I institution (See Table 2).

Table 2 - Reporter's objectives

Responses	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
positive publicity for team	5/28	1/20	2/40	2/40
scrutiny of coach	1/6	---	1/100	---
breaking story	11/61	3/28	4/36	4/36
info. gathering	12/67	3/25	5/42	4/33
accurately writing story	6/33	6/100	---	---
objectivity	1/6	---	1/100	---
entertain	1/6	---	1/100	---
educate	1/6	---	---	---

SIDs were questioned if they trained and prepared student-athletes for media interviews. Two-thirds of the 18 SIDs indicated that they do train their student-athletes for media training. Of the 12 schools who gave a yes response, half of them were from Division I institutions. One-third of the SIDs do not provide media training, with half those SIDs being from Division III schools (See Table 3).

Table 3 - Media training of student-athletes

Responses	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, we train s-a	12/67	6/50	3/25	3/25
no, we do not train s-a	6/33	1/17	2/33	3/50

SIDs who do train their student-athletes used one-on-one meetings with the student-athlete as their primary technique. Three-fourths of the 12 SIDs who train their athletes used one-on-one meetings. More than half those SIDs are from Division I and only one Division II school used one-on-one meetings. One-third of the SIDs used both instructional guides and pre-season seminars. Only one SID (Division III) used role playing to prepare student-athletes and no SIDs used guest speakers. (See Table 4).

Table 4 - SID techniques used

Responses	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
instructional guides	4/33	2/50	1/25	1/25
pre-season seminar	4/33	3/75	1/25	—
guest speakers	—	—	—	—
role playing	1/8	—	—	—
one-on-one meeting	9/75	5/56	1/11	3/33

Student-athletes were asked a series of questions pertaining to the various techniques the SIDs at their schools used to prepare them for media interviews. Almost 80 percent of the 18 student-athletes indicated that their school's sports information department does not hold a pre-season media training session. A balanced number of Division I, II and III schools were represented in the *no* responses (See Table 5).

Table 5 - Pre-season media training session

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, SID holds pre-season	4/22	2/50	1/25	1/25
no, SID does not hold pre-season	14/78	5/36	4/28	5/36

More than 80 percent of the student-athletes from each school are not required to attend a pre-season media training session. Forty percent of the 15 student-athletes were from Division III institutions and one-third were from Division I (See Table 6).

Table 6 - Required to attend pre-season media training

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, required to attend	3/17	2/67	1/33	—
no, not required	15/83	5/33	4/27	6/40

Similarly, over 80 percent of the student-athletes said they did not receive an informational guide on interviewing with the media. Six student-athletes with *no* responses were from Division III, five were Division I and four were Division II (See Table 7). Only three of the 18 student-athletes indicated they received an informational guide to help them with interviews. All three student-athletes who were

given an instructional guide said they actually read it.

Table 7 - Received instructional guide

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, received guide	3/17	2/67	1/33	—
no, did not receive guide	15/83	5/33	4/27	6/40

All but two student-athletes, one from Division I and one from Division II, indicated that a guest speaker has never spoken to their team on how to conduct themselves in media interviews. Almost 90 percent of the student-athletes have never had a guest speaker help them with interviewing. Of those 16 student-athletes, six each were from Division I and III (See Table 8).

Table 8 - Guest speaker

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, guest speaker attended	2/11	1/50	1/50	—
no, guest speaker did not	16/89	6/37.5	4/25	6/37.5

Close to 80 percent of the student-athletes said their respective SIDs were available for one-on-one meetings if they were having problems during media interviews. One half of the 14 student-athletes whose SIDs were available for one-on-one meetings were from Division I schools. Only three Division II student-athletes said their SIDs are available to help them with interviews. No Division I student-athletes indicated their SIDs were not available for one-on-one meetings (See Table 9).

Table 9 - Availability of SIDs for one-on-one meetings

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, SIDs available	14/78	7/50	3/21	4/28
no, SIDs not available	4/22	---	2/50	2/50

Every student-athlete who responded said they have never sought the help of a SID if they were having trouble during interviews (See Table 10).

Table 10 - Seeking help from SIDs

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, sought SID's help	---	---	---	---
no, did not seek SID's help	18/100	7/39	5/28	6/33

The previous findings represent the SIDs media training methods and their availability to student-athletes. The following information illustrates the topics SIDs said they stress in media training. Of the 12 SIDs who provide some type of interview preparation, over 90 percent said they tell student-athletes to represent the team in a positive light. A little over 80 percent of the SIDs also stressed honesty to their student-athletes. Representing the image of the school was a subject more than 80 percent of the SIDs tried to instill in their student-athletes (See Table 11 for Division breakdown).

Table 11 - Subjects stressed by SIDs in media training

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
speaking clearly	8/67	4/50	2/25	2/25
being on time	8/67	4/50	3/38	1/12
answering honestly	10/83	4/40	3/30	3/30
cooperating with interviewer	9/67	4/44	3/33	2/22
dressing appropriately	6/50	3/50	2/33	1/17
representing team in positive light	11/92	5/46	3/27	3/27
representing image of the school	10/83	4/40	3/30	3/30

Several other responses were given by SIDs in relation to the subjects SIDs concentrate on in media preparation. Shawn Brennan of Iona College said he wants his school's student-athletes to make sure they represent themselves as best they can. Sean Morrison of Marist College stresses the importance of taking time in answering reporter's questions. SID at East Stroudsburg, Pete Nevins, tells students-athletes "not to say anything you don't want to see in print."

Reporters were asked what skills they felt student-athletes should have to be prepared for interviews. Mike Candel from *New York Newsday* indicated that student-athletes merely need an adequate ability to express their thoughts. Dave Waldstein of the *New York Post* believes student-athletes need to understand the role of the media. "(Student-athletes) need a complete understanding of the media, including history and the different forms (press, radio, TV) and its benefits to the student-athletes." J.W. Stewart of the *Poughkeepsie Journal* said student-athletes "need to be able to put feelings into words and to avoid using cliches." Scott Dudinskie of the *Press Enterprise* agreed with Stewart on the tailoring of answers. "The ability to communicate ideas and answers pertaining to the questions rather than using generic answers is very important." Bill Albright of the *Williamsport Sun Gazette* feels student-athletes need to be relaxed and honest during an interview. "If

student-athletes feel as though they are not comfortable replying to a particular question, then the athletes should be honest enough to tell the reporter.”

Two-thirds (12) of the reporters indicated that the student-athletes they interview have solid communication skills. Of the 12 reporters, 42 percent covered Division III schools and only three covered at the Division I level. Although this response was not on the questionnaire, almost one-third of the reporters said whether or not a student-athlete has solid communications skills depends on the individual. Four of these five reporters covered Division I institutions. Only one reporter (Division II) specified that the student-athletes they interview have solid public speaking skills (See Table 12).

Table 12 - Communications and public speaking skills

	All	Div I	Div II	Div III
Response	F/%	F/%	F/%	F/%
communications skills	12/67	3/35	4/33	5/42
public speaking skills	1/5	—	1/100	—
depends on individual	5/28	4/80	—	1/20

Fifteen of the 18 reporters, or 83 percent, said the student-athletes they interview answer their questions honestly. Only six percent indicated the student-athletes did not answer honestly and 11 percent said student-athletes answer both honestly and not honestly (See Table 13). This choice was not on the questionnaire but two reporters gave it as a answer. The one reporter who responded with a *not honestly* reply covers a Division I school. Waldstein’s response was centered on the idea that the coach has a lot to do with the way a student-athlete operates in an interview. “Student-athletes are clearly trained not to say anything that could be construed as controversial. Though a coach’s perception of what is controversial

usually starts with what they had for breakfast.” All 18 reporters said the student-athletes they interview conduct themselves professionally during interviews.

Professionally in this context means cooperative and respectful of the reporter’s right to their job. Jim Stout of the *Danbury Times* said it is important to remember that student-athletes are not professionals. “If someone acts unprofessionally, I try to remember that they’re not professional athletes but college students.”

Table 13 - Do student-athletes answer honestly?

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
honestly	15/83	4/27	5/33	6/40
not honestly	1/6	1/100	---	---
combination of both	2/11	2/100	---	---

A series of questions on all three surveys dealt with the actual setup of the interviews. Questions also detailed SIDs, student-athletes and reporters experiences in going about the interview process. Over 80 percent of the SIDs indicated that all interviews with student-athletes have to be arranged with them beforehand. All seven Division I SIDs said interviews have to be arranged with them prior to meeting with student-athletes. Only three SIDs, with two on the Division III level, said interviews do not have to be set up with them beforehand (See Table 14).

Table 14 - Arranging student-athlete interviews with SID beforehand

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, I arrange interviews	15/83	7/46	4/27	4/27
no, I do not arrange interviews	3/17	---	1/33	2/67

Almost three-fourths of the reporters indicated that when they arrange to speak with a student-athlete they go through the sports information office. All seven Division I reporters arrange their interviews with the SID. Only five reporters do not set up interviews with the SID, with three of those being on the Division III level (See Table 15).

Table 15 - Reporters arranging interviews with SIDs

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, I arrange with SID	13/72	7/54	3/23	3/23
no, I do not arrange with SID	5/28	---	2/40	3/60

Several reporters gave explanations on the topic of arranging interviews with the sports information office. Mike Kern of the *Philadelphia Daily News* said a majority of the time he will go through the SID, but there are some occasions when he contacts the coach. Rick Remsnyder of *Gannett Suburban Newspapers* arranges his interviews in a similar fashion. "I usually contact the SID, but it depends. If it is a feature story, I'll go through the sports information office. If it is a game story, I'll often grab the athlete after the game without any assistance from the SID." Albright also said he will usually go right to the student-athlete right after the game when he is writing a game story or side bar to his story. Waldstein gave a different take on the matter. "Colleges verge on the paranoid. College students are adults and can speak for themselves - they should be treated as such."

More than half the SIDs said their student-athletes are always available for interviews with the media. However, 44 percent did indicate that student-athletes were not always available for interviews. Of the eight SIDs whose student-athletes

were not available, five of SIDs worked for programs that prohibited interviews the day of a game. Four of those SID were from Division I institutions. Three SIDs gave class schedules for the unavailability of a student-athlete for interviews (See Table 16).

Table 16 - Student-athletes always available for interviews

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, always available	10/56	3/30	3/30	4/40
no, not always available	8/44	2/50	2/25	2/25

More than half the reporters indicated that they have never had difficulty getting permission to speak to a student-athlete with six reporters covering Division III schools. Of the eight reporters who said they have had difficulty getting permission, six are on the Division I level. No Division III reporter said they have had difficulty in arranging to interview a student-athlete (See Table 17).

Table 17 - Difficulty getting permission to speak to student-athlete

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, have had difficulty	8/44	6/75	2/25	---
no, never had difficulty	10/56	1/10	3/30	6/60

Albright said he has occasionally had difficulty arranging interviews with student-athletes. "Yes is the exception here rather than the rule. It is sometimes difficult to get to the student-athlete because of class schedule and practice time." Remsnyder said a loss by a team always seems to make the athletes inaccessible.

“Sometimes after a particularly tough loss, players tend to disappear.” Stewart indicated that he has had difficulty dealing with the coaches. “Some schools do not allow their freshmen athletes to speak with the media, while other coaches just seem to veto any request to speak to their student-athletes.”

SIDs were asked if the head coach has the final say as to whether or not a student-athlete can be interviewed. Over 70 percent of the SIDs indicated the coach does not have the final say. Five of those SIDs were from Division II, while Division I and III each had four SIDs who said the coach does not have the final word (See Table 18).

Table 18 - Does head coach have final say?

<u>Response</u>	<u>All F/%</u>	<u>Div I F/%</u>	<u>Div II F/%</u>	<u>Div III F/%</u>
yes, coach does have final say	5/28	3/60	—	2/40
no, coach doesn't have final say	13/72	4/31	5/38	4/31

Of the 13 SIDs who said the head coach does not have the final say, more than half of them indicated the SID has the final word. Only about 30 percent of the SIDs said the student-athletes are able to choose for themselves whether or not they can be interviewed. Only one SID said the athletic director has the final word and one SID indicated the head coach and SID decide together, depending on the circumstance (See Table 19).

Table 19 - If not the coach, who has the final say?

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
SID	7/54	3/43	---	4/57
athletic director	1/7	---	1/100	---
student-athlete	4/31	---	3/75	1/25
head coach/SID	1/8	1/100	---	---

Student-athletes were asked who they thought had the final word as to whether or not they can be interviewed by a reporter. Close to 40 percent of the student-athletes, including five from Division I, indicated that the coach has the final say. Nearly 45 percent of the student-athletes, including four from Division II, said the student-athletes themselves decide whether or not they can be interviewed. Only three student-athletes listed the SID as the person who decided whether a reporter can interview student-athletes. No Division I student-athlete thought the SID had the final word (See Table 20).

Table 20 - Student-athletes view on who has final word

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
SID	3/18	---	1/33	2/67
coach	7/39	5/71	---	2/29
athletic director	---	---	---	---
student-athlete	8/44	2/25	4/50	2/75
other	---	---	---	---

All the reporters said they felt the coaches they deal with cooperate with them by allowing their players to be interviewed. Remsnyder stated that coaches usually understand it is good publicity for the school to allow the student-athletes to be interviewed. "Most coaches seem happy to have their players interviewed. They

realize it's good publicity for the school and a good learning experience for student-athletes to deal with the media." Jere Dexter of the *Cortland Standard* also stressed the importance of public relations for the student-athletes. "Coaches understand it is good PR for the program and for the athletes. It also help with the recruiting aspect." However, Albright had a contrasting view that dealt with a coach's personality. "About 99.5 percent of the time (coaches) cooperate. Some coaches with super egos think you are taking their time when you interview an athlete instead of hearing what they have to say."

One of the problems with the actual interview is the absence of the SIDs presence when the student-athlete and reporter converse. Over 70 percent of the SIDs indicated they attended the interviews, with all seven Division I SIDs sitting in on the interviews. Three of the five SIDs who did not attend interviews were from Division III (See Table 21).

Table 21 - SIDs who attend interviews

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, I attend interviews	13/72	7/54	3/23	3/23
no, I do not attend interviews	5/28	—	2/40	3/60

Of the 13 SIDs who attend the interviews, only about half of them said they would interrupt the interview if a reporter's question was inappropriate. Five of the six SIDs who said they do not interrupt the interview were from Division I (See Table 22).

Table 22 - SIDs who interrupt the interview

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, I interrupt inappropriate questions	7/54	2/29	3/42	2/29
no, I do not interrupt interview	6/46	5/83	—	1/17

Almost 70 percent of the reporters said they use different methods when interviewing a student-athlete as opposed to a coach. All five Division II reporters indicated they did not talk to student-athletes and coaches in a similar fashion. Those reporters who interview student-athletes differently gave varied reasons for using alternative methods. Stout said he interviews student-athletes and coaches alike in some ways.

I interview student-athletes the same in that I try to treat them as adults. I will vary my methods in that I sometimes have to protect the athletes from what they say in their honesty and naivete. Also, because some athletes are speaking with me for the first time, I may just sit and talk with them for a while to gain their trust.

Tony Coccagna, who writes for the *Indiana Gazette*, stated he tries to relax the student-athletes. "I try to put them in a comfortable setting and be more conversational rather than just use question/answer format." Albright also attempts to concentrate on making the student-athlete feel more relaxed. "I just try to make him/her feel relaxed and talk to me as they might to a friend. Sometimes athletes have a problem talking with someone they do not feel comfortable with."

All but two student-athletes indicated they have never felt uncomfortable answering questions during an interview. Six student-athletes each from Division I and III said they have never felt uncomfortable during interviews. No Division III

student-athlete indicated being uncomfortable answering a reporter's questions (See Table 23).

Table 23 - Student-athletes uncomfortable with interviews

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, I have felt uncomfortable	2/11	1/50	1/50	—
no, I have never felt uncomfortable	16/89	6/37.5	4/25	6/37.5

Only one student-athlete, from Division III, said he felt unprepared to talk to the media during interviews. All seven Division I student-athletes and the five Division II student-athletes indicated they felt prepared for interviews. SIDs were asked to rate themselves on how well they were preparing student-athletes for interviews. Fifteen SIDs responded to this questions but three chose not to. Almost half the SIDs indicated that they were doing a good job preparing student-athletes. Similarly, almost half the SIDs said they were doing a fair job of helping student-athletes with interviews. Only one school, at the Division III level, said they were doing a poor job with student-athlete preparation (See Table 24).

Table 24 - SIDs rate themselves on preparing student-athletes

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
excellent	—	—	—	—
good	7/47	3/43	1/14	3/43
fair (just OK)	7/47	3/43	3/43	1/14
poor	1/6	—	—	1/100

Several SIDs gave explanations for why they were doing either a good or a fair job preparing student-athletes for interviews. Scott Selheimer, from the University of Delaware, said he does a fair job preparing student-athletes. "We pretty much just train football and basketball players and not all athletes. We should go into more depth with all athletes with guest speakers, one-on-one meetings and getting feedback from athletes." Morrison also said he believes he is doing a fair job with his student-athletes but is limited because of the amount of media coverage his school receives. "With such limited media pool in the area, exposure to different situations is limited."

Matt Santos of Kutztown University indicated he is doing a fair job with student-athletes, but would like to implement some concrete training.

Our student-athletes are usually prepared for interviews through meetings and contact with the sports information office. If something is not working properly, I will help them correct it or make recommendations. We do not have a seminar or handbook for athletes though. We should have something more inclusive in place.

Scott Leightman from Bloomsburg University said he usually only addresses media training if a situation calls for it. "We could do more as far as preparation is involved, but the student-athletes who are demanded for media attention have been cooperative and relatively problem-free. If an individual situation needs to be addressed, we deal with it then." Al Langer of Montclair State said he feels his office would rate excellent in media training if pre-season seminars were part of the program.

Student-athletes were asked if they thought their SIDs were doing a good job preparing them for interviews. Over 60 percent of the student-athletes indicated their

SIDs were doing a good job, with six of the 11 student-athletes coming from Division I schools. Only three student-athletes from Division II and two from Division III thought their SID prepared them well for interviews. Four student-athletes had no opinion as to whether the SID properly prepared them for interviews (See Table 25).

Table 25 - Does your SID do a good job preparing you for interviews?

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
yes, SID does good job	11/61	6/55	3/27	2/18
no, SID does does not do good job	3/17	1/33	—	2/67
no opinion	4/22	—	2/50	2/50

The reporters were also asked if they believed the SID at the school they cover does a good job preparing student-athletes for interviews. Over 70 percent of the reporters indicated that the SID does a good job preparing student-athletes. Five of the 13 reporters were from Division I while four each were from Division II and III. Only one reporter felt the SID was doing a poor job (See Table 26).

Table 26 - Reporters take on the job SIDs are doing with interview preparation

Response	All F/%	Div I F/%	Div II F/%	Div III F/%
Good	13/72	5/38	4/31	4/31
Fair	4/22	2/50	—	2/50
Poor	1/6	—	1/100	—

All 18 SIDs who were surveyed are members of the College Sports Information Directors of America. Approximately 80 percent of the SIDs said they attend CoSIDA's annual instructional workshop. The workshop offers SIDs the opportunity to learn the latest techniques and practices in all facets of sports information, including

media relations and preparing student-athletes for interviews. Over 60 percent of the SIDs said that the NCAA does not provide enough information to help SIDs prepare student-athletes for media interviews. Additionally, more than half the SIDs indicated that CoSIDA does not provide ample resources for SIDs to conduct interview training.

Chapter Five

Summary

This thesis sought to determine if SIDs were preparing their student-athletes for media interviews. The author surveyed SIDs and student-athletes from 30 different ECAC institutions sponsoring men's basketball. Also surveyed were newspaper reporters who cover the respective schools. A major portion of the survey involved the amount of media training SIDs conduct for their student-athletes.

Two-thirds of the 18 SIDs said they trained their student-athletes for interviews. The most common technique SIDs used was one-on-one meetings with the student-athletes. None of the SIDs used guest speakers and only one used role playing to help prepare their student-athletes. Seventy-eight percent of the student-athletes indicated their SID was available for one-on-one meetings. However, none of the student-athletes said they have ever sought the help of the SID.

Representing the team in a positive light was the most common subject stressed to the student-athlete by the SID. Answering reporter's questions honestly and representing the image of the school were also topics the SIDs said they concentrated on heavily. Over 80 percent of the reporters said the student-athlete they cover answer questions honestly. Two-thirds of the reporters indicated student-athletes have solid communications skills but only one said they had good public speaking skills.

Over 80 percent of the SIDs arrange student-athlete interviews with the media. More than 70 percent of the reporters said they set up interviews with student-athletes through the sports information department. More than half the student-athletes were not always available for interviews, with class schedule and game day restrictions prohibiting reporters from interviewing.

Over 70 percent of the SIDs said the head coach does not have the final say for a request to interview their student-athletes. About half the SIDs said they have the final say whereas almost half the student-athletes indicated they have the final word. Only three student-athletes indicated they believe the SID is able to decide if a student-athlete can be interviewed.

Of the 18 SIDs surveyed in this study, close to 50 percent said they were doing a good job preparing student-athlete for interviews. Similarly, about 50 percent indicated they were doing a fair job with media training. Only one SID said they were doing a poor job with preparing student-athletes. More than 60 percent of the student-athletes said their SID was doing a good job while over 70 percent of the reporters indicated the SID was effective at preparing student-athletes for interviews.

Conclusions

Although close to 70 percent of the SIDs said they provided media training for their student-athletes, they do not take advantage of the various methods of preparation. No SIDs used guest speakers in media training. Whether it be a reporter or media training expert, guest speakers can provide the student-athletes with practical insight on interviewing. SIDs should take full advantage of guest speakers, especially at the Division I level where various media coverage is more predominant. SIDs also failed to list role playing as a technique they use in media

training. Role playing with student-athletes can give them the opportunity to experience a real interview situation. Having the student-athlete play the role of the interviewer can let them understand the interview from the reporter's perspective.

It was surprising to see that not many SIDs hold a pre-season media training session for their student-athletes. Only four schools conduct pre-season seminars. Although most pre-season sessions can only give a broad overview of interviewing, it does enable the student-athlete to hear what might be expected of them. A surprising eighty-three percent of the student-athletes are not required to attend a pre-season media training session. Five of those schools were from Division I and six were from Division III. Division I programs tend to receive more media coverage so at least a pre-season seminar should be conducted. On the other hand, Division III schools have less media exposure and media preparation can usually be addressed when certain situations require it.

One-on-one meetings can be a valuable tool for the SID if used properly. This study showed that almost 80 percent of the student-athletes indicated their SIDs were available for one-on-one meetings. Unfortunately, all these student-athletes chose not to seek out the help of the SID if they were having problems with interviews. Many student-athletes feel they can handle the media on their own. They do not realize, however, that sometimes situations arise where they might choose the wrong words to answer a question. SIDs can help student-athletes overcome anxiety and misunderstanding through an informal meeting in the office or even on the playing field.

SIDs at the Division I level tend to have a broader base of subjects they cover in media training. Speaking clearly, being on time, honesty, cooperation, representing team and representing school's image were all subjects at least four SIDs said they

stressed to student-athletes. In contrast, Division II and III seemed to concentrate on honesty and representing the team and image of school. Division I SIDs have more student-athletes to deal with. With such a vast amount of personalities, the SID has to make sure they cover all aspects of interview preparation. Division II and III programs tend to receive less media attention and therefore the SID doesn't see the need to go over several topics. One subject that needs to be stressed more by SIDs is public speaking. Only one reporter said the student-athletes he interviews has good public speaking skills. It is probably impossible to teach all student-athletes how to speak clearly and effectively in public. However, the SID can use role playing to help student-athletes understand what they may need to work on.

Arranging the actual interview evoked some varying tactics used at the various levels. All seven of the Division I SIDs and four of the five Division II SIDs said they set up interviews with the student-athletes. Only four Division III SIDs indicated they arrange the student-athletes' interviews with the media. All seven Division I reporters arrange to speak to the student-athletes through the SID. Only three reporters from Division III set up interviews with the student-athletes. At the Division I level, the SIDs seemed to have more control over setting up interviews. In contrast, the Division III SIDs tend to be more lenient with reporters, letting them call the student-athlete on the phone or meet with them directly after a game.

However, the author received mixed opinions on who has final say in allowing student-athletes to be interviewed. Thirteen SIDs said the head coach does not have the final word for interview requests. Of the 13 SIDs who indicated the head coach was not in charge of the interview setup, more than half said they themselves have the final word. The student-athletes responded with contrasting opinions. Almost half the student-athletes said they are the ones who decide if they can be interviewed.

Many student-athletes feel it is their right to turn down an interview because they are tired after a game or feel nervous speaking to a reporter. The SID and also the head coach has to help the student-athlete understand that a good interview with a reporter can benefit not only the player, but the team and the entire image of the school.

Overall, only about 60 percent of the student-athletes said their SID was doing a good job preparing them for interviews. More than 70 percent of the reporters indicated SIDs were doing a sound job with media training. Judging from these numbers, the SIDs in this study rate only as average in preparing student-athletes for interviews. Perhaps the main reason for this rating is that SIDs do not have the resources the NCAA or CoSIDA should provide for media training. More than 60 percent said the NCAA does not provide enough information on this topic for them to use. Additionally, over half the SIDs indicated that CoSIDA does not have ample resources on interview training. SIDs can be more effective if they use practical experience as their number one tool in preparing student-athletes for the media. Even though instructional guides can lay down the rules of thumb on paper, a student-athlete will not feel comfortable interviewing unless they can practice the process.

Recommendations

The author conducted his study using only newspaper reporters to base a majority of the findings on. A study that involves other media, such as television, would provide a different angle to the interviewing process. Student-athletes are faced with different pressures and anxieties when a television camera is centered on every word they say. SIDs at schools with television coverage need to be able to teach student-athletes the various intricacies of facing a live camera.

Another study that could prove beneficial to SIDs is to get the head coaches

opinions and views on media training for student-athletes. The head coach can have a heavy influence on student-athletes and can inform them of the importance of cooperating with the media.

For a future study on this topic, a focus panel of SIDs, reporters, student-athletes, head coaches, athletic directors and college presidents would provide various open-ended opinions on the subject. These groups would be able to see where the other differs on certain issues and responsibilities.

Evaluation

This study enabled the author to determine what SIDs were doing to help prepare student-athletes for media interviews. The research gave the author insight into the various techniques used by SIDs. It also provided the opinions of student-athletes and newspaper reporters on media training.

For further studies on this subject, sending surveys out to a larger universe would provide a more balanced list of schools to compare responses, both open-ended and closed.

Interviewing several student-athletes from the same school can result in various opinions on the job their SID is doing in interview preparation. Surveying several newspapers that cover the same school might also provide more diversified responses.

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MEDIA SURVEY

This questionnaire should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions. Remember, I do not intend to criticize anyone's answers, opinions or practices. Thank you again for your time.

Please read questions carefully. Some questions may call for a yes or no response followed by a space to briefly explain your answer. Other questions call for the selection of one answer, while some may ask you to select all answers that apply.

Fill in the name of your newspaper here. _____

1. What are your objectives when you write a feature or game story on a college sports team or student athlete?

Check which apply.

_____ positive publicity for team/student-athlete

_____ scrutiny of coach

_____ breaking story

_____ information gathering

_____ other _____

2. When you conduct an interview, do you arrange to speak to the student-athlete through the sports information department?

() yes () no

Please explain. _____

3. Have you ever had difficulty getting permission to speak to a student-athlete?

() yes () no

Please explain. _____

4. When you interview a student-athlete, do you try to talk with them the way you would a coach?

() yes () no

5. What methods do you use for interviewing a student-athlete as opposed to a coach?

6. Does your newspaper provide a set of guidelines when you interview a student-athlete?

() yes () no

7. Do you feel the student-athletes you interview have solid communication and public speaking skills?

Check which apply. _____ solid communication skills

_____ public speaking skills

8. Do you think student-athletes answer your questions honestly?

Check which apply. _____ honestly

_____ not honestly

(over)

8a. If you believe they answer dishonestly, do you think they answer according to:

- Check which apply. ☐ coach's instructions
☐ protecting the image of the school
☐ protecting the image of the team
☐ feeling uncomfortable with the questions

9. Do you feel student-athletes conduct themselves professionally during interviews? (Professionally means cooperative and respectful of your job as a reporter)

☐ yes ☐ no

9a. If you think they don't act professionally, why do you think so?

Please explain. _____

10. Have you ever had an interview in which the student-athlete was confrontational when you asked them questions?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please explain. _____

11. Do you feel the coaches cooperate with you by allowing their players to be interviewed?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please explain. _____

12. To the extent in which you think the SID is responsible for teaching student-athletes to communicate during interviews, do you think (School name) _____ does a good job preparing student-athletes for interviews? Check one.

- ☐ Good
☐ Fair (Just OK)
☐ Poor

13. Do you have any suggestions as to how (school name) _____ could improve their media training for their student athletes?

Please explain. _____

14. What skills do you feel each student-athlete should have to be prepared for interviews?

Please explain. _____

15. How many years have you been covering college sports?

☐ 1-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-10 ☐ more than 10

16. Including men's basketball, how many college sports do you cover for your newspaper?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ more than 5

(over)

17. Do you travel to both home and away contests?

☐ home ☐ away ☐ home and away

Please make any additional comments or suggestions in the space below. Thank you for your help in completing my thesis.

SPORTS INFORMATION SURVEY

This questionnaire should take only 10-15 minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions. Remember, I do not intend to criticize anyone's answers, opinions or practices. Thank you again for your time.

Please read questions carefully. Some questions may call for a yes or no response followed by a space to briefly explain your answer. Other questions call for the selection of one answer, while some may ask you to select all answers that apply.

1. What are the main objectives and responsibilities of your sports information office?

Please explain.

2. Does your office train and prepare student-athletes for media interviews?

() yes

() no

(PLEASE CONTINUE ON EVEN IF YOU ANSWERED NO

TO THIS QUESTION; OTHER QUESTIONS WILL STILL APPLY.)

2a. If you answered "yes" to question 2, what type of training do you provide your student-athletes?

Check all that apply.

_____ instructional guides

_____ SID pre-season seminar

_____ guest speakers

_____ role playing

_____ one-on-one meetings with SID

_____ other _____

3. Which of the following do you inform student-athletes about in preparing them for media interviews?

Check all that apply.

_____ speaking clearly

_____ dressing appropriately

_____ being on time

_____ representing team in positive light

_____ answering questions honestly

_____ representing image of the school

_____ cooperating with interviewer

_____ other _____

3a. Using the following scale, rate yourself on how well you think you are preparing student-athletes for media interviews?

_____ excellent

_____ good

_____ fair (Just OK)

_____ poor

4. Briefly explain your answer to question 3a.

5. Which of the following sources do you use to instruct the student-athletes on how to do deal with the media?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ NCAA Public Relations and Promotions Manual
☐ *Sports Information Office* by Howard Davis
☐ *The Dream Job: Sports Publicity, Promotion and Public Relations* by Melvin Helitzer
☐ Instructional information from outside media coaching specialists (Such as Kathleen Hessert and the Sports Media Challenge)
☐ CoSIDA instructional guides and information
☐ other _____
☐ none of the above

6. How many print media outlets cover men's basketball?

Fill in number. _____

7. Does the local media attend away contests for men's basketball?

() yes () no

8. Do all interviews with student-athletes have to be arranged with you beforehand?

() yes () no

9. Are the student-athletes always available for interviews with the media?

() yes () no

Explain. _____

10. Does the head coach have the final say as to whether or not a student-athlete can be interviewed?

() yes () no

11. If the head coach does not have the final say, who does?

- ☐ SID
☐ athletic director
☐ student-athlete
☐ other _____

12. Do you or a member of your staff attend media interviews with student-athletes?

() yes () no

13. Do you or a member of your staff interrupt the interview if a reporter's question is inappropriate?

() yes () no

(over)

14. What aspects of media training would you like to concentrate more on?

Please explain. _____

15. Do you feel there is enough available information provided by the NCAA or CoSIDA that help SIDs prepare student-athletes for media interviews?

NCAA ☐ yes ☐ no

CoSIDA ☐ yes ☐ no

16. Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve student-athlete relations with the media?

17. How many intercollegiate sports does your school sponsor?

☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ more than 20

18. Under what athletic affiliation does your school compete in men's basketball?

☐ Division I ☐ Division II ☐ Division III ☐ other _____

19. How many years have you been working in the sports information field?

☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 20-30 ☐ more than 30 ☐ other _____

20. Are you a member of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA)?

☐ yes ☐ no

20a. Do you attend CoSIDA's annual instructional workshop?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please make any additional comments or suggestions in the space below. I thank you once again for helping me complete my thesis.

STUDENT-ATHLETE SURVEY

This questionnaire should take only 10-15 minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions. Remember, I do not intend to criticize anyone's answers, opinions or practices. Thank you again for your time.

Please read questions carefully. Some questions may call for a yes or no response followed by a space to briefly explain your answer. Other questions call for the selection of one answer, while some may ask you to select all answers that apply.

1. Are you required to take a public speaking or general communication course as part of the general school curriculum?

☐ yes ☐ no

2. Does the sports information or athletic department hold a pre-season media training session?

☐ yes ☐ no

3. Are you required to attend a pre-season media training session?

☐ yes ☐ no

4. Did you receive an informational guide on interviewing with the media from the sports information office?

☐ yes ☐ no

5. If you answered yes to question 4, did you read the available information?

☐ yes ☐ no

6. Has a guest speaker ever spoken to your team about how to conduct themselves in media interviews?

☐ yes ☐ no

7. If you are having problems during media interviews, is the SID available for one-on-one meetings to help you?

☐ yes ☐ no

8. Have you ever sought the help of a SID if you were having problems during media interviews?

☐ yes ☐ no

9. Who has final say as to whether or not you can be interviewed by a reporter?

☐ SID ☐ coach ☐ athletic director ☐ you the student-athlete ☐ other

10. Do you feel prepared to talk to the media during interviews?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please explain. _____

(over)

11. Have you ever had a situation where you felt uncomfortable answering questions during an interview?
☐ yes ☐ no

Please explain. _____

12. In your opinion, are the media who interview you honest and straightforward, or are they looking for controversy?

☐ honest and straightforward ☐ controversial ☐ a combination of both

13. To the extent in which you think the SID is responsible for preparing student-athletes for interviews, do think your SID does a good job teaching student-athletes proper communication and interviewing techniques?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please explain. _____

14. Who do you think the student-athlete should represent during a media interview?

Please rank in order of importance (1 - most important, 2 - next important, 3 - least important)

_____ themselves

_____ team

_____ school

15. What do you think is the most important skill or topic to include in a training program for student-athletes who interview with the media?

16. What year are you in school (athletic eligibility)?

☐ freshman ☐ sophomore ☐ junior ☐ senior

17. What is your academic major?

Please add any additional comments or suggestions in the space below. Thank you for your help in completing my thesis.

Scott Ronaghan
218 East High Street
Apt. 4
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Sports Media Colleague,

The relationship between student-athletes and the media can be sensitive at many colleges and universities. Confrontations between student-athletes and the media can affect the image of the school, the team, coach and athletes themselves. Student-athletes must know how to conduct themselves in media interviews. As a sports journalist, you know first hand how student-athletes act and communicate during interviews.

My name is Scott Ronaghan and I am a graduate assistant in the Sports Information Department at Rowan College (NJ). I am enrolled in a Master of Arts program in Public Relations and I need your help to complete research for my thesis.

I need your assistance in finding out what skills student-athletes need to perform well in interviews. The enclosed questionnaire, which I mailed to you and 30 other sports journalists who cover ECAC basketball-sponsoring institutions, asks for your opinions on how well student-athletes communicate in interviews. My purpose is not to criticize anyone or any office, but to solicit facts and opinions from experienced professionals.

A portion of my research may involve telephone conversations with some of the respondents to clarify an answer or to secure an informational interview. **Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me by Friday, February 28, 1997.** As a thank you, I'll send you an abstract of my thesis.

Thank you for your assistance with my thesis. **IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT ME AT (609) 863-1484.**

Sincerely,

Scott Ronaghan

P.S. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope so you can conveniently and quickly return your responses to me. Please indicate if you wish your name to remain anonymous in the printed results.

Scott Ronaghan
218 East High St.
Apt. 4
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Sports Media Colleague,

I am writing to you because I have yet to receive the survey I mailed to you three weeks ago on the student-athlete/media relationship. I realize you must be busy with the winter sports winding down and the spring seasons beginning. However, if you could send the completed surveys back to me in the next couple of weeks I would greatly appreciate it.

With graduation upcoming shortly, it is very important for me to complete my thesis on time. Returning the completed survey will be a big help to me in completing my research. Thank you again for your assistance.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT ME AT (609) 863-1484 or through my E-mail address at: RONA6710@rowan.edu

Sincerely,

Scott Ronaghan

P.S. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope so you can conveniently and quickly return your responses to me. Please indicate if you wish your name to remain anonymous in the printed results.

Scott Ronaghan
218 East High St.
Apt. 4
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Sports Information Colleague,

The relationship between student-athletes and the media can be sensitive at many colleges and universities. Confrontations between student-athletes and the media can affect the image of the school, the team, coach and athletes themselves. Student-athletes must know how to conduct themselves in media interviews. SIDs can use their media skills to help student-athletes feel more comfortable during interviews. Teaching student-athletes to deal with the media can effectively enhance the image of the athletic program and the institution.

My name is Scott Ronaghan and I am a graduate assistant in the Sports Information Department at Rowan College (NJ). I am enrolled in a Master of Arts program in Public Relations and I need your help to complete research for my thesis.

The purpose of my project is to obtain insight into the techniques you use to train your student-athletes to communicate with the media. I am particularly interested in specific methods you use to help student-athletes conduct themselves in interviews.

The enclosed questionnaire, which I mailed to you and 30 other SIDs at ECAC basketball-sponsoring institutions, will provide me with information about media-training techniques used by sports information offices. My purpose is not to criticize anyone or any office, but to solicit facts and opinions from experienced professionals.

In addition to completing the questionnaire, would you please have a STUDENT-ATHLETE FROM THE MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM complete a separate questionnaire (enclosed) seeking student-athlete perceptions. The name of the student-athlete will remain anonymous.

A portion of my research may involve telephone conversations with some of the respondents to clarify answers or secure an informational interview. **Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me by Friday, February 28, 1997. As a thank you, I'll send you an abstract of my thesis.**

Thank you for your assistance. **IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT ME AT (609) 863-1484.**

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Scott Ronaghan

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Scott Ronaghan
218 East High St.
Apt. 4
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Sports Information Colleague,

I am writing to you because I have yet to receive the two surveys I mailed to you three weeks ago on the student-athlete/media relationship. I realize you must be busy with the winter sports winding down and the spring seasons beginning. However, if you could send the completed surveys back to me in the next couple of weeks I would greatly appreciate it.

Remember, in addition to completing the questionnaire, would you please have a **STUDENT-ATHLETE FROM THE MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM** complete a separate questionnaire (enclosed) seeking student-athlete perceptions. The name of the student-athlete will remain anonymous.

With graduation upcoming shortly, it is very important for me to complete my thesis on time. Returning the completed surveys will be a big help to me in completing my research. Thank you again for your assistance.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT ME AT (609) 863-1484 or through my E-mail address at: RONA6710@rowan.edu

Sincerely,

Scott Ronaghan

P.S. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope so you can conveniently and quickly return your responses to me. Please indicate if you wish your name to remain anonymous in the printed results.

Asbury Park Press
Neptune, NJ

Baltimore Sun
Baltimore, MD

*Bloomsburg Press Enterprise
Bloomsburg, Pa.

*Burgen Record (2)
Hackensack, NJ

*Connecticut Post
Torrington, CT

*Cortland Standard
Cortland, NY

*Danbury New Times
Newtown, CT

*The Enterprise
Brockton, MA

*Gannett Suburban Newspapers
White Plains, NY

*Indiana Gazette
Indiana, Pa.

*Ithaca Journal
Ithaca, NY

*Long Island Newsday
Melville, NY

*Lowell Sun
Lowell, MA

*Morristown Daily Record
Parsippany, NJ

*New Britain Herald
New Britain, CT

*New York Newsday
Kew Gardens, NY

*New York Post
New York, NY

*Oneonta Daily Star
Oneonta, NY

*Philadelphia Daily News
Philadelphia, Pa.

*Pocono Record
Stroudsburg, Pa.

*Poughkeepsie Journal
Poughkeepsie, NY

*Reading Eagle Times
Reading, Pa.

*Springfield Union News
Springfield, MA

Stamford Advocate
Stamford, CT

Trenton Times (2)
Trenton, NJ

*Wilmington News Journal
Wilmington, DE

*Williamsport Sun Gazette
Avis, Pa.

*Worcester Telegram
Worcester, MA

* denoted returned survey

*Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, Pa.

*Central Connecticut State
New Britain, CT

*Cortland State
Cortland, NY

C.W. Post
Brookville, NY

*University of Delaware
Newark, DE

*East Stroudsburg University
East Stroudsburg, Pa.

*FDU-Madison
Madison, NJ

*Fordham University
Bronx, NY

*Hartwick College
Oneonta, NY

College of Holy Cross
Worcester, MA

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, Pa.

*Iona College
New Rochelle, NY

*Ithaca College
Ithaca, NY

*Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Md.

*Kutztown University
Kutztown, Pa.

*Manhattan College
Riverdale, NY

*Mansfield University
Mansfield, Pa.

*Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY

University of Massachusetts-Lowell
Lowell, MA

*Monmouth University
West Long Branch, NJ

*Montclair State University
Upper Montclair, NJ

*The College of New Jersey
Trenton, NJ

Rider University
Lawrenceville, NJ

Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, CT

*Southern Connecticut
North Haven, CT

*Springfield College
Springfield, MA

Stonehill College
North Easton, MA

*Temple University
Philadelphia, Pa.

*Western Connecticut State
Danbury, CT

William Paterson College
Wayne, NJ

* denotes returned survey